



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families**

Highbury House  
5 Highbury Crescent  
Islington  
London  
N5 1RW

6th February 2004

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

### The role of CSCI is to:

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

## Inspection Methods & Findings

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

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families

**Address**

Highbury House, 5 Highbury Crescent, Islington, London,  
N5 1RW

**Local Authority Manager**

Ms Linda Cointepa

**Tel No:**

0207 527 1708

**Address**

Highbury House, 5 Highbury Crescent, Islington, London,  
N5 1RW

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

paul.curran@islington.gov.uk

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

**Date of last inspection**

7/3/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		6 <sup>th</sup> February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Ms Jill Marriott	083058
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Sarah Alexander – Service Manager Linda Cointepas - Team Manager	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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

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

**Part D: Provider's Response**

**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.

Islington Fostering Service is a local authority service providing a range of care options for children who are looked after. The fostering service is committed to providing quality foster placements and kinship care placements, to support children who for a number of reasons cannot live with their own families.

The fostering service provides three distinct services:

Short term foster care placements.

Kinship foster care placements.

Respite foster care placements.

The fostering service aims to work in partnership with families to enable children to return home where possible or to prepare them for permanent placements.

## 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 following methods were used to inspect Islington Fostering Service.

1. Planning the day and interview with the manager. 12/1/04
2. Interview with carers. 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004.
3. Interviews with children and young people 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 19 January 2004, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2004.
4. Meeting with one parent 20<sup>th</sup> January 2004
5. Observation of Foster Panel 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004
6. Tracking files 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2004
7. Tracking personnel files 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2004
8. Attended Social Work team meeting 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004
9. Attended Foster Carers Group 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2004

The inspection took place over a three-week period starting on the 12/1/04. It found that many of the standards had been met or partially met. The overall service provided was good. Evidence was seen of the service making progress to meet the required standards.

#### **Statement of Purpose. Standard 1.**

##### **Standard 1 remains partially met.**

The Islington Fostering Service has a statement of purpose, which is being revised and is at present in draft format the revised statement and children's guide will be completed by March 2004. Neither the draft statement of purpose or the children's guide to the service was available during the inspection.

#### **Fitness to Carry on or Manage a fostering Service.**

##### **Standards 2-3.**

##### **Both standards were fully met**

The fostering service is managed efficiently by managers who have the skills and experience to fulfil the requirements of the posts they hold.



## **Management of the Fostering Service.**

### **Standards 4-5**

#### **1 standard was fully met and 1 partially met.**

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

## **Securing and Promoting Welfare.**

### **Standards 6-14**

#### **Of the 9 standards 6 were met and 3 partially met.**

The service provides good carers who offer good quality care for children placed. With regard to the standards partially met, the manager must ensure that carers are aware of services available for them to use to enhance the care they provide to the children placed with them.

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

### **Standards 15-23**

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

The support to staff and carers has improved. Training for carers is being reviewed and a revised training programme will be available soon. Carer's reviews are not all up to date. It is evident from the inspection findings that there has been a major improvement since the last inspection.

## **Records**

### **Standards 24-25**

#### **Both standards were fully met.**

Recordings on files are clear and easy to read.

Some files did not have completed Looked after Children's forms recorded. All files were kept securely in locked filing cabinets.

## **Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service**

### **Standard 26**

#### **Standard met.**

The premises are fit for use by the fostering service.

## **Financial Requirements**

### **Standards 27-29**

#### **Standards were fully met.**

The finances were within the spending limits for the service.

## **Fostering Panel**

### **Standard 30**

#### **Standard met.**

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

**Short term Breaks.**

**Standard 31.**

**Standard met**

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

**Family and Friends as Carers.**

**Standard 32**

**Standard partially met.**

Islington has an effective kinship care scheme. From the files it was evident that not all kinship care reports arrive at the foster panel within the timescales required.

## **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:

YES

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:**

Six requirements are outstanding from the previous inspection in addition to three new requirements identified during this inspection. There is failure to satisfy all of the regulatory requirements, which is not substantial.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
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	
1	3	FS1	The manager must ensure that the statement of purpose includes information set out in standard 1.4. The manager must ensure a children's guide is available to all young people using the service	31/8/03
2	43(1)	FS4	The manager must ensure that all regulation 43 notifications are made to the appropriate authorities in accordance with regulation 43(1) Schedule 8.	31/8/03
3	11(b)(2)	FS7	The manager must ensure that the cultural and identity needs of each child placed are included in their care plan and reviewed regularly.	31/8/03
4	11(b)(2) 17(3)	FS8	The manager must ensure that children are appropriately matched with carers. Where this is not possible, children and carers are offered support to meet the identity and cultural needs of the child.	31/8/03
5	29(2)	FS21	The manager must ensure carers have annual reviews at which their terms of approval are discussed.	31/8/03
6	17(1)(3)	FS32	The manager must ensure that all carers, caring for children of families and friends must be given the same access to supported training and information as all foster carers.	31/8/04

**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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**     Jill Marriott     **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**     \_\_\_\_\_     **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**     Hannah Hanley     **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**     \_\_\_\_\_

## 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	FS1	<p>The manager must ensure that the statement of purpose includes information set out in standard 1.4. The manager must ensure a children's guide is available to all young people using the service.</p> <p><b>This is a repeat requirement.</b></p>	31/8/03
2	43(1)	FS4	<p>The manager must ensure that all regulation 43 notifications are made to the appropriate authorities in accordance with regulation 43(1) Schedule 8.</p> <p><b>This is a repeat requirement.</b></p>	31/8/03
3	11(b)(2)	FS7	<p>The manager must ensure that the cultural and identity needs of each child placed are included in their care plan and reviewed regularly.</p> <p><b>This is a repeat requirement.</b></p>	31/8/03
4	17(3) 11(b)(2)	FS8	<p>The manager must ensure that children are appropriately matched with carers. Where this is not possible, children and carers are offered support to meet the identity and cultural needs of the child.</p> <p><b>This is a repeat requirement.</b></p>	31/8/03

5	29(2)	FS21	The manager must ensure carers have annual reviews at which their terms of approval are discussed.  <b>This is a repeat requirement.</b>	31/8/03
6	17(1)(3)	FS32	The manager must ensure that all carers, caring for children of families and friends must be given the same access to supported training and information as all foster carers.  <b>This is a repeat requirement.</b>	31/8/03
7	42(1)(a)sch7	FS11	The manager must ensure that all complaints are recorded on file with actions and outcomes within the timescales of the complaints procedure.	30/4/04
8	17(1)	FS19	The manager must ensure the training plan for the fostering service is completed and available to carers.	30/4/04
9	38(2)	FS32	The manager must ensure that reports regarding Kinship Care are presented to the Panel within the required timescales.	30/4/04

#### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action

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

**PART B****INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	YES
• 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	12/1/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	53



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.

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

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose for Islington Fostering Service is under review. The revised document was not available during the inspection. The Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide to the service will be completed by the middle of March 2004.

The information required in Standard 1 Regulation 3 of the National Care Standards will be fully incorporated into the Statement of Purpose. Copies of the completed documents will be available to all carers and children.

A copy will be sent to the National Care Standards Commission.

Evidence was gained from discussion with the service manager.

## 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

All members of the management team have the relevant qualifications for their posts. It was evident from discussion with staff, the service records and information on files that the organisation of the service is good. The service is reviewed yearly and developed accordingly. The budget was in good order at the time of inspection. All members of staff are supervised every 2/4 weeks. Supervision files were seen by the inspector and were up to date. Carers told the inspector their link workers visited approximately every 4 weeks. The Manager holds a diploma in management. The manager has also undertaken in house budget management training and is now monitoring the service budgets. The manager has been in post for nearly two years and has appropriate experience and qualifications to manage the service. Evidence was gained by discussion with the service managers, staff and carers. The service records and personnel files were also seen during the inspection.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The local authority recruitment procedure is used to ensure all members of staff are recruited appropriately. The managers of the service all have Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and references checked by telephone on receipt of the written information. Neither managers nor members of the staff team are given a starting date prior to all of the relevant checks being carried out. Personnel records were seen during the inspection all records were up to date and in good order. Evidence was gained from discussion with the management team and checking personnel records.

## 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?**

2

The roles and responsibilities of the manager and staff are clearly defined. Staff and carers were aware of their line of accountability and who to contact for support and information. The manager has full responsibility for the service budget. Carers interviewed by the inspector were aware of the breakdown of the allowances they received. Carers also understood their responsibility to declare any conflict of interest, which may arise. The overall responsibility for the budget is still held by the finance department of Islington Social Services, the day-to-day budget responsibility is held by the team manager. There have been some incidents, which should have been notified to the National Care Standards Commission and haven't.

The Manager must ensure all regulation 43 notifications are made available to the relevant authorities including the National Care Standards Commission.

Evidence was gained from service records and discussion with carers, managers and members of the fostering staff team.

**Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months: 0**

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.**

5

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

3

**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 manager and staff team have clear job descriptions setting out the role and responsibilities of the post. The level of delegation and lines of accountability were discussed in supervision sessions and team meetings and were clearly defined. All members of staff know whom they are responsible to. All members of staff are aware of whom to report to in the absence of the manager. The team receive regular supervision and team meetings are held weekly. Evidence was gained from discussion with managers and staff and from service records and staff files.

## 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

Foster Carers go through a recruitment induction and assessment process before becoming approved foster carers for Islington. Assessments include inspection of carer's homes, Criminal Records Bureau disclosures on all relevant adults written references followed up by visits to referees. Throughout their fostering careers carers are visited regularly by the link social worker.

The fostering service has introduced a 24-hour help line to support carers outside of office hours. There is also a monthly carers support group.

The manager monitors the children and carers files each month. Evidence was gained from discussion with carers, staff and managers and from the files and records seen.

### 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?

2

Islington Fostering Service has an equal opportunities policy. Past training programmes have included identity work with children in placement. Children referred to the service are matched as closely as possible with carers who are from the same background as the child. Where this is not possible a child is placed with a view to finding a more appropriate placement within six weeks. Training is being further developed to assist carer's to offer appropriate support to children placed. Discussion regarding the child's needs forms part of the induction process. All carers are expected to ensure the religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs of the children placed with them are met. It was evident from discussion and reading files that more support is needed in this area. Carers told the inspector that it would be useful if some very basic information were available at the start of placement. For example, the nearest appropriate place of worship, appropriate dress when attending religious services and some knowledge of customs and foods relevant to the children. This basic information was not available on the files seen.

The manager must ensure relevant basic information is available to carers when children are placed with carers from a different cultural background.

Evidence was gained from the carer's group, discussion with staff and managers and file tracking.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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The Fostering Service makes every effort to ensure each child's needs are fully met in the placement.

The inspector was told that when matching children and carers the care plan, assessments of the child and the carer and information from relevant professionals is used to inform the decision.

As in standard 7 There was no evidence to suggest extra support is brought in to assist children placed with carer's from different cultural backgrounds. Evidence was available of carers researching and gaining appropriate knowledge of different cultures for themselves. The manager must ensure that carers are aware of the extra support available to assist the placements of children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The manager must ensure that relevant information is available at the start of placements where the cultural needs of the child are different from those of the carer.

Evidence was gained from discussion with managers, carers and staff and from tracking files and records.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**  
**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The fostering service has an appropriate child protection policy and procedure, which is linked to the London wide procedures. All carers receive training with regard to safe care as part of their preparation training. Training includes information regarding what to do if a child makes an allegation. Evidence was gained from discussion with staff and carers. Pre inspection questionnaire and the service records.

<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	100	%
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<b>Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Family contact is discussed and agreed at the placement meeting. Where appropriate carers are offered support to ensure the contact is a good experience for the child. Contact is regularly discussed between the carer and supervising social worker and also at Looked after Children's reviews. It is recognised that some contact is very difficult to support. Training regarding managing contact is being developed and will be available to carers in the near future.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from discussion with staff and carers and from the service records and files.</p>		

<b>Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>Children are consulted and have the opportunity to make their views known during the statutory childcare review process. Children are also aware that they can contact their social workers for support. Children spoken to during the inspection said they did have the opportunity to make choices and let their views be known. One child's file showed they had made a complaint no resolution was seen on the file despite the complaint being more than six months old. The manager must ensure all complaints are recorded on file with actions taken and outcomes.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from discussion with young people and file tracking.</p>		

<b>Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>It was evident from discussion with young people, carers and staff that the health needs of the children were under regular review.</p> <p>The files tracked by the inspector showed dates of medical, dental and optical appointments. There was evidence on record that the fostering service maintains good links with the Looked after Children's Health Team.</p>		



<b>Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The fostering service maintains good links with the REACH Team who work specifically on the promotion of education of Looked after Children and provides a service to children not in school. One young person had gained a place on a music project through the REACH Team the placement has been very successful.</p> <p>The files seen had Personal Education Plans for children where appropriate.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from discussion with staff, carers, and young people and from tracking files and reading records.</p>		

<b>Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)</b>		
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Carers are aware of their responsibility to ensure young people placed with them are assisted to develop skills to prepare them for independent living. Carers have received training regarding positive moves for young people and are supported by their supervising social workers to implement an age appropriate independent living programme for the children placed.</p> <p>It was evident from discussion with carers and agency staff that independence training for children of all ages is promoted during every day living.</p>		

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Staff are appropriately recruited through the Islington recruitment procedure. The inspector saw staff files, each had appropriate references, job descriptions, application forms, evidence of interviews and up to date Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. Information was seen on staff files by the inspector at the Human Resources Department. Information was clearly filed and kept securely in a locked filing room.

Total number of staff of the agency:

16

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

X

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Islington Fostering Service has a clear management structure and all staff are appropriately qualified to the posts they hold. Workloads are monitored through the supervision process. Training is also identified through the supervision and appraisal system. The service has adequate administrative back up and IT equipment available for staff to carry out their work effectively. The staff team have employment contracts and conditions of service. There was evidence of some communication between the carer's link workers and the child's social workers on files seen. It was evident from discussion with staff that they were aware of the policies and procedures of the service. Evidence was gained from file tracking and discussion with manager's social workers and cares.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>It was evident from supervision files and records seen that there were adequate numbers of staff with appropriate skills, qualifications and experience. Carers were recruited from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet the needs of the children referred. It is evident that advertising for and recruiting appropriate carers is a continual process. Recruitment of carers involves an in-depth assessment, including references and a criminal records bureau disclosure. All carers homes are safety checked before approval to foster is finalised and then on a yearly basis.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from file tracking and discussion with staff and managers.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Islington is a large local authority governed by legislation. The fostering service has a performance monitoring system to ensure services provided are effective and efficient. Carer's files seen during the inspection showed regular supervision had taken place. Carers are also able to gain 24-hour support from the telephone helpline service available. Staff files showed evidence of regular supervision. The inspector was shown a whistle blowing procedure, health and safety policies and adequate professional indemnity insurance for staff and carer's.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from service policies and procedures and discussion with staff and carers.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>There was evidence of staff and carers training available. Training needs were identified during the supervision and appraisal process. Despite efforts to engage carers in the available training numbers attending remain low.</p> <p>During discussion with carers the inspector was told that training had become mundane with little difference between the courses over the years.</p> <p>The service has enlisted the help of a consultant to look at the training needs of staff and carer's and produce an action plan to develop the training and make it accessible, interesting and appropriate to meet the needs of the carer's.</p> <p>The manager must ensure the training plan is updated and made available to all carers. Evidence was gained from tracking files and records and discussion with staff and carers.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>All staff attended regular supervision and team meetings. Members of staff were aware of their job descriptions understood their roles and responsibilities. The service has implemented a staff appraisal system, which is used to identify the training needs of individual staff members.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from the supervision and appraisal policies and discussion with staff.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The service has a clear strategy for working with carers, which includes the development of an appropriate training programme, and monthly supervision. Carers attend support groups regularly. Yearly reviews of carers have improved and more carers have had at least one reviewed. Where necessary foster carers review reports are seen at panel.</p> <p>The files tracked showed improvements on last year there was evidence of clear recordings of events and information.</p> <p>The manager must ensure all carer's yearly reviews are up to date.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from record tracking and discussion with the manager, staff and carers.</p>		

<b>Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)</b>		
<b>The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The fostering service is well managed and has produced some very good reviewing and monitoring systems. Carers are supervised regularly and have access to a 24-hour support service. Training for carers is being reviewed and a programme of training is being identified to meet the needs of all carers.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from tracking files and records and discussion with staff and carers.</p>		

**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

All carers have appropriate preparation training to ensure they have the skills to meet the needs of the children placed with them. Training is being reviewed and up dated to include the views and ideas of the carers.

Evidence was gained from discussion with staff and carers.

## 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

The information recorded on files was clear and file monitoring had taken place regarding all files seen. Looked after children plans were up to date on the four files tracked. Information regarding visits by the children's social worker is held on the child's file.

Carers are given relevant equipment such as cameras and computers to ensure an up to date record is kept for each child. The information is given to young people when they leave the placement.

The manager must ensure that LAC review forms on the files are complete.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All relevant information was kept on record. Records and files were stored securely in locked cabinets. All children's files are returned to the relevant social work department at the end of placement.

Carers are aware of the access to files policy and their right to see their files.

Evidence was gained from record and file tracking, discussion with the manager and inspection of the file storage.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	139
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	X
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	X
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<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	14
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<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	13
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<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	137	<b>Maximum £</b>	285
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## 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 premises are suitable for the purpose of the service. The IT equipment is password protected and all records and files are securely stored in locked cabinets.

The premises provide an adequate workspace for each employee. The premises are adequately insured under the council insurance policy.

Evidence was gained from inspection of the building and discussion with staff.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager is responsible for monitoring the service budget on a monthly basis. The social services finance section holds the main responsibility for the budget. The budget was seen during the inspection some areas were in credit and others were overspent. Overall the budget remained within the spending limits.

Evidence was gained from inspection of the service budget.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the fostering service are part of a wider financial plan held outside of the fostering service. The fostering budget was seen during the inspection and was within the spending limits specified.



**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Carers receive financial allowances and fees. A breakdown of the allowances is given to each carer. Fees and allowances have been reviewed and now include a reward element for carers.

Evidence was gained from discussion with staff, carers and files tracked.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

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

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

The panel provides a number of functions including:

Approval, review and monitoring of foster carers

Approval of kinship carers

Termination of approval

Extension of placement

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

The chair of the panel has produced a report on the work of the panel over the past year, which sets out the work undertaken and the aims for the year ahead.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

### Key Findings and Evidence

### Standard met?

2

Islington has a policy related to family and friends as carers. All children placed with family or friends should be taken to panel within six weeks of the placement this does not always happen. After three months a longer-term plan must be made. If the child is to remain with the carer's consideration is given to adoption, residence order or matching and approval for fostering.

The family and friends as carers project (Kinship Care) needs further work to improve the process. Reports to panel are often later than the 6 weeks allocated and extensions to placement are requested. From records seen it appears that the support offered to Kinship Carers could be improved.

The manager must ensure that discussion takes place with the responsible social work teams to ensure reports of placements made with family or friends arrive at panel within the agreed timescales. The manager must ensure that the children and carers receive support and supervision at the same level as all foster carers and children placed.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**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

NO

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

NO

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 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 , 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

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

NO

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

YES

Other: <enter details here>

NO

**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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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.