



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### Coram Adoption Service

**Coram Adoption and Permanent Families  
Service  
49 Mecklenburgh Square  
London  
WC1N 2QA**

*Lead Inspector*  
Ms Jill Marriott

*Announced Inspection*  
24th January 2006      12:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Name of service</b>  | Coram Adoption Service  |
| <b>Address</b>  | Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service<br>49 Mecklenburgh Square<br>London<br>WC1N 2QA |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                                       | 020 7520 0300   |
| <b>Fax number</b>   |   |
| <b>Email address</b>  |   |
| <b>Provider Web address</b>                                   |   |
| <b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b> | Coram Family  |
| <b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>             | Ms Gillian Anne Gray  |
| <b>Type of registration</b>                                   | Fostering Agencies  |
| <b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>   |   |

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**          6/12/04

## Brief Description of the Service:

Coram Adoption and Permanent Family Service provides two specific fostering services.

- 1) Concurrent Planning – Places 0-2 year olds with foster carer's who are also approved adopters. This enables security of placement should attempts to reunite the children with birth families fail.
- 2) HIV Project- Places children affected by HIV with ethnically and culturally appropriate foster carers.

Coram, finds families to care for children for planned periods of time, which are agreed with the child's local authority and finalised at the Looked After Children's Planning meeting. Throughout the child's placement with Coram, carer's contact is maintained with the placing authority social worker, other professionals as necessary and the child's birth family where appropriate.

The concurrent planning project places children who are under the age of two years with foster carers who are also approved as adopters. Every effort is made by the concurrent planning team to enable children to return to their families. If children are not able to return home they remain with the foster carers who are already approved to become their adoptive parents.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was announced and was carried out over five days starting on 24/1/06 The plan was as follows:

- 1) Planning the inspection. – 24/1/06
- 2) Team meeting – 25/1/06
- 3) Reading records' policies and procedures – 26/1/06
- 4) Home visits to carers x 2 – 26/1/06
- 5) Reading children and carer files – 27/1/06
- 6) Foster panel – 8/2/06

Three carers and one child's questionnaires were returned to the commission the low return is because the fostering side of Coram is very small there were less than 8 children placed at the time of inspection. Apart from two all placements are baby placements.

The inspector would like to thank the carers and children who completed questionnaires and those who welcomed the inspector into their homes.

The inspector would also like to thank the agency and the staff who took part in the inspection.

## **What the service does well:**

Coram Family is a fair and competent employer who offers good support to staff and carers. Coram is committed to ensuring the safe care of the children and young people it places. It was evident from discussion with staff and with carers that they feel valued and respected for the work they do.

Social workers offer very high levels of support to carers.

The questionnaire received from a young person commented positively on the support he received from the Coram social worker and from his foster carer.

Discussion with carers and returned questionnaires showed that foster carers felt well supported by their link workers.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The staff appraisal system is now being used and reviewed to ensure it is an appropriate tool for staff development.

## **What they could do better:**

It is evident from advertisements and recruitment campaigns that Coram Adoption and Family Services have tried very hard to recruit staff from minority groups. So far they have not been successful and the staff team remains predominantly white. However the agency are continuing to do all they can to create a more diverse staff group.

There were no requirements made at this inspection and only one recommendation.

The recommendation was to separate the reports of home visits from the contacts section of the files. This will ensure easy access to record on the carer's files.

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

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection



# Being Healthy

## **The intended outcome for this Standard is:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:**

Standard 12 was assessed at this inspection.

Coram in this and in previous inspections has evidenced that staff and carer take a proactive role in promoting children's health. Children are further protected by the policies and procedures of the service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

From discussion and from written information on children's files and that contained in policies and good practice guidance there is evidence to demonstrate that Coram provides services, which ensure children's health and developmental needs are met.

Foster carers are clear about their responsibilities in respect of the health needs of the children placed with them. Evidence seen on files showed that all children have regular looked after children medicals, and that each child is registered with a G.P. Regular dental, vision and hearing checks are recorded and younger children are linked with a health visitor.

Policy information and evidence seen showed, that children placed with Concurrent Planning carers are seen by a Consultant or the Local Authority Medical Advisor prior to placement.

Children with special health needs are supervised by specialist medical resources, e.g. HIV Clinics, Child and Family Consultation Service and Child Development Clinics.

Files evidenced that the health of all children placed with Coram carers is tracked through the Looked After Children review process.

# Staying Safe

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):**

Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15, & 30 were assessed at this inspection.

The Responsible Individual and the managers at Coram are suitably qualified. The recruitment practices are in line with regulatory requirements for staff and carers. The service ensures that children and young people are suitably matched with approved carers. The approval process of carers is centred on safe care practice. The foster panel is organised effectively.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Responsible Individual and the managers of Coram have been approved and registered with the Social Care Commission. Three staff files and four carers files were seen by the inspector, they showed that the recruitment policy and procedures are appropriate and all references and relevant checks have been made. Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures seen are up to date.

Children are placed with carers who closely match their own ethnic, cultural, religious and racial background. Coram does advertise when necessary for specific carers to ensure the best match possible is made. Advertising is extended to appropriate organisations such as churches and newspapers, which reach underrepresented groups.

From discussion with carers and staff it was evident that all carers receive training in the recognition of abuse, how to respond to signs of abuse and caring for children who have been abused. The training is aimed to develop foster carers awareness and understanding of issues related to the protection of children.

Coram places a great importance on "safe care" the Carer's Handbook contains information and guidance relating to safe care practice. Policies and procedures regarding anti bullying, missing from care and unacceptable punishment are all included in the handbook.

The inspector observed the Foster Panel, which approves, reviews and terminates approval of carers. The panel is well organised with appropriate well-informed members present. Carers who attended the panel are treated with respect

Files showed that older children are consulted about the care they receive prior to the carer's annual review.

Where appropriate consultation documents are used. In other cases information is obtained by discussion and observation of the child and carer during link worker visits. From discussion with carers and from the files seen it is clear that carers are visited regularly and that annual household reviews are carried out.

Health and safety issues are covered in the initial training for carers and homes are inspected during link worker visits. Health and safety is reassessed yearly as part of the foster carers review.

The inspector visited two carers during the inspection both were aware that they might be interviewed as part of the inspection process. The homes visited were warm clean and adequately furnished the children placed had their own bedroom available.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

Standards 7,13, & 31 were assessed at this inspection  
Children and young people are placed with carers who are able to meet their ethnic, religious, cultural and racial needs. Coram works with the child, carers and all relevant agencies to ensure the best educational outcomes for the children and young people. Foster carers are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to the placements made with them.

## **EVIDENCE:**

It was clear from discussion with staff and carers and from attendance at a staff meeting and the Foster Panel that there was evidence to show that children and families are provided with a service, which values diversity and promotes equality. Coram has an equal opportunities policy, which is shared and discussed with carers throughout the recruitment and approval process and through ongoing support, supervision and training.

Equality issues and issues related to race, gender, culture, language and disability are considered throughout the matching process as are the basic issues such as safe care, experience of working with specific ages and caring for difficult teenagers. It is only once all of the issues have been considered a final decision, regarding the match will be made by Coram and the placing authority.

From the files seen and from discussion with staff and carers it was evident that a high priority is placed on the educational needs of children and young people. Personal Education plans were seen on children's files. One file showed that the Coram link worker was working in partnership with the child, the school, the carer and the mental health service to support a child who was

having difficulties with schooling and life in general. The assistance offered by the link worker was supportive and appropriate for both, the child and the carer.

It is the role of Coram foster carers to keep in contact with the child's schoolteachers and attend school open evenings and special events evidence of carer's roles regarding the education of children placed was recorded on files. All carers recruited by Coram undergo the same induction and approval process. A care plan is developed with regard to the day-to-day care of each child placed. Each plan takes into account the legal status of the child and includes the roles and responsibility of the carer.

# **Making a Positive Contribution**

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

Standards 10 & 11 were assessed at this inspection  
Coram and its carers are very much aware of the need to work in partnership with and consult with children, young people and birth parents. Contact arrangements are clearly recorded on children's files.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There was evidence on each child's file of contact arrangements. Contact is of great importance especially where concurrent planning placements are being made. Concurrent planning placements are made for babies 0-2years. Babies are placed with foster carers who are approved to adopt if the child's birth family is unable to offer an appropriate home.

Regular supervised contact is one of the important tools used to assess the birth mothers parenting ability.

Information was seen on two concurrent planning files of contact arrangements and dates. Information was recorded to show whether or not the dates arranged had been kept.

Coram has an appropriate room available for contact with access to facilities to make hot and cold drinks. The contact supervisor provides reports of observations made during each session these are recorded on children's files, recordings were seen by the inspector.

Foster carers told the inspector that they were aware of their responsibilities regarding contact prior to having a child placed with them. Two carers said they were committed to enabling children to attend regular contact sessions with their families. This sometimes means that carers have to travel considerable distances up to five times each week to ensure contact visits take place.

Where appropriate young people placed with Coram carers are asked to contribute their views to the foster carers review and to their Looked After

Children's review. One file seen gave the link workers observation of a child with a disability this evidenced how positive the placement was for the child. Two baby files showed that each child had made good progress, the health visitors reports showed that the children had reach the appropriate age related milestones.

Evidence on carer's feedback questionnaires to the commission and a questionnaire received from one child showed that they feel they are listened to and that they are asked for their views on the services they receive.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

Standard 14 & 29 was assessed at this inspection

The fostering service in partnership with the carers and the child's local authority do where appropriate support young people to prepare for adulthood. Coram foster carers are paid directly by the child's local authority.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Each child's file seen included a care plan. The care plans are age related one of the plans talked about preparation for adult years other children placed are not yet old enough to start this process. From discussion with staff it was clear that when appropriate preparation for adulthood is included in the Looked After Children review and forms part of the child's care plan.

One file seen showed that the young person was identified as being old enough to plan for adulthood, however their mental health needs have frustrated the process. Evidence showed that the link worker, carer, school and mental health services are working with the child to promote their independence and encourage them to take an interest in their health and personal hygiene. At present the file shows the young person is not able to co operate with the plan, which is reviewed regularly.

Evidence on file and from discussion with staff and carers showed that carer's are paid directly by the child's local authority, carers told the inspector that they received payments regularly and are aware that if any problems arise regarding finance the link worker is available to help sort it out. Carers are aware of the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them. Evidence of payments to carer's is recorded in the carer's handbook.



# Management

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

Standards 17,21 & 24 were assessed at this inspection.

The Fostering Service has adequate numbers of experienced and qualified staff. There is a clear strategy for working with and supporting carer's. Children's case records are clear and comprehensive.

## **EVIDENCE:**

From discussion with managers and staff, from records seen and from information in the Coram statement of purpose it is clear that the Coram staff team have the relevant experience and qualifications for the posts they hold. Difficulties are being experienced in recruiting staff from ethnic minority groups. This was, discussed with the inspector. Evidence was seen of recruitment in appropriate newspapers but so far this advertising has not produced positive results and the staff team remains predominantly white.

There is a clearly set out process for the assessment of prospective foster carer's. Coram carers are recruited in line with the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance. The fostering service successfully recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of the children for whom it aims to provide a service.

From information on carer's files, from discussion with carers and staff and from the policies and procedures seen by the inspector it was evident that Coram has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Carers who spoke with the inspector said they were very happy with the service and support they received from their link workers. It was evident from file notes that foster carers, are visited regularly by their link workers and these visits are recorded. The visits seen on two files were recorded in with the running sheets (contacts) and these would be better placed in the appropriate section (Home Visits). Carers told the inspector that they had the telephone number of their link worker for out of hour's service as well as the number for their local authority emergency service. Carers said they were very well supported to care for the children placed with them, they also talked about the support groups and the training days available to them.

Four children's files were seen during this inspection each included appropriate information about the child, the Looked After Children review and the carers form F, the files included up to date care plans, records of contacts and home visits. Information was on files from the initial referral to the present date. The children's case records seen by the inspector were easy to follow and contained relevant information. All confidential records are kept in locked cabinets when not in use.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

| BEING HEALTHY      |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>12</b>          | 4            |

| STAYING SAFE       |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>3</b>           | 4            |
| <b>6</b>           | 4            |
| <b>8</b>           | 3            |
| <b>9</b>           | 3            |
| <b>15</b>          | 3            |
| <b>30</b>          | 3            |

| ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i>     | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>7</b>               | 3            |
| <b>13</b>              | 4            |
| <b>31</b>              | 3            |

| MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i>             | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>10</b>                      | 4            |
| <b>11</b>                      | 4            |

| ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i>           | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>14</b>                    | 4            |
| <b>29</b>                    | 3            |

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

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Standard | Regulation | Requirement | Timescale for action |
|-----|----------|------------|-------------|----------------------|
|     |          |            |             |                      |

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

| No. | Refer to Standard | Good Practice Recommendations   |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1   | 24                | Reports of home visits to all carer's and children should be recorded in the file section marked "home visits". |
|     |                   |   |

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