



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service**

Fostering & Adoption

3rd Floor North

Town Hall Annexe

Ealing

London

W5 2BY

2/12/03, 3/12/03, 8/12/03, 9/12/03,  
16/12/03, 21/01/04.

## **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 Ealing Fostering Service

**Address**

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Ealing, London, W5 2BY

**Local Authority Manager**

Ms Ghazala Sheikh

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**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**

19/2/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		2nd December 2003	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Mr Ged Durkin	074878
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Ms. Ghazala Sheikh	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

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**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

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**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

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**2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**

**3. Management of the fostering service**

**4. Securing and promoting welfare**

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**6. Records**

**7. Fitness of premises**

**8. Financial requirements**

**9. Fostering panels**

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**Part D: Provider's Response**

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**D.2. Action Plan**

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## 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 Ealing 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.

The fostering service of the London Borough of Ealing is located on two sites in Ealing and Acton. The service provides short-term placements, long term placements, kinship placements and short term breaks for children with special needs. The service consists of a Support Team, Access to Resources Team, Recruitment Team and Administration Team. All have separate managers who report to a Service Manager who has overall responsibility for the service. For the purpose of Inspection report the Service Manager is regarded as the Manager of the service. At the time of the Inspection there were 11 qualified social workers, (not including the manager) working across the service and a number of staff on short term contracts. Ealing continues to make efforts to recruit and retain staff and there was no evidence appear of any significant gaps in the service during this inspection. Similarly, the recruitment and retention of a wide variety of foster carers is a continual process to ensure that the service strives to meet the needs of the children it has to foster.

## **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.)

On the basis of this inspection the Ealing Fostering Service appeared to be operating in a very satisfactory manner. Interviews with the Manager, staff, children and foster carers, examination of policies and procedures and the observation of the Fostering Panel all indicated that the organisation continues to have clear management responsibilities, good lines of communication and a focus on the fostered child or young person. This inspection has been able to confirm that the majority of requirements identified from the last inspection have been implemented. In conclusion, a continuing feature of the inspection process has been the open, transparent approach of the service and the helpful manner of all those with whom the Inspector has had contact.



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

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

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:**

Under Section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Commission considers the Local Authority's Fostering Service fails to satisfy regulatory requirements and that they are not substantial.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
3	34(3)	FS8	That before making a placement, the foster care is provided with the necessary information to enable them to care for the child as outlined in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Attention must be given to ensure that information given to foster carers is accurate.	30/6/03
6	26(2)(a)(b)	FS30	That the fostering panel develops and implements a system to periodically monitor the effectiveness of reviews in accordance with regulation 29 and oversees the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider.	1/9/03

**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	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

## 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	34(3)	FS8	That before making a placement, the foster parent is provided with the necessary information to enable them to care for the child as outlined in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Attention must be given to ensure that information given to foster carers is accurate.	15/3/04
2	26(2)(a)(b)	FS30	That the fostering panel develops and implements a system to periodically monitor the effectiveness of reviews in accordance with regulation 29 and oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider.	31/3/04

### 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	RFC6	Foster carers should have a consistent approach to recording practices.


\* 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	6
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
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	
• 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	NO
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	2/12/03
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	32

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 previous inspection had identified that the Statement of Purpose did not contain any information about the number of foster carers working with the local authority, the number of children placed by the local authority and the complaints dealt with by the local authority and their outcomes. In addition, the fostering service had not produced a specific children's guide to fostering to be approved by elected members. The revised Statement of Purpose now contains all the relevant information and a specific children's guide has been produced that has been approved by the elected members.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There is no change since the last inspection. The Manager of the service has a social work and management qualification and has been in post since October 2002. The inspection process has continued to highlight that this manager has the necessary skills and experience to ensure that this service is effectively led and managed.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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A previous examination of the Manager's personnel file revealed that all the information required under Schedule 1, Regulation 20 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 was in place.



## 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

Interviews with fostering service staff and examination of documentary evidence confirmed that there were clear roles and responsibilities and effective systems of communications throughout the organisation. Staff receive ongoing supervision on an ongoing basis according to line management responsibility and there are regular team and business meetings. Interviews and feedback from foster carers indicated a good and consistent level of support from their identified Link Workers.

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

13

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

YES

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

NO

Serious illness or accident of a child.

NO

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

NO

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

NO

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

YES

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

NO

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

YES

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

### Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service demonstrated this standard was met. The organisation has a clear line management structure with accompanying delegated areas of responsibility and accountability. All staff receive formal supervision and appraisal. There are regular management meetings with particular emphasis being given to information sharing between the different parts of the service. There is a monthly meeting between the staff from the two sites of Ealing and Acton. There are identified arrangements in place for cover 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

All foster carers go through a thorough assessment to ensure that they have the necessary personal qualities, experience and skills before they become approved. All foster carers have all the appropriate policies and procedures contained in a comprehensive handbook that is issued by the fostering service. In addition, foster carers have regular support meetings and each has a minimum of a three weekly visit from their Link Worker. Ongoing training is also provided for foster carers. The Inspector, accompanied by a colleague, visited a randomly selected group of four carers and also spoke to some of the children in their care who were appropriate to be interviewed. The foster carers spoken with indicated that they received a good level of support. All of the foster carers spoken with had a different approach to recording issues they thought necessary concerning the foster child in their care. The foster children spoken with confirmed that they were happy with their placements. All the accommodation met the needs of those placed there.

### 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

Ealing Borough Council has an Equality and Diversity Policy and the Children's Services Division, (of which the fostering service is a part), has a Monitoring of Racist Incidents & Equalities Standard. The Inspector was informed by the Manager of the service that recruiting and retaining as diverse a range of foster carers as possible continues to a primary goal of the organisation. Foster carers are supported in this area by being provided with training on anti-discrimination and racial awareness. Additional funding is also made available to carers with mixed heritage placements for matters such as skin and hair care needs and to cover any additional expense incurred when attending religious festivals or cultural events. Ealing fostering service is in the process of finalising a draft trans racial policy which when finalised will give greater clarity on this subject.

<b>Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)</b>		
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
The Manager informed the Inspector that at the point of placement as much information about the child/children is made available in order to try and meet their needs. All referrals are written and are made through the Access to Resource Team. A large proportion of placements are emergency but as much information as possible is collated and provided. In addition, Link Workers will meet with the social worker and, if appropriate, the child/children to be fostered. As at the previous inspection, interviews and feedback from carers confirmed that they receive a lot of information about the children they were fostering but that not all this information had been forthcoming at the time of the placement and had not always been accurate.		

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b>		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
Link workers and the young person's social worker monitor placements on an ongoing basis. Ealing Fostering service has its own Complaints and Allegations Procedure, which, if necessary, incorporates a Child Protection Procedure. The Manager informed the Inspector that any allegations are investigated. A strategy meeting would determine who undertakes the investigation. Depending on the outcome of the investigation a child may be removed from the placement or the carer receive more support and training if the issue was one relating to the standard of care. A review by the fostering panel would decide whether such carers could be reappointed. Carers interviewed confirmed that they received specific training on Child Protection. This topic along with the non-use of corporal punishment is discussed as part of their initial assessment to become foster carers. Full guidance is also available for carers about allegations of abuse in the handbook given to every carer. The Manager also told the Inspector that Ealing Fostering is participating in new project called "Blue Print". This was set up by "Voice of the Child" and DOH. This project aims to ascertain young people's views through other young people and their experiences of coming into care. A project stemming from this is the Peer Monitoring scheme, which is currently being established in Ealing in conjunction with Child Line. This will look at young person's issues with specific reference to bullying.		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	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

Discussions and feedback from foster carers indicated a realisation of maintaining appropriate family contacts and friendships for the child in their care. The Manager informed the Inspector that the needs of the child are discussed at the point of placement and the importance of family contact emphasised, this is taken on a case-by-case basis. Full support and guidance is given to carers so that they are aware of their role during these arrangements. Appropriate financial support is given to cover items such as transport to help facilitate contact.

**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

Statutory reviewing processes are the primary mechanism by which all the appropriate individuals are consulted about significant issues that are likely to affect the young person's daily life and their future. The annual foster carer review has been revised to include a questionnaire for young people to feedback about their placement. There are also various department events where feedback is sought i.e. "Outer Limits Day" and "Rising Stars Day". Link workers support carers to ensure that the young person's views are continually sought and heard. The young person also has their own social worker, with whom they can discuss any matter. In addition, the foster carer's handbook has a lot of detail as to the types of meetings that may occur, who should attend them and how they should be conducted.

**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

All Looked After Children undergo medicals and are registered with a GP. The Manager told the Inspector the service ensures that there is a coordinated approach to ensure all agencies involved in the care of a young person are linked. The foster carer's handbook gives very clear guidance as to the health care needs of young people in foster care that cover aspects such as physical, emotional and social development. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that training is also provided on First Aid. The fostering service has access to a Looked After Children Nurse who attends the carer's support group and will visit the young person in the foster home if appropriate. The Looked After Nurse also sits on the fostering panel so that any health related issues are picked up at an early stage of a placement. Link workers will discuss other general health issues such as hygiene with the carer and facilitate any other health related services such as a school nurse that may be necessary.

**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?**

3

The Manager informed the Inspector that meeting the educational needs of the young people in foster care was given a very high priority. The fostering service has a specific policy to promote the education of children in foster placements. Carers are given detailed guidelines about supporting and enabling the children in their care to have their educational needs met. The Manager informed the Inspector that the Children Services Department has a specialist education team set up to try and ensure that any disruption to a young person's education is kept to a minimum. A member of this team sits on the fostering panel. Members of this team attend the foster carer's support group and can act as a liaison between schools and foster carers. Every effort is made to ensure that young people are maintained in their own school to avoid additional upheaval when they go into foster care. There is also an incentive scheme that rewards young people in foster care who attain satisfactory exam results with book vouchers. Interviews with carers confirmed that all were actively involved in the promotion of education of those in their care.

**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

The Manager informed the Inspector that some foster placements are funded beyond 18 years of age. Young people over the age of 16 are automatically referred to the leaving care social work team. There are arrangements with other agencies such as the housing department or the YMCA to help facilitate independent living. It was reported that a supported lodgings scheme will be developed with specific training for foster carers to be provided to help prepare young people for independent living.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

An examination of seven files of staff who work in the fostering service confirmed that all had the information required under Schedule 1, Regulation 20 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Manager informed the Inspector that there is a specific post created to check that all carers have had all the necessary checks and references taken up. All the carers interviewed confirmed that they had been through a rigorous assessment procedure that included initial meetings, interviews, referee interviews, medical checks, CRB checks, inspection of premises and being presented before the Fostering Panel. A check of the carer files confirmed that all had had statutory checks made on them.

Total number of staff of the agency:

26

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

2

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is no change from the findings of the previous inspection. The fostering service has a clear management structure and lines of responsibility and accountability. The fostering service comprises of three teams made up of the Support Team, Recruitment Team and Access to Resources Team. There is also an administration team that gives support to the fostering and adoption team. Each has a manager who is responsible to the Operations Manager. Interviews with the Operations Manager and staff confirmed that staff receive regular supervision and that the department has an accessible training programme that staff or carers could utilise. Interviews with foster carers confirmed that they receive regular support from their Link Workers through direct visits and telephone support.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The fostering service appeared to have a sufficient number of experienced and qualified staff. All foster carer assessments are undertaken by qualified social workers. Ealing Social Services has a specific package to try and recruit and retain social workers and offers financial inducements to do practice training and a post qualification award. Those staff interviewed had the necessary qualifications and experience to be able to carry out their tasks. Specialist staff have been recruited to offer immediate support to foster carers to prevent placement breakdown. The recruitment of carers is an ongoing process. The fostering service continues to have a proactive approach to recruiting carers that involves running a variety of advertising campaigns designed to attract as wide a variety of foster carers as possible.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
<b>The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>All staff interviewed confirmed that they receive regular and formal supervision. Staff also have access to a professional counsellor. The Manager and Director of Children Services operate an “open door” policy if staff have an issue they wish to discuss. Foster carers have their own designated Link Worker who will offer whatever support is necessary. There is also the foster carer’s support group, which meets on a regular basis. The Inspector attended one of these groups as part of the inspection process. If a carer wishes to discuss any matter with a manager of any of the services then they are free to do so. The fostering service also offers an out of hours service which carers can access if they need to. In addition, carers can utilise the department’s complaints procedure should they wish to.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>In addition to the core training programme for the Housing and Social Services Department, the Inspector was informed by the Manager that there were external courses and that a number of staff were undergoing social work training, sponsored by the Department. There is also a Practice Development Forum that consists of a monthly two hour seminar that acts as an update for staff on current policy issues. Carer’s training needs are reviewed during their annual review. Core NVQ level 2 training is offered to all carers. Carers can also access any internal department training. Interviews with staff and carers confirmed that a range of training was available according to the needs of the individual.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>All staff interviewed had a clear knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. In addition, all received a good level of support and supervision along line management responsibilities. All foster carers interviewed indicated that they received good support from their Link Workers, (whether in the form of visits or phone calls), the monthly support group and an out of hours service, (if necessary).</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The Manager informed the Inspector that the service has a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting carers. Specialist staff with the necessary training and experience in child-care have been recruited to give direct and immediate support to foster carers to prevent placements breaking down. All foster carers have an allocated Link Worker who has regular contact and who actively encourages each carer to attend the carer's support group. The Link Worker will also access all necessary training for the carer and ensure that they have received the comprehensive carer's handbook, which contains all the relevant policies, procedures and guidelines. The service formally reviews the carers on an annual basis in order to ensure all necessary support and help is being given.</p>		

<b>Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)</b>		
<b>The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The Manager of the service informed the Inspector that it was the assessment process that all carers went through prior to being approved that identified any learning needs. It was each Link Worker's responsibility to monitor and supervise the placement and identify any knowledge or skill gaps and to encourage the carer to undertake all necessary training. Interviews with foster carers confirmed that they receive a good level of support from their allocated Link Worker.</p>		



**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

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

3

Foster carers receive preparatory training as part of their assessment process before becoming carers. In addition, they are offered NVQ training and are able to access any appropriate departmental training. Interviews with carers confirmed that they were able to access training on a regular basis at times and venues convenient to them. The Manager informed the Inspector that it was the intention of the service to develop a core-training programme for all carers when a Training and Development Officer had been appointed.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager informed the Inspector that there is an up to date case record maintained on every young person in foster care. This case record is maintained by the Link Worker. Team managers will audit a specific number of files every month. The Inspector examined four case records of foster children and found them to contain all the necessary information. The department has a policy and guidance on access to records. Any work done with reference to accessing case records by a young person in care is undertaken by staff trained in preparing young people for independent living.

### 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?

The Inspector examined the case files of those foster placements that were visited as part of the Inspection process. There were separate files for carers, all checks on carers, files on the children being looked after and financial records of allowances paid. Some of the files examined contained a lot of historical information that might not have been relevant for the current placement but nevertheless represented valuable information about earlier life events/issues.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	124
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	154
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	168
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	33
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	15
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	92.81
<b>Maximum £</b>	285.53

## 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

This inspection saw the service's offices in Acton inspected. The premises used as offices by the fostering service appeared to be sufficient to meet the needs of the staff who work there. The office had good secure storage for files, sufficient IT and telephone lines. The other office is situated in Ealing and had been inspected during the previous inspection. There had been no significant issues regarding that office.

## 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?

9

This Standard is not applicable as the Fostering Service being inspected is not an Independent Fostering Agency but is a local authority fostering service.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the fostering service are managed within the London Borough of Ealing's budgetary system. The Manager is responsible for managing the fostering service's budget, which is done by examining monthly records of expenditure. Spending by the Department is monitored on an ongoing basis. The accounts of the service are examined by Ealing's external auditors.

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

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

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

3

There is no change since the last inspection. The Manager of the fostering service informed the Inspector that there is a designated staff member who has the responsibility to ensure that payments and allowances are paid promptly to the carers. The amounts paid reflect expenditure on birthday and Xmas presents. The carer's handbook gives clear information as to the type of allowances payable. Interviews with carers confirmed that they received their allowances promptly on a weekly basis.

## 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 service has clear and detailed written policies and procedures regarding the guidelines, membership and remit of the fostering panel. The Inspector attended a fostering panel and observed the panel to conduct itself in a methodical, deliberate and professional manner as it heard the presentations before it. The panel is now held in council chambers, which offers more space and the intention is that proposed foster carers will be invited to meet the panel as part of their presentation for approval. The panel chair was interviewed and he reiterated the view of the panel as being a body designed to question and quiz in order to safeguard the welfare of any children placed in the care of foster carers. During the panel issues and concerns were observed to be dealt with appropriately. Since the previous inspection an elected member of the council now sits on the panel. There is still no formal quality assurance system for monitoring the work of the assessors to ensure consistency of approach from the different agencies, which provide information to the panel. The chair thought there was a need to systemise the feedback process to the relevant agencies in order to give an overview of information and assessments put before the panel. Such a system had been a requirement of the previous inspection. The proposed publication of an annual report of the panel, the chair hoped, would give scope to comment on the quality of assessments that the panel has put before it and will identify trends and plans which help plan future services.

## 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 fostering service provides a Family Link service that provides short-term breaks for families with children with disabilities and a sitting service for children in the child's home. The Inspector interviewed one of the staff involved with this service who explained that there were particular policies and procedures that had been adapted from the fostering services policies to ensure that these individual young people had their needs met.	
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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
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The fostering service has a specific policy and procedure for the referral, assessment and post approval arrangements for those carers who are within the fostered child or young person's kinship network. Ongoing support is given to kinship carers with the creation of a dedicated social worker post and they are invited to all foster carer events. There were 33 kinship placements at the time of this inspection.



**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 2/12/03, 3/12/03, 8/12/03, 9/12/03, 16/12/03, 21/04/04 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

An action plan had been received and is available at the West London Area Office.

**Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:**

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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, Ghazala Sheikh of LB Ealing 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, Ghazala Sheikh of LB Ealing 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:**

Some amendments to be made as inaccurate information.

**Print Name** Ghazala Sheikh  
**Signature** Ghazala Sheikh (signed)  
**Designation** Childrens Placement Manager  
**Date** 24/03/2004

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

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