



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Kingston Fostering Services

The Guildhall

Kingston upon Thames

Surrey

KT1 1EU

9th,11th,12th & 25th February 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Kingston Fostering Services

Address

The Guildhall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT1 1EU

Local Authority Manager

Jenny Rigby

Tel No:

020 8546 2121

Address

The Guildhall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT1 1EU

Fax No:

020 8547 6036

Email Address

jenny.rigby@rbk.kingston.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

N/A

Date of Inspection Visit		9/11/12 & 25 February 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Davina McLaverty	071703
Name of Inspector	2	Jean Stuart	071704
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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Jenny Rigby – Team Leader	

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 Kingston Fostering Services. 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.

Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames is a Local Authority service that provides temporary and permanent foster carers for children and young people.

The service is based in Guildhall 1, High Street, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 1EU.

The day-to-day management of the service is left to the Team Manager (Family Placements Services).

The types of services offered are: (a) Emergency (b) Short Term Foster Care, (c) Permanent Foster Care, and (d) Short Breaks Scheme.

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 took place, with two Inspectors over three and half days in February 04. Inspectors found that the majority of Standards had been met. Overall the quality of the service provided was good. The Inspection demonstrated that the majority of standards had been met. Comment cards have been received from two Placing Officers, six foster carers and eight young people. Comments on the whole show satisfaction with the service and comments are reflected in the main body of the report.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1). This Standard had a minor shortfall.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose is available and two Children's Guides (one for young people over the age of 10 years and the other for younger children). The Local Authority must ensure that both documents detail how to make a complaint and provide the telephone number of the Commission. The Children's Guide should be produced in different formats, to ensure the differing needs of children are met.

Fitness to carry on or to Manage a Fostering Service (Standard 2-3). Both Standards were met.

From the feedback, observation and information received the Inspectors concluded that the operation of the service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible child care. Staff files were seen to be well organised and contained all the required details.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5) Both Standards were met.

The Team Leader and her staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. In line with good practice the Fostering Service is reminded of the need to notify the NCSC of any events listed under Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14) Eight Standards were met, one had a minor shortfall.

Before foster carers are approved they attend various training courses, are interviewed, references taken and various checks carried out. The files viewed by inspectors and attendance at a staff meeting demonstrated that children are adequately matched with foster carers, and encouraged to maintain their cultural beliefs. Foster children are asked for feedback in writing before their reviews. Steps must be taken to ensure the children have adequate knowledge about how to make a complaint.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, and Training staff and Foster Carers. (Standards 15-23) Seven Standards were met; two Standards had a minor shortfall.

All foster carers and staff undergo a check with the Criminal Records Bureau. Social workers have an allocated caseload. Supervision takes place with line managers on a four to six weekly basis. Foster carers reported that they feel well supported. All foster carers sign a carer's agreement. Appraisals must be carried out on all staff and further steps must be taken to ensure the foster carers receive appropriate training and feedback obtained from them regarding course content and its usefulness.

Records (Standards 24-25) Both Standards were met

The foster service maintains a case record for each foster child, and each foster carer. Records are stored securely.

Fitness of premises for use as Fostering Services (Standard 26) This Standard was met.

The office accommodation is adequate with the exception of a lock/keypad, which is required

on the Fostering Team rooms' door.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29) Three Standards were met.

This is a Local Authority service and is financed on a regular basis by the financial department of the Authority. Foster carers reported that they receive payments on time.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30) This Standard was met

The Fostering Panels meet on a monthly basis. The Panels were child centred and focused on outcomes for children.

Short-term Breaks (Standard 31) This Standard was met.

Policies and procedures are in place for short-term care. One member of staff is allocated to this service.

Family and Friends as Carers (32) This Standard was met.

The Local Authority has a number of family and friends approved as carers. Support is provided to these foster carers.

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:

Regulation 3(2)(c), Standard 1.5 – The Fostering Service must ensure all children have a Children's guide available to them. The Guide for younger children must include details of the Commission.

Regulation 12(2)(f), Standard 11.5 – The Fostering Service must take further steps to ensure all children have adequate knowledge about how to make a complaint.

Regulation 21(4) (a), Standard 20.4 -The Fostering Service must ensure that all staff receive a yearly appraisals and a copy is kept in their personnel files.

Regulation 32(5), Standard 26.3 - The Fostering Service must ensure that a lock/keypad is on the outside door of the team room to ensure that unauthorised personnel do not have access to confidential records, should the door be left open and all cupboards not locked.

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	12 (2f)	11 & 22	That the fostering service informs all children in foster care and the foster carers of the telephone number and address of the National Care Standards Commission to raise any concerns they may have.	28/2/03
2	21(4a)	20	That the organisation ensures that all staff receive appraisals and a copy is kept in their personnel files.	28/3/03

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 Davina Mc'Laverty **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Norma Vieira **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(2)(c)	1.5	The Fostering service must ensure all children have a Children's Guide available to them. The Guide for younger children must include details of the Commission.	31.4.04
2	12(2)(f)	11.5	The Fostering Service must take further steps to ensure all children have adequate knowledge about how to make a complaint.	31.4.04
3	21(4) (a)	20.4	The Fostering Service must ensure that all staff receive a yearly appraisals and a copy is kept in their personnel files.	31/4/04
4	32(5)	26.3	The Fostering Service must ensure that a lock/keypad is on the outside door of the team room to ensure that unauthorised personnel do not have access to confidential records, should the door be left open and all cupboards not locked.	31/5/04

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	1	The Children's Guide should be produced in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.
2	4	The Management team were reminded of the need to follow good practice, and notify the NCSC of any events listed under Regulation 43(1) Schedule 8.
3	17	The Fostering Service must take further steps to ensure the feedback is thought following training.

* 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	5.5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
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 9/2/04

Time of Inspection
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

10.00
60

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose specifically for the Fostering Care Service is available as a public document. This document includes

- the services provided for children who are placed by the fostering service within the borough,
- the involvement of children and foster carers in service planning delivery,
- procedures and processes for recruiting and approving of foster carers,
- fees and allowances,
- training and support
- and quality assurance.

Two children's guides have been produced one for children over 10 years of age, the other for younger children. The children's guide for younger children does not include details of the Commission in it. The Team Leader reported that copies of the guides had been circulated to all children and foster carers in the fostering section.

Eight questionnaires were received back from children, four of the children reported that they had not been given a children's guide or a leaflet about the service. The Fostering service must ensure all children have a guide available to them. This issue is the subject of Requirement 1.

The service is looking at ways to ensure that the Guide is produced in formats to meet the needs of different groups of children e.g. an interactive CD Rom for Looked After Children has been developed and will be circulated once approval has been granted.

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 completed pre-inspection questionnaire indicates that the current Team Manager has a professional qualification together with management experience as a Senior Practitioner in Family Placement Team.

In interview the Manager, demonstrated that she exercises good leadership of the staff and this has led to a cohesive group that work well together. From the feedback, observation and information received the Inspectors concluded that operation of the fostering service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible child care. The Team Manager took up her present post in September 2001 and is currently undertaking a Management course which matches the competency levels required by the NVQ Level 4.

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

Four staff files were examined during the course of the inspection. Staff files were seen to be well organised. Files contained application forms together with full employment history and satisfactory explanations of any gaps in employment, relevant qualifications, references and Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB).

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

The Team Leader and her staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Staff reported that they are able to access support through well-established lines of communication and regular group meetings and supervision. For the foster carers there are established support group, which staff reported are poorly attended. The fostering team are looking at ways they can encourage foster carers to attend.

The four files sampled by the inspectors showed that each of the persons involved in the fostering service has a duty to declare any possible conflicts of interest to the organisation.

This is a Local Authority run service and the Audit section monitors the finances. The Inspectors were told that the Team Leader holds a budget and this is reviewed regularly to ensure that she remains within the allocated resources.

The Management team were reminded of the need to follow good practice and notify the NCSC of the events listed under Regulation 43(1) Schedule 8. This is the subject of a recommendation.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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 Team Manager is employed on a full time basis and has the responsibilities of the day to day function of the Fostering and Adoption Services. The Team Leader reported to the inspectors that she has a job description which clearly sets out her roles and responsibilities and that she is aware of her lines of accountability. The Team Leader is well supported by her deputy who acts on her behalf in her absence.

Following discussions with the staff group, the Team Leader and feedback received from foster carers, children and purchasers questionnaires, the Inspectors concluded that this service is being managed to an acceptable standard.

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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Four foster carers' files were sampled. Four foster carers were visited and interviewed during the course of this inspection. The files indicate that before foster carers are approved they attend various training courses, are interviewed, references taken and various checks made. The foster carers confirmed that they have a copy of the Health and Safety guidelines. Foster carers reported that a yearly review of each foster carer is completed which is presented to the fostering panel for approval. The inspectors could see that part of the assessment for foster carer's approval included the environment. This is to ensure that the house is safe and that the furniture and fittings, meet with the Local Authorities requirements.

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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As reported by the Team Leader the fostering service addresses the issues of diversity and promoting equality by organising group discussions, training and in supervision. This is also promoted through the Foster Carer Handbook and the Children's Guide to fostering. The Team Leader reported that foster children are encouraged to maintain their cultural beliefs and attend functions as necessary. There are foster carers on the register who provide specialist services e.g. to children who have disabilities and they would receive extra financial support to ensure that these children's needs are met.

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?**

3

Staff and carers reported to the inspector that attempts are made at all times to ensure that each child placed is carefully matched with a carer. This is to ensure that the carer is capable of meeting the assessed needs of the child. Staff spoke of how this becomes an issue when there is an emergency and the authority has to place a child and there are no matching foster carers available. In these circumstances the child is placed to a near matching carer as possible and suitable placement searched for the next working day. This issue is regularly discussed in supervision and meetings in order to find a solution.

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?**

3

The Foster Carers' Handbook and Children's Guides were available for inspection. The Foster Carers' Handbook clearly sets out guidelines to protect children from abuse and what to do in case there was abuse. The Handbook and the Children's Guides explain how each child has access to their Social Workers and the Child Participation Officer to discuss any concerns they have. The documentation seen by the Inspector shows that children are encouraged to attend their statutory reviews and provide a confidential written contribution.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

0

%

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

Depending on circumstances of each child, contacts are maintained with their birth parents and supervised visits are arranged. The Carers reported that Social Workers are at hand to provide support and assistance in dealing with any difficult contact issues. The files show that each contact is recorded in detail. The foster carers are aware that maintaining contacts is crucial to the social welfare of the child in the future.

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?**

2

Feedback from the children questionnaires revealed that children's opinions are sought and listened to. The children seen during the inspection presented as comfortable in their environment, and their manner indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster carer. The Children's Guide (for children over 10 year olds) details that children can also make complaints to the National Care Standards Commission or the Children's Participation Officer. However this must be addressed in the Guide for Younger Children. The Inspectors also noted that there are regular planned six weeks meetings between Social Workers and the children. The files show that entries are made of the discussions in each individual files. Of the eight children's questionnaires received six of the children stated that they had been told how to make a complaint. The other two questionnaires, where there was no answer were from children under 10 years of age. This issue is subject to Requirement 2.

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

Staff spoken to maintained that they always tried to give foster carers full information including the health needs about the child being placed, except in an emergency when this information is delayed and is made available as soon as possible. Foster Carers are provided with a list of health agencies they can access should it become necessary. Each of the children in Fostering Service's lists undergoes medical checks on an annual basis and this is recorded in their review form. The Looked After Children Health adviser is currently in the process of revising current protocols to ensure greater consistency between social workers, foster carers and health professionals in respect of ensuring that looked after children's health needs are addressed and statutory reviews take place which fully conform to guidance. Foster Carers, Social Workers and young people now have direct access to the health adviser.

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

All children's files examined during the course of this inspection indicated that children have links with schools. The foster carers have the responsibilities to ensure that children do attend school. Any child away from school or absent is entered in their logbooks and Social Workers are notified. One foster carer spoke of her efforts to ensure that her child educational needs are met. Support and advice is available from the Looked After Children Education Adviser who all Looked After Children and Foster Carers have access to. Meetings are also planned with the Fostering Service Social Workers, Education Liaison Officers and children to discuss progress etc. This is discussed at children's reviews.

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

A carer reported to the Inspector how Social Workers ensure that each young person preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living is consulted about his/her future. A young person spoke to an inspector about independent living and how they were being supported in moving towards this. Pathway plans are used with young people who are encouraged to be actively involved in decision-making processes.

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

There is a recruitment strategy in place to recruit foster carers. Four foster carer files were inspected. All foster carers are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references taken up and checked to assess suitability. Records are kept for references that have been obtained and their outcomes. All Social Worker staff have an appropriate qualification to work with children. There is on-going training available to staff. All foster carers and staff details are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. All personnel involved in fostering service are supported with group meetings, supervisions and trainings. The foster carers are encouraged to follow the NVQ courses. One foster carer visited spoke of her attainment of the NVQ Level 2 award.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

0

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

This is a Local Authority run service with a management structure, with lines of accountability. Social workers have allocated caseloads and are supervised by their Line Managers on a four to six weekly basis. Three administrative staff, the equivalent of two full-time posts, supports the Fostering Service. As seen by inspectors there is a duty system in operation during office hours to answer any queries and an out of hours support line for foster carers from 5pm –1.00am. The Emergency Duty Team also operates out of office hours. The Team Leader informed the Inspectors that both fostering service and children's Social Workers understand each other's roles and that they work well together.

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>It was evident during the course of the staff group discussion that the staff have worked hard to meet all the targets set i.e. reviews of foster carers, children, home visits, supervision, attending foster group meetings. The fostering service has a Publicity and Recruitment Officer to assist in the advertisement and recruitment of foster carers. The fostering service has a very clear assessment and approval process.</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>Information gathered following our discussion with staff and foster carers regarding employment indicated that the fostering service is a fair and competent employer with sound employment practices. The out of hour's duty team is available to deal with emergencies that may arise. The Fostering Manager and her deputy are also available to support the foster carers should there be a need to clarify any issues. The Inspectors saw a copy of the councils whistle-blowing policy which all staff have a copy. The Team Leader reported on 9th March 2004 that the whistle blowing policy and procedure has been sent to all foster carers. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as a Local Authority organisation has a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers, children in their care and staff.</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>Generally the Royal Borough of Kingston has a comprehensive training programme. A full-time training officer is in post in the Children and Families Division to look at training of all staff, which includes staff, and foster carers of the fostering service. Regular training courses are organised. Some are general courses i.e. health and safety, child abuse and while others are specifics i.e. Post Qualification, detachment, challenging behaviours etc. The team Leader reported that foster carers are also involved in some joint training with social workers. The Team Leader and the staff informed the Inspectors that all new staff follow an induction programme. The Team Leader attends the Association of London Government meeting for lead officers in fostering and adoption and/or the London Regional Fostering and Adoption Group. Both focus on fostering matters both nationally and in London.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The staff said that they are aware of their duties and responsibilities expected of them and meetings and supervisions for all staff are planned in advance. On examination of the four staff files it was noted that only one staff appraisal had been carried out. Arrangements must be made for all staff receive appraisals from their line manager and a copy of the appraisal is kept in each staff personnel file. The Team Leader informed inspectors that next year appraisals would be linked to Performance Related Pay. This issue is subject to Requirement 3.</p>		

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
<p>Six questionnaires were received from foster carers, five of who stated that they felt well supported by the fostering service. One foster carer felt unsupported primarily as their supervising social worker was on long term sick. The Team Manager reported that as a result of this person's poor health, staff had endeavoured to support the foster carers this person had been allocated. The four foster carers visited were all positive about the support they received. Four foster carers files were examined by the Inspectors and were found to be adequate, entries are made of meetings, supervision, training and group discussions in the foster carers files</p>		

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?	3
<p>Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, qualified Social Worker. These foster carers have access also to other professional support, information and advice to enable him/her to provide consistent, high quality care for a child or young person placed in their home. All foster carers signed an agreement that they accept, understand and operate within all standards, policies and guidance of the fostering service. Information on how to make a complaint includes the address and telephone number of the local National Care Standards Commission office.</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?

2

The four files examined by the inspector identified that before foster carers are approved, each carer has an opportunity to talk to existing foster carers about their experience and knowledge. Carers reported that they attend required training and receive induction training. Foster carers also spoke of on-going programme of training and self development for foster carers to develop their skills and tackle any development need. Two foster carers spoken to report that they find it difficult to attend training because of other commitments. One foster carer indicated in their questionnaire that she was not happy with the training. This person stated, "that no one listens to what you have to say". Further steps must be taken to ensure the foster carers receive appropriate training and feedback obtained. This issue is subject to a recommendation.

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 foster care service maintains a case record for each foster child or young person in their foster care and also for the foster carers. These records were available for inspection. The files demonstrated that entries were made of visits by Social Workers. Forms were found to be in good order. The inside of the front cover of the files details the contents of each section. The children's files examined at the time of the inspection were well organised.

Foster carers visited were aware of the importance of record keeping and the need to keep records in a confidential manner.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The records examined during the course of this inspection were found to be good order. Confidential records are kept securely and safely in locked cupboards and are accessible to authorised staff only.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

47

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

32

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

79

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

11

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

1

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

186.14

Maximum £

344.53

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?

2

The office was found to be appropriate for the purpose. They are easily accessible to the fostering service staff to work from, is fully furnished with all necessary equipments including IT and communication systems. Staff indicated that when there is no one in the office during office hours they have to lock all cabinets even when visiting the toilet, as the door to the office has no locks. A lock/keypad is required on the outside door to ensure that unauthorised personnel do have access to confidential records should the door be left open. This issue is subject of Requirement 4.

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?

0

This is a Local Authority run service and the finance is audited on regular basis by the finance department of the council.

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?

0

This is a Local Authority run Service.

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

The Foster Carer Handbook gives details about the charges and allowances paid by the fostering service. The charges are agreed at the beginning of each placement and reviewed annually or sooner if there is a need for it. All foster carers spoken with stated that they receive payments on time with details of breakdown of the costs of the services. One foster carer stated in her questionnaire that they did not receive a breakdown to their payment. In discussion with the payments officer she maintained that where foster carers circumstances has changed then she sends out a handwritten breakdown of the payments. If foster carers needs are the same them the payment breakdown is detailed in the scale of charges which inspectors saw in the foster carers handbook.

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
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The Fostering Panel meet on a monthly basis and it is planned to increase these as the demand for approvals and reviews are increasing. Observation made of the Panel meeting indicated that they are operating within the terms of reference as agreed. It was noted that the panels were child-centred and focused on outcomes for children. The Social Workers when presenting the case to the Panel ensured that the range of information is collated, including applicants involvement in assessment and children self-assessment confidential questionnaire. The Chair of the Fostering Panel ensured that all members participated and that all relevant information was considered and that good quality decisions were made about the approval of foster carers. New members are due to be recruited in September 2004 and the Panel Chair at interview stated that he hoped that the Panel would reflect a more culturally diverse group than at present.

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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	3
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Royal Borough of Kingston operates a regular short breaks scheme. There is a half-time post in the fostering service. This person who deals with short-term breaks. Inspectors inspected policies and procedures in place to meet the needs of this service. The fostering service is keen to recruit more short break foster carers.

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 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames has number of family and friends as their carers who care for specific children. The Team Leader informed the inspectors that the staff respond quickly and positively to any potential assessment of family members or friends as foster carers. Support and training for these types of carers are the same as the other foster carers.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

There were no Lay Assessors present at this inspection.

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 <9 February 2004> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Comments and an action plan were received from the Provider.

These are available to view upon request from the Croydon Local Office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 17/05/2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 _____ 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.