



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service

Social Services Department

512a Heathway

Dagenham

Essex

RM10 7SL

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th and 19th March
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

London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service

Address

Social Services Department, 512a Heathway, Dagenham, Essex, RM10 7SL

Local Authority Manager

Mr Philip Segurola

Tel No:

020 8227 2233

Address

Social Services Department, 512a Heathway, Dagenham, Essex, RM10 7SL

Fax No:

Email Address

bob.kedward@lbbd.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 ?

NO

Date of last inspection

03/03/03

Date of Inspection Visit		1st March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Robert Sobotka	116793
Name of Inspector	2	Mr Tim Weller	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) 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.		No Lay Assessor present	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Nigel Fordham	

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 London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Fostering Service is a local authority service that provides temporary and permanent foster carers to care for children and young people.

The service is based in Heathway in Dagenham.

The service offers foster placements to children in the 0-17 years age range, and aims to provide carefully matched placements for children, many of whom may have experienced abuse or neglect.

The service offers the full range of foster placement from 'emergency' to task centred/short term to long term 'permanency'. It also deals with all aspects of 'Kinship' care and monitors 'private' fostering arrangements.

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 found that many of the National Minimum Standards had been met or partially met and that overall quality of the service provided was good.

Statement of purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met. The statement of purpose was comprehensive, up-to-date and provided the scope of information stipulated by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

Both of these standards were met. The staff demonstrated a competent and professional knowledge in relation to the needs of the service. The inspectors received a number of positive comments regarding the competence and management style of the service manager.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Both of these standards were met. The service manager demonstrated his commitment to the monitoring and controlling of the activities of the fostering service; this included liaison with other professionals and agencies. The inspectors were satisfied through interviews with agency staff and via observation that the fostering service was managed effectively and efficiently.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

6 out of 8 standards were met.

The inspectors found that appropriate health and safety checks were undertaken at the homes of foster carers. 3 out of 4 tracked cases showed that the foster placement agreements were not returned to the agency once the foster carers have signed them. The foster care agreement must be maintained and kept up-to-date at all times. Some of the foster carers visited stated that there was room for improvement in relation to the depth of information given about children placed with the carers. It has therefore been recommended that the fostering service seeks to identify measures to improve upon this. The foster carers visited were able to demonstrate their knowledge of child protection issues.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)

4 of these 8 standards were met

Some of the personnel records did not contain all information required as listed in Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations. Personnel records must contain all information

required as listed in Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations. Members of staff interviewed during the Inspection were aware of the management structure and individual roles and responsibilities. The agency must ensure that it keeps a clear record of all complaints received, these must be recorded and monitored and the outcome evaluated to inform future provision of services. Training records indicated that staff undertake on-going training and appropriate professional and skills development to enable them to carry out their jobs efficiently. There were established employment procedures covering the recruitment of staff and carers. Foster carers stated that they received adequate level of support. All carers visited stated that training offered was beneficial and appropriate to their needs, however some of them felt that training times did not suit their daily schedules. It is therefore recommended that training courses take place during daytime and evenings and weekends, to suit all foster carers. It is recommended that the Manager gives consideration to the provision of crèche facilities at training sessions to give greater encouragements to foster carers to attend.

Records (Standards 24-25)

None of these 2 standards were fully met.

The fostering service provider must ensure that all records listed in Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations are maintained and kept up-to-date.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was met.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

2 of these 3 standards were fully met. The service is funded by the social services through an established budget. During the inspection there were no concerns raised regarding the ability of the service to fund its obligations. Visits to foster carers identified that some carers were not aware of what level of entitlements they were entitled to. It is recommended that the fostering service provides foster carers with clear guidance on their entitlements

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was met. The Inspector was satisfied with the professional conduct of the panel.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was met. It was noted that the fostering agency had done some work to improve kinship care arrangements since the last Inspection.

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:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

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	
1	34(3)	FS8	The Manager must ensure that the foster placement agreements contain specific reference to elements of matching, which were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate any gaps in the match between child and carer.	Immediate & Ongoing
2	11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	FS10	The Manager must ensure that the placement agreement and care plan are comprehensive and fully completed in order to comply with Regulations.	Immediate & Ongoing
3	16	FS13	The manager must ensure that the foster carers are given necessary information and support to promote the education of children in foster care, and will need to develop information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.	30/09/03
4	28, 30	FS22	The Manager must ensure that the Foster Care Agreements are in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations and ensure that all foster carer records comply with Regulation 30.	30/09/03
5	34(3)	FS24	The Manager must ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained for each child in foster care.	30/09/03

6	22/31	FS25	To ensure that all records are accurate and up-to-date and that all registers are in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations.	30/09/03

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Robert Sobotka	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Tim Weller	Signature	_____
Date	28th May 2004		_____

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	5,7,20	FS15	Personnel records must contain all information required as listed in Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations.	30/06/04
2	34(3)	FS22	The fostering agency must ensure that the Foster Care Agreement is signed and kept on individual foster carer file, in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services agreement.	30/06/04
3	18(5)	FS22	The agency must ensure that it keeps a clear record of all complaints received, these must be recorded and monitored and the outcome evaluated to inform future provision of services.	30/06/04
4	22	FS25	The fostering service provider must ensure that all records listed in Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations are maintained and kept up-to-date.	30/08/04

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
1	FS23	It is recommended that the Manager gives consideration to the provision of crèche facilities at training sessions to give greater encouragements to foster carers to attend.
2	FS8	The fostering service should ensure that carers are provided with sufficient information relating to each child placed in their care.
3	FS16	It is recommended that the staff supervision process is formalised and that supervision sessions provided for social work staff are recorded.
4	FS20	It is recommended that training courses take place during daytime and evenings and weekends, to suit all foster carers.
5	FS24	It is recommended that the agency provides foster carers with necessary equipment to record significant life events for the child.
6	FS29	It is recommended that all foster carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable to them.

* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	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	01/03/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	65

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?

3

The fostering service had recently produced their statement of purpose. The statement of purpose was comprehensive, up-to-date and provided scope of information stipulated by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. It was last reviewed on 13/02/04.

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

The fostering agency manager holds a social work qualification (C.S.S) and is currently gaining BTEC Level 4 Certificate in Management Studies. He has worked in Fostering and Adoption Services since 1991. In the last 5 years he has worked as a Senior Practitioner, Independent Reviewing Officer (Fostering) and Team Manager (Fostering) since October 2001. The inspectors received a number of positive comments regarding the competence and management style of the service manager.

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 Inspectors met and interviewed a broad range of staff employed by the fostering service. The staff demonstrated a competent and professional knowledge in relation to the needs of the service. The staff working directly with foster carers, young people and children presented appropriate qualifications and experience for their positions.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There were core procedures in place for controlling the activities of the service. The service manager demonstrated his commitment to the monitoring and controlling of the activities of the fostering service; this included liaison with other professionals and agencies involved in the welfare of children. Staff interviewed during the inspection were aware of their roles and responsibilities and line of communication and accountability.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

1

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspector viewed the service manager's job description. The service manager stated that none of the staff working in the agency hold similar positions in another organisations. Levels of delegation are clear, including when the manager is absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The inspectors found that appropriate health and safety checks were undertaken at the homes of foster carers. The fostering service had established a positive working relationship with the local authority housing department which enabled access to larger accommodation for foster carers, following careful consideration of their individual circumstances. The inspectors visited four foster carers in their own homes and were satisfied with the quality of the accommodation and facilities provided for children and young people.

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
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The service demonstrated an active commitment to taking into account the background and cultural needs of the children and young people placed with foster carers. The needs of both the children and young people, and the foster carers, were suitably addressed by a staff team, which reflected the diversity of the local community.

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?	2
The Inspectors visited four randomly selected foster carer placements. The Inspectors were pleased to observe that the fostering service had undertaken a good level of work to ensure that specific needs of children and young people were being met. Some of the foster carers visited stated that there was room for improvement in relation to the depth of information given about children placed with the carers. It is therefore recommended that the fostering service seeks to identify measures to improve upon this aspect of practice. The Manager must ensure that the foster placement agreements contain specific reference to elements of matching, which were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate any gaps in the match between child and carer.		

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
The foster carers visited were able to demonstrate their knowledge of child protection issues. The Inspectors viewed copies of the agreements signed by both the fostering service and the foster carers, which evidenced that appropriate written guidelines were in place. It was noted, however, that in 3 out of 4 tracked cases the foster placement agreements were not returned to the agency once they have been signed by the foster carers. The foster care agreement must be maintained and kept up-to-date at all times. Foster cares were offered an induction, which incorporated training in the identification and prevention of abuse. The fostering service provided continuous professional development for foster carers via the availability of specific training. The service manager stated that foster carers were in receipt of the appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks. Decisions of approval of foster carers by the panel were subject to satisfactory CRB clearance. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection were aware of the action to be taken if the foster child is missing from home.		
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?**

3

The Inspector noted that the service produced a suitable policy and procedure for the facilitation of appropriate contact arrangements. The files of the children and young people evidenced that visits took place per accordance to individual assessments. The files of the foster carers demonstrated that support and advice was offered by the supervising social workers to ensure the safe management of all contact issues.

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?**

3

The Inspectors were satisfied with the documentation within the files of the children and young people, which demonstrated a consistent approach of seeking their views. Both foster carers, and the children and young people stated their awareness of the complaints procedure. The Inspectors found that there was a keen awareness by the foster carers of the need to consult with the children and young people in their care. The Inspector received 29 completed Children's Questionnaires; these indicated that the agency has sought the children's opinion about their foster carers and about how the fostering agency could be improved.

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?**

3

Each person was registered with a General Practitioner, dentist and any other relevant healthcare practitioner. Children are usually registered with the foster carer's own GP, however if a young person needs to remain with their own doctor because of ongoing treatment, his/her wishes are observed. Foster carers spoken to stated that any support required to meet the health care needs of children placed with them is readily available. The foster carers have access to The Looked After Children Health and Education Support Team (LACHES), which provides advice, training and support on health and educational matters. Representatives from the team visited the foster carers' support group, during which they made a presentation on the team's role and support available in relation to the looked after children.

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?	2
The young people interviewed stated that a range of support was readily available when needed, such as homework clubs, access to computers and learning resources. One of the foster carers visited has been commented on her perseverance in ensuring that children placed with her returned to full time education by positively empowering young people placed in her care. Additional tuition was also available to those who needed it. All foster carers have been provided with a computer. The manager must ensure that the foster carers are given necessary information and support to promote the education of children in foster care, and will need to develop information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.		

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)		
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
From discussions with foster carers, young people placed with them as well as young people met during the group discussion, the Inspector was satisfied that the fostering service ensures that foster carers help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Carers of young people 15 years and above liaise with the Leaving Care Team to agree a Pathway Plan for the young person and the skills that the young person needs to achieve this. The carer can then begin to advise and promote the skills needed.		

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?

2

Staff are recruited through the local authority recruitment procedure. The Inspector visited the human resources department to view the personnel files. At the time of the inspection some of the staff employed before April 2002, were not in receipt of the Criminal Records Bureau check. It was noted that staff had previously undergone appropriate police checks. The human resources manager stated that there were plans to obtain CRB check for the existing staff in the near future. Some of the personnel records did not contain all information required as listed in Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations. Personnel records must contain all information required as listed in Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations. Staff working in the agency were appropriately qualified to work with children, young people, their families, foster carers, and had a good understanding of foster care. All foster carer assessments seen were completed by appropriately trained social workers.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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?

2

The Inspector was satisfied that there is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability. From discussion with staff employed by the agency, it was clear that the agency manager operates an open door policy for his staff. All staff interviewed stated they are sufficiently supported in their professional role and that any training which would help them in carrying out their roles efficiently and professionally was readily accessible to them. Training records indicated that staff undertake on-going training and appropriate professional and skills development to enable them to carry out their jobs efficiently. Staff supervision files evidenced that not all staff received their professional supervision on a regular basis. It is recommended that this process is formalised and that supervision sessions provided for social work staff are recorded. All employees of the agency were provided with appropriate written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. There was an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support.

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?	3
<p>There were clear recruitment and selection procedures in place for both staff and carers in the service. The service manager stated that the agency recruits foster carers by local publicity and advertising, participation in annual “Fostering Fortnight”, by ‘word of moth’ from current foster carers, radio advertising, advertising in special publications i.e. “The Citizen” magazine, West Ham United supporters brochure, “What’s On Where” and Leisure Services calendars. The service also has two Local Authority minibuses, one liveried in the agency’s corporate “Thought about Fostering” advertisement and the other liveried in the “Short Breaks” scheme logo. It was noted that at the time of the inspection there was a shortage of approved foster carers, which meant that some of the children placed with the existing carers were outside “the usual fostering limit of 3”. There was evidence that the exemptions have been sought from the local authorities in which the foster carers resided. At the time of the inspection the fostering service had an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.</p>		

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?	3
<p>Through discussion with foster carers and staff employed by the agency, and viewing the foster carer files the Inspector was satisfied that there were appropriate management systems in place for carer supervision, appraisal and support. All carers visited stated that there has been a significant improvement in the level of support offered to them. Foster carers were aware of the ‘out-of-hours’ management and support services available to them. Carers spoken to stated that they were aware of the whistle blowing procedures and would use them to ensure the welfare and safety of children.</p>		

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
<p>Staff interviewed stated that they receive regular training, which enables them to enhance their skills and to update their professional practices. There was evidence of a relevant training programme for both social work staff and carers and for joint training between staff and carers. Training programme was discussed and identified during staff appraisals. The agency had a training brochure in place.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Each member of staff had the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings. As previously mentioned staff supervision files evidenced that not all staff received their professional supervision on a regular basis. It is recommended that this process is formalised and that supervision sessions provided for social work staff are recorded.

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?****3**

From discussions with foster carers during individual visits and from the group discussion, the Inspector was satisfied that the fostering agency has a clear strategy for working with and supporting foster carers. All foster carers spoken to stated that they were happy with the support they received, however some felt that the agency should offer more flexible training times (for those carers who are unable to attending training sessions during the day).

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

As previously mentioned, 3 out of 4 foster carer's files inspected did not contain an up-to-date Foster Care Agreement, although there was evidence that these have been sent out to individual carers. The fostering agency must ensure that the Foster Care Agreement is signed and kept on individual foster carer file, in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services agreement. The service manager stated that the agency was in the process of updating the foster carers handbook, and as an interim measure a "Quick Reference Guide for Foster Carers" was introduced, however none of the foster carers were in receipt of the guide. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that they receive at least one unannounced visit from their supervising social workers. The agency must ensure that it keeps a clear record of all complaints received, these must be recorded and monitored and the outcome evaluated to inform future provision of services. Records of allegations of abuse were found to be kept to the satisfactory standard. The Manager must ensure that the Foster Care Agreements are in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations and ensure that all foster carer records comply with Regulation 30.

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?**

2

The Inspectors were satisfied with the level of training offered to foster carers to ensure that they possess skills required to provide high quality of care. All carers visited stated that training offered was beneficial and appropriate to their needs, however some of them felt that training times did not suit their daily schedules. It is therefore recommended that training courses take place during daytime and evenings and weekends, to suit all foster carers. It is recommended that the Manager gives consideration to the provision of crèche facilities at training sessions to give greater encouragements to foster carers to attend. Courses offered were focused on individual needs of children placed with foster carers. There was evidence that some carers have commenced gaining NVQ qualifications, whilst some have been still waiting to commence gaining their qualification. Minutes from supervising visits, which were viewed by the Inspectors, demonstrated that the service ensures that where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both are encouraged to attend training. Training provided to foster carers within the last year included: "Managing Challenging Behaviour", "Choosing to Foster" (for 'new' carers), "Child protection", "STEPS" Training Programme, NVQ Level 3 in Childcare, and training on diversity.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The register of foster carers and children placed in their care was not up-to-date at the time of the inspection, it is therefore required that the fostering agency must ensure that foster carer register as well as the register of children placed in their care is maintained at all times and kept up-to-date. The service manager stated that carers are encouraged to keep a record of a child's time with them. Some of the carers recorded information relating to all children placed with them in one diary. The Manager must ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained for each child in foster care. It is recommended that the agency provides foster carers with necessary equipment to record significant life events for the child. The Inspector was satisfied that the foster carers encourage children placed in their care to reflect on and to understand his/her history, according to the child's age and ability.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The Inspectors viewed randomly selected foster carer files. The files were generally well maintained, however some of the files did not contain all required information, this included: the Foster Care Agreements, record of children currently placed with the carers and record of all accidents occurring to children whilst places with foster parents. The carers did not sign some of the foster cares supervision minutes. The fostering service provider must ensure that all records listed in Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations are maintained and kept up-to-date. The agency had an "Access to Files Policy for all staff/carers/service users". As mentioned in Standard 22, the agency must ensure that it keeps a clear record of all complaints received, these must be recorded and monitored and the outcome evaluated to inform future provision of services.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			201
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 £	£197	Maximum £	296

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 agency provides adequate, easily identifiable offices, which can be accessed by staff/carers/children and their parents during normal office hours. The premises had facilities for the secure retention of records, appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems and an appropriate security system in place. The service manager stated that there were plans to extend the building in the near future.

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
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The service is funded by the social services through an established budget. During the inspection there were no concerns raised regarding the ability of the service to fund its obligations.

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
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The Inspector was satisfied that the financial processed/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice. The service manager stated that the agency provides a stable financial resource with adequate systems to cover payment processes and accounting.

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?

2

The agency had a clear policy on fostering allowances, which has also been included in the recently produced "Quick reference guide for foster carers". None of the foster interviewed/spoken to were however in receipt of the guide. Foster carers interviewed stated that payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. It was noted, however, that some foster carers were unaware of certain allowances that they were entitled to claim. It is therefore recommended that all foster carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable 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?

3

The fostering panel has an independent Chairperson and several representatives that are independent of the Social Services Department. It also welcomes representation from a foster carer of another Local Authority and a local Councillor. The panel has a Deputy Chairperson identified when required. The service manager stated on his self-assessment form that the service has had a difficulty recruiting a 'care leaver' to the Panel on a permanent basis. The agency was negotiating with another Local Authority for a foster carer representative. The fostering panel had a clear policy and procedure in place. The Fostering Panel Constitution was last updated in January 2004. The Inspector observed the fostering panel meeting. The Inspector was satisfied with the professional conduct of the panel. There was evidence in form of previous fostering panel meeting minutes, and it was also observed during the observation of the panel meeting, that the panel provided a quality assurance function in relation to assessment process as stated in Standard 30.5 of the National Minimum Standards.

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 service has recently launched a new "Short Breaks" scheme for children with disabilities in partnership with "Parents for Children". The Inspectors interviewed the scheme coordinator and were satisfied with the foster carer assessment process. The coordinator would also play a role in the matching process. The project had a separate allocated budget with a specifically dedicated part-time administrator. The project's progress is evaluated during steering group meetings on regular basis as part of the quality assurance process. At the time of the inspection 4 prospective foster carers were being assessed and the agency hoped that one of those carers would be presented to the fostering panel in April/May.	
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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?

3

The Inspector interviewed the coordinator responsible for the 'kinship care' arrangements. The coordinator had previously worked as a foster carer for 10 years. At the time of the inspection the agency had 16 kinship care arrangements. The inspector was satisfied that the agency was sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as foster carers. The agency was able to evidence that kinship carers receive adequate level of support. The service manager stated that the process to become a 'kinship carer' is more robust, clear and monitored under the management information. It was noted that two of the cases presented to the fostering panel during the inspection were those of long standing kinship care placements. The service manager stated that the agency was in the process of formalising a comprehensive "Kinship Care" policy.

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 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 8th & 19th March 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

YES

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

YES

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

NO

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>

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.