



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fostering Services (LBHF)

**Barclay House
2nd Floor, Effie Road
Fulham
London
SW6 1EN**

Lead Inspector
Tony Lawrence

Announced Inspection
9th January 2006 09:30

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

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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 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

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

Name of service	Fostering Services (LBHF)
Address	Barclay House 2nd Floor, Effie Road Fulham London SW6 1EN
Telephone number	020 8753 2300
Fax number	020 8753 2329
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.lbhf.gov.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Steve Miley
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration: None

Date of last inspection 2nd February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Fostering Service provides placements for children and young people with approved carers. The Service provides full-time, short term and respite placements with approximately 200 carers. The Service operates six teams of social workers, each with its own Team Manager. One team deals with the recruitment and approval of foster carers; two teams support foster carers after approval by the Council's Fostering Panel; one team provides short breaks for children with a disability and there are also Access to Resources and Treatment Foster Care Teams. All placements are approved by the Council to ensure children and young people placed are safe and well cared for. The service is based in Social Services offices, shared with the Council's Looked After Children teams and other services for children and young people. The office provides secure accommodation for confidential information.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection took place over five days from Monday 9th – Friday 13th January 2006. Tony Lawrence and Jackie Derbyshire, CSCI Regulation Inspectors, carried out the inspection. They spoke with managers and staff from the service, foster carers and young people and checked records kept by the service. Confidential questionnaires were sent to carers and young people and their comments are included in the report. The Inspectors were satisfied that the service provides a good standard of support to young people and foster carers and children and young people are cared for safely. Five requirements made following the last inspection in February 2005 have all been met.

What the service does well:

The service provides excellent training opportunities and support for foster carers. The Authority has an effective Fostering Panel that considers all applications from people wanting to become foster carers. The Fostering Service has a stable team of managers, social workers and support staff and staff turnover is low.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Standards of recording visits by social workers to foster carers have improved. The Department's Health and Safety policy has been reviewed to reduce risks to staff. The arrangements for placing young people in an emergency have also been reviewed. Senior management arrangements within the Department have also been strengthened.

What they could do better:

The Local Authority must make sure that foster carers are given basic information about children placed with them at the start of each placement. A small number of recommendations are also made.

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 or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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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:

12.

The health care needs of looked after children and young people are well known to staff and foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

The Inspectors reviewed the Looked After Children files for three young people and each file included clear evidence of effective joint working with health services. The health care needs of each young person are clearly recorded in their files and records of statutory reviews included details of how these would be met. Statutory medicals are offered and a record is kept if the young person refuses this. A nurse is employed to work with all Looked After Children, arranging medicals and providing support and advice to young people and carers.

Young people told the Inspectors that they are registered with a local GP. Four young people returned confidential questionnaires sent out as part of this inspection. All four young people said that their foster carers helped them to stay healthy by providing good food and encouraging exercise. Carers also confirmed that they are given the health record of each young person placed with them and this moves with the child when they leave the placement.

Specific health care needs of children and substance misuse training has been provided for carers. The Training Co-ordinator also confirmed that carers have requested child development and first aid training courses and these will be provided in the current year.

Since the last inspection, the Service has introduced a clinical child psychology service. A qualified psychologist is available to meet with foster carers to help them understand a child's specific behaviours and develop strategies to help the child and family.

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):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30.

The service ensures young people are cared for safely.

EVIDENCE:

The Divisional Manager - Family Placement Unit, manages the Fostering Service and this has not changed since the last inspection in February 2005. The Divisional Manager is a qualified social worker with a great deal of experience working in and managing services for children. He told the Inspectors that he is due to begin studying for a Diploma in Management Studies in April 2006. The senior management arrangements within the Social Services Department have changed since the last inspection and the Divisional Manager now reports to the Assistant Director of Operations, a newly created post.

The Inspectors visited four foster homes as part of this inspection. All four homes provided a very good standard of accommodation for children placed with the foster families. All four children had their own room and these were very well furnished and decorated. Carers told the Inspectors that a health and safety check is completed by their supervising social worker as part of their annual review.

The Inspectors felt that appropriate matches had been found for the four foster children they visited.

The Fostering Service has a 'Safe Caring' policy. This is included in the carers' Information Pack and training is provided. Foster carers told the Inspectors that they were aware of the policy and training. Training is also provided on caring for children who have been abused. Each foster carer signs an agreement that clearly states that corporal punishment is not permitted. The Inspectors saw signed agreements on the four files reviewed during this inspection. The Fostering Service also has policies and procedures on children who are missing from a placement and bullying. Young people, Social Workers and foster carers told the Inspectors that bullying was not an issue in most placements and procedures would be followed if the child or carer has concerns.

The major issue identified by foster carers during this inspection was the lack of information provided by the local authority when children are first placed. While it is not reasonable to expect full information to be available at the start of an emergency placement, the Inspectors felt that more must be done to provide essential information as soon as possible. There is also a need to ensure that Placement Agreement Meetings are held within seven days of the start of each placement. This will make sure that the foster child and their carers understand the purpose of the placement, the likely duration and the plans for the child's future.

All staff working in the service are recruited by the local authority's Social Services Department. Staff confirmed that the recruitment procedures include interviews, references and other checks, including a Criminal Records Bureau Enhanced Disclosure. The Inspectors noted that there has been very little staff turnover in the past 12 months and the Service employs a team of qualified and experienced staff and managers.

An Inspector observed part of the Fostering Panel held on Monday 16th January. The Panel comprises the required number of independent people, a Councillor and representatives of the Fostering Service and the Social Services Department. The panel considered three applications for approval. Detailed reports are sent in advance to Panel members and the independent Chair collates questions that are put to the applicant and their assessing social worker. The Inspector was very impressed with the professionalism and independence of the Panel and the way in which it works to ensure suitable people are recruited as foster carers.

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):

7, 13 and 31.

Policies and procedures are in place to make sure issues of diversity and the importance of education are understood by carers and children / young people.

EVIDENCE:

Each foster carer's file includes a list of placements that have been made and these also record the ethnicity of the child and the carers. The Inspectors were satisfied that in most cases, children are appropriately matched with foster families. Where this was not the case, the Inspectors saw evidence that the placement usually only lasted for a few days while a more appropriate placement was identified. Carers said that, in practice, most placements are made in an emergency and there is little opportunity for children to visit potential foster families. All of the children interviewed and those who returned confidential questionnaires said that they were happy with the placements that had been found for them.

The last inspection report included a requirement that all Looked After Children must have a current Personal Education Plan (PEP). Three of the four files checked during this visit included a PEP. The fourth child's PEP was available at the end of the inspection. The planning meeting had been held on 09/11/05 but the record had not been updated. A specific training course on Supporting Education for Looked After Children is also provided by the Family Placement Unit.

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):

10 and 11.

The Service makes sure that children and young people are supported to keep in touch with significant people. The Service also regularly seeks the views of young people on the support they receive.

EVIDENCE:

To assess these Standards the Inspectors checked the Looked After Children (LAC) files for three young people and the Fostering Service files for the carers they are placed with. The LAC forms all included information about the young person's family and other significant people. Foster carers also told the Inspectors that they are given information about each young person's family members, including details of people who are not allowed contact. Foster carers also said that their supervising social workers would support them if there were difficult issues arising from contact with relatives or other people.

Four young people who returned confidential questionnaires said that they were asked for their comments on the support they receive. A proforma is available for young people to complete at the end of a placement, although this does not appear to be well known to young people who spoke with the Inspectors or those who returned questionnaires. One young person also said that they had felt listened to when they made a formal complaint about a carer.

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):

29

The Service has set fees and allowances and these are regularly reviewed.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers told the Inspectors that they were aware of the Council's scale of fees and allowances. All four carers visited by the Inspectors said that fees and allowances are usually paid promptly by the Fostering Service.

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):

1, 16, 17, 21 22, 23, 24 and 26.

The Fostering Service is well managed and carers are well supported.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Service has a clear Statement of Purpose that is regularly reviewed. The Statement is included in the Information Pack given to all approved carers.

Since the last inspection, management arrangements have been strengthened and the Service has been expanded to include a Treatment Foster Care team. The Inspectors felt that the Service is well staffed by a team of qualified and experienced managers, social workers and support staff.

The Service has established procedures for recruiting new carers and two teams of social workers are responsible for recruiting and assessing new carers. While staff were generally positive about the arrangements for recruiting carers, there was some concern about staff visiting new carers on their own. In most cases this will be the first time staff from the Service have met the applicant and although some checks are made, some staff feel vulnerable. It is a recommendation of this report that the Service's recruitment procedures are amended to require the first meeting with potential new carers to take place in the Fostering Service office, rather than the applicant's home.

Carers confirmed that supervising social workers are easily contacted and all mentioned the emergency out of hours contact service that is available. The Inspectors felt that carers and staff from the Service are clear about the role of the supervising social workers. Each foster carer has an annual review and all reviews go to the Fostering Panel. Carers said that they value this acknowledgement of the work they do.

The Inspectors met with the Fostering Service's Training Officer who has been in post for just over a year. In this period, the training available for foster carers has been reviewed and more training specific to the needs of carers has been provided. The Training Officer is working with the Council's Human Resources department to monitor attendance and he reported that there has been a significant increase in the number of carers attending courses. It is a recommendation of this report that the Foster Care Agreement is amended to require each carer to attend at least training events each year. Eight foster carers successfully completed their NVQ Level 3 training in 2005; seven carers are currently completing their training and eight more will start the training in March 2006.

The Inspectors reviewed the case files for three young people and four foster carers' files. All seven files were well maintained and up to date. The Fostering Service manager confirmed that a new computerised records system would be introduced later in 2006. The records of all looked after children/young people and foster carers will be available on the system. This will enable recording to be done electronically and files will be shared between fostering social workers and each child's allocated social worker.

The Fostering Service is based in Council offices close to Fulham Broadway.
The premises provide suitable accommodation for staff working in the service.

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>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	2
15	4
30	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	3
17	2
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	3
23	2
24	3
25	X
26	3
27	X
28	X
32	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
1	FS9	34	Foster carers must be given essential information as soon as possible after the start of each placement. Placement Agreement Meetings must also take place within seven days.	31/03/06

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	FS17	The Service's recruitment procedures should be amended to require the first meeting with potential new carers to take place in the Fostering Service office, rather than the applicant's home.
2	FS23	The Foster Care Agreement should be amended to require each carer to attend at least training events each year.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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