



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Havering Fostering Service

Whitworth Centre
Noak Hill Road
Harold Hill
Romford
Essex
RM3 7YA

4th February 2004 – 23rd March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Havering Fostering Service

Address

Whitworth Centre, Noak Hill Road, Harold Hill, Romford,
Essex, RM3 7YA

Local Authority Manager

Ms Linda McGrath

Tel No:

01708 434548

Address

Midland House, 109-113 Victoria Road, Romford, Essex,
RM1 2LX

Fax No:

Email Address

Linda.mcgrath@haverling.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

Feb-Mar
2003

Date of Inspection Visit		4 th February 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Elizabeth Sebunya	144706
Name of Inspector	2		
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.		N/A	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mrs Linda McGrath	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of London Borough of Havering 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.
<p>The London Borough of Havering's Fostering Service is located at Midland House, Victoria Road, Romford, Essex. The aim of the service is to recruit and support a range of suitable foster carers to work with young people to ensure the best possible outcomes for those in foster care. Fostering Services include task centred (short term), long term, shared care and kinship fostering for children between 0-18 years who are looked after by the local authority under the Children Act 1989. Where the needs of children and young people cannot be met from within the local authority fostering service, provision is commissioned from independent fostering agencies. These agencies are monitored by the Commissioning Unit and also through arrangements made within the Pan London Agreement, (this is an organisation comprising the London Boroughs who have come together to negotiate contracts and organise monitoring of children's provided by the independent sector).</p>

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 was undertaken over a period, from the 4th February 2004 to 23rd March 2004. This was to enable the Inspector to observe the fostering panel, visiting foster carers, attend coffee morning, reading, staff, children and young people and foster carer's records. The Inspector received written feedback from foster carers, children and young people and pre-inspection questionnaire from the Team Manager. The Inspector also interviewed the Group Services Manager and the Senior Officer from the Commissioning Unit.

The Inspector found that all of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services had been met, except two, which were almost met. The Inspection report will detail evidence to support this. There were outstanding requirements and recommendations from the last inspection, which have been included in the report.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was almost met. The Statement of Purpose has recently been updated and amended with the details as outlined in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations. The Children's Guide draft is now completed and awaiting approval from the senior management. It is a requirement that the final Children's Guide must be forwarded to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 – 3)

Both standards were inspected and met. The Statement of Purpose makes reference to the qualifications and experiences of the Team Manager. There was evidence throughout the inspection that the Team Manager has demonstrated effective leadership to manage a fostering agency.

Management of the Fostering Service (standards 4 – 5)

Both standards were inspected and met. The organisational structure provides clear roles and procedures for managing, monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

Nine standards were inspected. Seven standards were met and two were almost met. Through discussion with staff, foster carers, attendance at the fostering panel and the coffee morning for foster carers and home visits there was evidence to demonstrate that the Fostering Service ensures that children, young people looked after and their families, are

provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. The Fostering Service ensures through support given to foster carers, parents and an ongoing training, that each child and young person is encouraged to develop and maximise her/his potential and to lead as full a life as possible.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15 – 23)

Nine standards were inspected. Eight standards were met and one was almost met. Records were inspected at the offices of the fostering service and staff were interviewed as part of the inspection process. Havering Local Authority and the Fostering Service, has clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follows good practice in safeguarding children and young people. Havering Local Authority and Fostering Service operates a vigorous and thorough recruitment procedure of foster carers. There was evidence of a comprehensive and good quality-training programme for foster carers and staff.

Records (Standards 24 – 25)

Two standards were inspected and were both met. From discussions with the Team Manager, staff and viewing case records there was evidence to demonstrate that the Fostering Service maintains comprehensive and well organised paper and computer records.

Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard was inspected and met. The premises are well equipped and maintained with good quality furnishing and fittings. From observing the building the Inspector was satisfied that the premises are appropriate for the purpose in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 – 29)

Three standards were inspected. All standards were met. The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager states that the financial process and systems are robust and comply with the general financial management. Discussions with Team Manager, Group Manager and the Senior Officer from Commissioning Unit there was evidence that financial processes/systems of the Fostering Service are properly operated and maintained.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

The fostering panel has clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions. The panel has a role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment and approving of the foster carers. The Inspector was able to evidence this during observation of the panel and through discussions with the panel Chair.

Short-term Standard 31

The standard was inspected and met. The Fostering Service has clear policies and procedures for the Home from Home scheme, which provide respite for families with children who have disabilities. The scheme actively promotes and recognises that parents remain

the main carers and have responsibilities for the health and educational needs of their children.

Family and Friends as Carers Standard 32

This standard was inspected and met. The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager of the Fostering Services that the local authority recognises the importance of Kinship Care (family and friends as carers). The Inspector was provided with the policy and procedures of Kinship Care.

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

YES

NO

NO

[illegible]

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	3/4	FS1	The Children's Guide must be available and copy sent to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	06.06.04
2	34	FS8	To ensure that carers are only offered if they represent appropriate matches for a child, the Manager must ensure that all matters and obligations in foster placement agreements are ascertained prior to placement, as far as is possible.	06.06.04
3	28/30	FS22	The Manager must ensure that the Foster Care Agreements are in line with Regs. 28/30 & Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations.	06.06.06

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	Elizabeth Sebunya	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Sue Bestjan	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	3/4	FS1	It is a requirement that a copy of the final the Children's Guide must be forwarded to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	06.06.04
2	3/4	FS	The Statement of Purpose must be made available on request to staff, foster carers, children and young people.	06.06.04
3	3/4	FS1	The final Children's Guide must be suitable for all children and young people fostered through the Fostering Service, including a summary of what the service sets out to do for the children	06.06.04
4	38(3)(d)	FS8	It is a requirement that foster carers must be provided with full information about the fostered child and his/her family to enable the foster carer to protect the child, his/her own children and others whom they have responsibilities.	06.06.04

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	FS4	Since a local authority Fostering Service is not a registered provision under the Care Standards Act 2000, the requirements under Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 cannot be a “requirement” on the local authority. However, good practice would indicate that the Fostering Service should establish and maintain a system for the monitoring of matters set out in schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and for improving the quality of foster care provided.
2	FS8	It is recommended that the new Foster Care Placement Agreement should be made available for the next inspection.
3	FS9	It is recommended that foster carers unable to attend training due to work and other commitments should be offered alternative opportunities.
4	FS	It is recommended that friends and family should be offered Child Protection and other childcare training as required.
5	FS18	It is recommended that newly approved foster carers should be provided with more supportive out-of-hour support as well as other foster carers.
6	FS23	It is recommended that the Manager give consideration to the provision of crèche facilities at training sessions to give greater encouragement to foster carers to attend.
7	FS32	It is recommended that the authority should put in place a consistent assessment, support, training and reviews of Kinship Carers.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	7
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	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	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	04/02/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	36

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

The Statement of Purpose has been approved by and updated. The revised and updated version was provided to the Inspector. There was evidence that the Statement of Purpose makes reference to the Fostering Services provided as task centred (short-term) long term, shared care and kinship fostering for children and young people aged 0 – 18. The Statement of Purpose sets out clearly the overall aims and objectives of the fostering services, that is to ensure safe, secure and effective care that enables all children to fulfil their potential, maximise their health and live successful adult lives. The Statement of Purpose also states that the Fostering Services objectives is to support, train and supervise all foster carers so that they can provide a wide range of placements which meet the diverse needs of children and young people and to gate-keep resources within a financial framework that meets the needs of the children, young people and their families.

The Statement of Purpose includes the management structure, numbers of staff, relevant qualification and experience of staff, numbers of foster carers, numbers of children placed and the procedures and process for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers. The Statement of Purpose must be made available on request to staff, foster carers, children and young people.

The Team manager informed the Inspector that the Children's Guide for the Fostering Service is still in draft form awaiting Senior Management's approval. The final Children's Guide must be suitable for all children and young people fostered through the Fostering Service, including a summary of what the service sets out to do for the children. The Children's Guide must be kept under review as necessary and copies provided to each foster carer, depending to the understanding and age of the child. It is a requirement that the Children's Guide must be forwarded to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

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

From the pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service, from inspecting the personnel file, from Human Resources Department and interviewing the Team Manager there were evidence that she has many years experience in working with children and families since 1989. There were copies of her qualification and identification on her personal file. The Team Manager has been managing the Family Placement Team for the last five years. In the pre-inspection questionnaire provided by Team Manager she has CQSW, BSc in Social Work, PQ in Social Work and B Tech in Management, which is equivalent to NVQ Level 4.

Throughout the inspection there was evidence that the Team Manager exercises effective leadership of the staff and operation, in such a manner that the Fostering Service is organised, managed and staffed to deliver appropriate child care service to children and young people.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Service operates the recruitment policies and procedures of London Borough of Havering, which were provided to the Inspector for inspection. From discussion with the Team Manager and staff and from sight of the recruitment documentation the Inspector was satisfied that the correct procedures are followed. Staff files inspected contained CRB checks, application forms, interview and selection process forms and the outcome. Personal files also contained letters of appointment, two references from previous employers on headed notepaper and copies of staff qualifications and identification. Three staff CRB checks were being processed for renewal after the three years. On this occasion the Inspector was satisfied that Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are complied with.

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 Inspector was informed that the Group Service Manager has the overall responsibility and supervises the Team Manager. The Team Manager has the day-to-day responsibility of the fostering, adoption and home from home teams. There are clear roles for the Team Manager and staff and are well-established lines of communication and accountability between each team, staff and foster carers. From discussion with staff from each team there was evidence that they were aware of their roles and responsibilities. From the pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager and from the discussions between the Group Services Manager, Team Manager and the Inspector, the Inspector was informed that there is a financial framework within the fostering service with clear procedures for payment. The Inspector also visited the Commissioning Unit as part of the inspection and from the discussions and documentations provided there was evidence that payments of foster carers are made regularly and on time. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they receive their payments on time. The Team Manager, Group Services Manager confirmed that allowances are regularly reviewed to make the recruitment and retention of foster carers viable.

The Team Manager informed the Inspector that the Fostering Service informs foster carers and staff of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest. During interviewing of staff and foster carers there was evidence that they were all aware that they have a responsibility to declare of any conflict of interest to the Team Manager of the Fostering Service.

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.

0

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.

3

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**

From the Team Manager's personal file there was a clear job description setting out her duties and responsibilities. During the discussion with the Team Manager there was evidence that the Team Manager does not hold a similar position in another organisation. The level of delegation and responsibilities of the Team Manager and the Senior Practitioner (the Team Manager's deputy), are clearly defined in the Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose states clearly that in the absence of the Team manager the Senior Practitioner deputises for the team manager for the day-to-day running of the Fostering Team. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that the Group Services Manager maintains oversight, financial responsibilities and makes key decision, as required. The Inspector interviewed the Senior Practitioner and Group Services Manager and both confirmed that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the absence of the team manager. On this occasion the Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service is managed effectively and efficiently.

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

As part of the inspection process the Inspector visited four foster carers when the children were in placement. All four homes were warm, adequately furnished, decorated, maintained to a good standard of cleanness and hygiene and were free of avoidable hazards. Within the homes visited each child had their own bedroom and arrangements reflected the child's interests, offered privacy and required space. In foster home, one young person was sharing a double bedroom with her baby child aged one. All foster carers visited were in-house foster carers. Foster carers interviewed during the home visits and at the coffee morning at Midland House (The Fostering Service Offices), confirmed that they attended preparation groups which included training covering health, safe caring environments. The Team Manager also stated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that during training, and the checking of staff, foster carers and visitors to the family includes the health and safety checks of the home provide a safe environment for the children and young people in foster care. During the interview with the Team Manager, she informed the Inspector that the Fostering Service makes sure that children and young people who are transported by foster carers are adequately insured and use age and size appropriate car restraint systems. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are properly insured and use suitable car restraint systems when transporting children.

Foster carers visited and those attended the coffee morning were aware that an Inspector from the National Care Standard Commission would be visiting them and the children/young people.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Statement of Purpose make reference to Havering Fostering Service ensuring it will provide placements that value diversity, promote equality, individual and personal needs and social and cultural background preferences. The Team Manager gave a statistical breakdown of the Looked After Children ethnically at 19/01/04 as 83.1% from White background. During preparation training, and assessments of foster carers they are assessed on their understanding of diversity and equalities. The Inspector was provided with the equalities policy and anti-discriminatory procedures. The local authority promotes equality issues and staff are provided with mandatory training. From the training program, Statement of Purpose and observing of the fostering panel and discussion with foster carers the Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service ensure that children, young people and their families are provided with a service which values diversity and promotes equality. There was evidence that the Fostering Service aims through written guidance, on-going

training, support given to foster carers by supervising link social workers, that each child is encouraged to develop and maximise her/his potential and to lead as full a life as possible.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Team Manager informed the Inspector that the referral system has now improved since the last inspection. All placements must be agreed/approved by line management. The Statement of Purpose make reference that the Family Placement Service receives requests from social workers via The Children's Commissioning Unit after senior managers have agreed. During the interview with the Senior Placement Officer from the Children Commissioning Unit she confirmed that matching the children and young people with the right foster carer is their main priority. The Senior Placement Officer stated that a request is provided in writing which outline the reasons for the placement care needs, ethnicity, religion, language, intended timescale, legal status and any other key information that enables the Children's Commissioning Unit to identify a suitable match to be found. The staff interviewed also confirmed that there is information sharing between the link social workers, child/ren, young people and link social workers. The Senior Placement Officer stated at the time of inspection that only one child who is not in the same race placement, and that support is provided to the child and foster family around translation, dietary needs etc from the local community. During case tracking, discussion, with foster carers and staff the aim is to achieve a good match but the reality is often dictated by the need for urgent placements. From foster carers, questionnaires a child was placed by the Emergency Duty Social Worker who did not have the basic information, for instance name, date of birth and gender. From discussion with the Team Manager she confirmed that the majority of placements are not planned. From files inspected there were good practice, of structured planned placements, where introductory visits took place. Foster carers, children and young people's files inspected recordings of visits and telephone contacts were made. From foster carers files inspected written foster placement agreements have been drawn up between foster carers and Fostering Service. The Placement Agreement contained specific reference to elements of matching and where foster carer need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and foster carer, for example, where it is not the same race placement. New Foster Care Placement Agreement forms have been drafted and are waiting for implementation. It is a requirement that foster carers must be provided with full information about the fostered child and his/her family to enable the foster carer to protect the child, his/her own children and others whom they have responsibilities. It is recommended that the new Foster Care Placement Agreement should be made available for the next inspection.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

During the inspection and in the pre-inspection questionnaire the Team Manager stated that to safeguard the welfare of children and young people each foster carer has a named supervising social worker that provides monthly home visits and supervise foster carers, there is frequent telephone contact. Regular support groups, coffee mornings forums, training and advise on issues relating to care and safety of children and young people are explored. The Team Manager stated that all foster carers and staff are trained in Child Protection Procedures and awareness of sign and indicators of possible abuse. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they have attended Child Protection Training and other relevant training relating to childcare. There was evidence during the inspection of social workers personal individual files that they have considerable experience in Child Protection work from their previous employment. The Inspector was provided with the Child Protection policy and procedures and the training programme was available during the inspection. Comments from foster carers through the Foster Carers Questionnaire and interviews stated that training programmes are not flexible enough, as some foster carers have full time jobs and the Fostering Service does no longer provide foster carers with crèche facilities. It is recommended that foster carers unable to attend training due to work and other commitments should be offered alternative opportunities.

The Fostering Service has a clear policy and procedures relating to the discipline and behaviour management of children and young people. The policies and procedures were available for inspection. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that during preparation groups they received training around discipline and behaviour management of children and young people placed in their care. Supervising social workers interviewed confirmed that discipline and behaviour management is regularly discussed during training, home visits and telephone contacts. From the policies and procedures the Inspector observed that unacceptable practices are clearly outlined. Acceptable practices are also outlined in the policies and procedures. From information provided to the Inspector it was clear that kinship foster carers are not provided with Child Protection training and other training as may be required. It is recommended that friends and family should be offered Child Protection and other childcare training as required. The Team Manager should consider childcare support (crèche) for foster carers.

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

98**%**

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**

There was evidence that the Fostering Services makes a high priority to ensuring that children and young people in foster care are encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts. The Team Manager stated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that in the Foster Carers' Agreement and Department of Health Looked After Children paperwork make specific reference to maintaining contact. Foster carers interviewed by the Inspector during the home visits and at the Coffee morning confirmed contact between foster children and their families are held regularly. Foster carers pointed out that at times the hours and location of contacts affects their own families. Foster carers informed the Inspector that the Fostering Services should provide support staff with transportation or locations that are convenient for both children, young people, their families and foster carers' families. The Inspector was provided with the Fostering Service procedures, which sets out how contact for each child is to be established, maintained and reviewed. The Team Manager confirmed that the local authority employs workers whose specific role is to supervise contact. From information provided and interviews with foster carers there was clear evidence that contacts are provided and supervised either at the foster carer's home or at the identified location. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that foster children and young people are encouraged to have telephone, letter/card contacts.

The Team Manager also confirmed that childcare reviews are held regularly and social workers are reminded that all significant parties are consulted and considered. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are consulted by social workers, child/ren complete their consultation books, and the Independent Chairs speaks to child/ren or young people prior to the reviews taking place about their opinion regarding arrangements of contacts. Social workers interviewed also confirmed that contact is always on the agenda item in Looked After Children's Reviews, and during preparation groups training the Fostering Service stresses the importance of foster carers helping a child or young person to maintain appropriate contacts. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that foster carers receive training around encouragement and facilitating contacts.

Foster carers interviewed told the inspector that financial assistance is provided towards costs involved in ensuring contacts take place at the desired frequency and takes place in most suitable places. Social workers maintain records of all the outcomes of contacts to make sure it is beneficial to the child/young people and their families. From the children's and young person's individual files inspected outlined in the care plans the frequency of contact and if it is supervised or unsupervised. Children and young people interviewed confirmed that they have contact with their family and three children and young people do not have contact with their family. On this occasion the Inspector was satisfied that correct procedures are being followed to maintain contact with looked after children/young people and their families.

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**

Leaflets are provided to children and young people according to their age and understanding about the Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitor for looked after children and young people and advocates. The leaflets were provided to the Inspector for inspection. Social Workers interviewed confirmed that they talk to the children or young people on their own to ascertain their feelings. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they understand the importance of listening to the views of the children and young people placed in their care. From discussion with foster carers, children and young people during home visits and from foster carers, children and young people questionnaires, the Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service seeks to ensure that children and young people's opinion are sought over issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future. The Inspector did not speak to any parents or significant others on this occasion.

The Team Manager, staff and policy and procedures make reference to offering child/ren and young people with communication difficulties with facilities to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and treatment.

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**

The Statement of Purpose makes reference to the Fostering Service offering placements that safeguard and nurture the emotional and social development and psychological well being of the child. It is also states that placements that maintain good physical and mental health. The Team Manager pointed out in the pre-inspection questionnaire that all children and young people are offered health assessments as outlined in the Looked After Children Guidance regarding medicals. Foster carers are responsible for registering the child/ren and young people to their own GP if a child/ren or young people do not have a GP already. The Fostering Service keeps a register of all Looked After Children and monitored to ensure regular medicals are undertaken or offered. From children and young people's files inspected and interviewing foster carers there was evidence that medicals are checked regularly.

On this occasion the Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service ensure that foster carers receives training and support which enables them to offer each child or young people in foster care to receive health care which meets his/her physical, emotional and social developments.

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 Statement of Purpose states that children and young people who use the placement services have the same opportunities and life chances as their peers. That stability and continuity in relationships, education, leisure activities etc, is paramount. The Team Manager stated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that the local authority has a policy "The Education of Children Looked After". This was provided to the Inspector for inspection. It sets out the requirement for each agency, social services and education, staff and foster carers and requires that each child must have a Personal Education Plan. From children and young people's files inspected each had a Personal Education Plan completed and filed. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they attended school meetings and encourage the children or young people to do their homework.

The Fostering Service provides transport, computers and financial assistance for extra circular activities. Foster carers visited and interviewed provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that the Fostering Service is linked to Connexion (a Government initiative) which help young people to find jobs, linking with education departments, develop a dedicated teacher in schools to deal and help Looked After Children if they wish to go to College or Universities. Foster carers are supported financially to provide school uniforms and sports equipments. The Foster Carers' Pack includes information and guidelines on financial entitlements and these are updated every year. Transportation to school and contacts would be included in the Placement Agreement and must be presented to the board.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

From discussion with the Team Manager, foster carers, one young person, staff, survey of young people and the policy and procedures there were evidence that the Fostering Services supports foster carers to help young people towards acquiring independent skills and knowledge necessary for adult living. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that the Leaving Care Team works closely with the Fostering Services to ensure that young people remain within its remit and who are preparing to leave the Care System are consulted about their future, encouraged to be involved in decision making and in the implementation of the Pathway Plan. The Inspector interviewed a young person during a home visit at the foster carer's home and she confirmed that discussions have started with the Leaving Care Team in preparing her Pathway Plan and independence skills checklist. During the site inspection the Inspector observed that the Leaving Care Team and the Fostering Services share the same building and both managers share the same office. The Inspector was provided with leaflets produced for young people, for instance Making a Difference and A Young Person's Guide to Supporting Lodging. Services provided for young people leaving the Care System includes, preparation groups for 6 – 8 weeks, Careers Drop In, Informal Groups and Groups for Boys/Girls. A support group for foster carers of older children and young people and supportive lodgings providers is held bi-monthly to discuss specific needs of this age group.

The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager stated that foster carers

are trained and supported to ensure that they understand the importance of young people developing skills and have the necessary knowledge for adult living. Foster carers interviewed where a young person aged fifteen and half is in contact with Leaving Care Team confirmed that she has been helping and discussing with the young person regarding developing the skills around independent living. The Team Manager confirmed that the Leaving Care Team is responsible for recruiting landlords/landladies to provide supported lodgings and this is outside of the Fostering Services. Information provided to the Inspector states that local authorities Leaving Care Service links with young people 15 ½ and 16 years and begin to complete and prepare Pathway Plan as well as independence skills checklist. The checklist is used to identify areas for development with the young person, foster carer, and supervising social worker and after care worker.

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

The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager stated that Fostering Service provide a named supervising social worker to foster carers and shared carers, regular monthly home visits, weekly or more frequent telephone contact, regular support groups, coffee mornings, forums and training to advise on issues relating to the care and safety of children and young people. There are also joint visits with the child's social workers and the supervising social workers.

There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. During the interview with the Group Services Manager and the Team Manager there was evidence that personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained and understand the recruitment process. From staff files inspected and discussion with the Team Manager the Inspector was satisfied that schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulation 2002 are complied with, that references undertaken before appointment and CRB checks are carried out and renewed every three years.

The team is well supported by three administration staff. The authority has a separate Children's Commissioning Unit, which ensures that any use of external fostering providers is done safely with all appropriate checks, and contracting procedures are carried out. From the discussion with the Senior Principal Officer at the Children's Commissioning Unit the Inspector was satisfied that correct procedures are followed. The Inspector was provided with the information about "Management and Supervisory Meetings with Foster Carers". This is a code of practice which is followed by supervising social workers and outlines the process that regular meetings should have a clear purpose, an agenda and must be signed by the foster carer and supervising social worker. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that the Fostering Service provides them with good supervising social workers, support, regular home visits and telephone contacts and support groups.

Total number of staff of the agency:

13

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

1

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**

The organisation and management of staff is clearly outlined in the Statement of Purpose and the Foster Carers' Handbook. The Fostering Service has a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability. From discussion with the Team Manager and information provided in the pre-inspection questionnaire, there was evidence that in the absence of the Team Manager, the Deputy Team Manager (Senior Practitioner) is responsible for the day-to-day of running the team. The Group Services Manager maintains oversight financial responsibility and makes any key decisions as required. The Fostering Service has a structure and systems in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively. There was evidence that staff are managed and monitored by people who have appropriate skills and qualifications. Staff interviewed confirmed that they receive regular supervision where their workloads are discussed and monitored. The Inspector was provided with the on-going training and proposed training programme for the next three years for foster carers. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are aware of the on going and proposed training. Some foster carers interviewed were disappointed that they cannot attend the training due to lack of childcare support. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that training programme for foster carers is updated regularly and encourage attendance is being reviewed with the provision of crèche facilities a high priority.

There is adequate administrative back up of two part-time administration support, one fulltime responsible for CRB checks and one for foster carer database. From interviewing administrative staff there was evidence that the Fostering Service has adequate administrative back up. The office is equipped to enable social workers and administrative staff to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. From observing and interviewing social workers the Inspector was satisfied that they all understand the role of children's social workers and have a clear understanding about how the Fostering Service social workers and children's social workers work effectively together. The Fostering Service provide staff with policies and working practices in respect of grievances and disciplinary matters, equal opportunities, health and safety procedures and details of the services offered and these was available during the inspection.

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**

From the staff files inspected and discussion with the Team Manager and Group Services Manager there was evidence that the Fostering Service has adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff. The Statement of Purpose make reference that staff are all suitably qualified with DipSW or CQSW and many have a number of years experience in the field of children and families social work and fostering or adoption. A recruitment campaign has been undertaken by Havering Fostering Service to meet the needs of it's young people through the provision of local foster carers. The target set in the Quality Protects management Action is to recruit 25 new foster carers over three years (2001 – 2004). The Fostering Service aim to increase retention of current and future potential foster carers through an extensive and attractive support package. The Inspector was provided with the Fostering Service policies and procedures, which set out the assessment process that are

made known to prospective foster carers at the time of contacting the Fostering Service.

From information provided by the Team Manager there was evidence that the Fostering Service has an assessment process, which covers many areas as defined in this standard. For instance, child rearing, understanding of diversity and equalities, contact between fostered child and the children/young people's families, foster carers' own experiences in relation to disabilities and/or attitudes to disability. All assessments are competency-based. From information provided by the Team Manager, interviews with social worker staff and policies and procedures the Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service aims to provide an adequate service to meet the needs of the children and young people.

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?

2

The Fostering Service uses the employment policies and procedures of the London Borough of Havering. From staff files inspected the Fostering Service is a fair and competent employer. The Statement of Purpose and Foster Carers' Pack states that out-of-hours management and support services are available for foster carers. The Team Manager and staff confirmed this. Foster carers interviewed informed the Inspector that Fostering Service offers out-of-hours support through the normal social services emergency duty team. Newly approved foster carers interviewed informed the Inspector that they find the out-of-hour emergency duty not very supportive as they feel that foster carers come way down the list of emergencies. There was evidence that the Team Manager is aware of this and she informed the Inspector that the present system need to be improved to provide a 24 hour dedicated support helpline.

The Team Manager and from the Foster Carers' Pack states that supervising social workers offer monthly supervision and annual appraisals. From foster carers' files inspected there was evidence that an agenda was drawn up before supervision, supervision was recorded, signed by both social worker and foster carers and dated. Appraisals were also recorded and development training identified. The Inspector was provided with policies and procedures regarding health and safety for inspection. Foster Carers' Handbook makes reference to Fostering Service advising fosters carers to take up their own insurance company first. The Council takes out policies intended to protect foster carers for liabilities arising from the service they provide. Public liability and professional indemnity insurance is in place.

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**

From viewing files and documents, policies and procedures, discussion from staff and foster carers the Fostering Service has a good quality-training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep up-to-date with professional developments. Staff interviewed confirmed that there is an induction programme which staff had found useful. The Fostering Service organise a joint training programme with staff and foster carers as and when required, for example child protection.

Foster carers are given the opportunity to gain NVQ Level 3 qualification. A training programme for 2003 – 2004 and the three-year proposed training programme was made available for inspection for instance, Preparation for Adult Life, Identity and Life Story Work, Managing Stress, Managing beginning Middle and Ending of Placement. The Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service has a good quality-training programme.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff is properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Staff interviewed informed the Inspector that they have all received clear written details of their duties and responsibilities at the time of taking up their posts and were provided with the policies and procedures of the organisation. From the discussions with the Team Manager, the Deputy Manager and staff they all confirmed that staff involved with foster carers and young people receive good support and supervision. All supervisions and appraisals are planned. From staff and foster carer's files inspected there was evidence that supervision takes place on a regular basis, together with an annual appraisal. Staff meetings are mandatory and held fortnightly.

In the pre-inspection questionnaire the Team Manager stated that a caseload weighting system is in place, which ensure good management oversight and regular staff supervision to ensure that tasks are prioritized and issues highlighted.

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**

The Team Manager informed the Inspector that there is a separate team solely responsible for supporting foster carers. From foster carers files inspected there was evidence that records of home visits, telephone calls and e-mails are recorded by the supervising social workers. There are regular support groups and coffee mornings offering mutual support and ongoing training for foster carers. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they find support groups and coffee mornings very helpful, especially the newly approved foster carers as they use the groups as a learning tools/exchanging ideas.

Foster carers visited informed the Inspector that they attend their local foster carer group. Foster carers are advised to become members of the National Foster Care Association, which the Borough is a member. Feedback from foster carers was generally positive but varied in terms of their personal experience of support. Many made very positive feedback about their supervising social workers but disappointing feedback for the children and young people's social workers. Children most often are not clear about the different roles of the respective social workers, as the children's/young people's social workers tend to change quite a lot. All foster carers are reviewed annually with reports being available to the fostering panel, the Inspector observed a recent fostering panel where annual reviews were held. The Inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting foster carers.

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**

Feedback from foster carers during home visits, coffee morning and foster carers questionnaires were very positive about the supervision, support and training provided. The Team Manager also confirmed that each foster carer is supervised by a named appropriately qualified social worker and all foster carers have access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care for a child/ren and young people placed in their care. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the Team manager states that the supervising social worker will visit foster carers four weekly, a recording form is completed and jointly signed, a copy given to the carer and one placed on the carers' file, outlining the issues and decisions of the visit, regular telephone contact/support is also provided. Where a supervising social worker is not available, the duty worker or Team Manager will assist and in longer periods of absences a named supervising social worker will be allocated. Foster carers also receive unannounced visits. A regularly quarterly newsletter is also distributed to foster carers and shared carers, coffee mornings, support groups and a number of forums for foster carers to meet as peers and with staff and managers are also organised. The Fostering Service has updated/developed a new Foster Care Agreement, which was made available for inspection. The Team Manager confirmed that foster carers are paid fortnightly, insurances are set up under the local authority indemnity insurance, automatic membership of Fostering Network and Havering Network Association and respite provided where appropriate.

The Inspector was provided with policies and procedures regarding allegation/complaints against foster carers and how they are dealt with. Foster carers are given support and advice by the supervising social workers, information about independent support, contacts for legal advice and the role of the local and National Foster Care Association. Where

allegations/complaints are made against foster carers, individual the Team Manager for quick follow up and decision-making keeps records.

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

It was evident from discussion with foster carers, newly approved foster carers, viewing some foster carers' Form F competency format assessments and attending fostering panel the Fostering Service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality of care. Existing foster carers participate preparation groups of prospective foster carers and training is within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Most training sessions are arranged at times convenient to foster carers, but the Team Manager pointed out that there is still room for improvement as some foster carers find it difficult to attend some training due to family and fostered children commitments. The training programme for 2003 – 2004 and the proposed training programme for the next three years were available for inspection. The Team Manager informed the Inspector that where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers both have to attending preparation groups. There was evidence that all foster carers have annual review and newly approved foster carers are presented to the fostering panel after 12 months. The Inspector was satisfied that this standard was met.

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
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Case records for looked after children are housed in a separated building where the children and young people are based. As part of the case tracking exercise the Inspector inspected the files. From viewing the children and young people's case files relevant information contained in the files inspected. There is a written policy on case recording, which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files. Recordings were kept up to date.

Foster carers interviewed knew why the child/ren or young people were placed in their care and understands the basis for the placement, intended duration, the purpose and details of the child/ren or young person's legal status. Some foster carers informed the Inspector that in some cases child/ren and young people placed stayed longer than the intended duration. From Children and young people's files inspected there was evidence in the placement agreement the purpose of the placement, details of the children or young person and their legal status. Foster carers' interviewed informed the Inspector that where they are given information about the child/ren or young person's history they reflect on the history according to the children/young person's age and ability. One foster carer informed the Inspector that she is involved in life story work with the child. The local authority has access to personal information policies and procedures, which are available for foster carers and young person.

Supervising social workers interviewed informed the Inspector that during preparation groups and during supervision foster carers are informed about the importance of keeping all information about children or young people in their care in a secure place. There was evidence during home visits at foster carers that all documentation about children or young people in their care are stored in a secure place.

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
<p>The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager states that each looked after child or young people own file is kept securely in the relevant childcare teams. That there is a written policy on case recording, retention and storage of files. There was evidence during the inspection that each foster carer has his/her own file, which kept secured within the Family Placement Service. Staff files are kept within the Personnel Section and separate staff supervision files are within the Family Placement Service. The agency staff file is also kept at the Family Placement. There was evidence during the inspection that all confidential records are stored securely at all times and the Inspector was provided with a clear policy on accessing personal files. The Inspector was provided with the written policy and procedural guidance for staff for keeping and retention of case files. In the files inspected all written entries were legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguishable between fact, opinion and third party information was clearly marked. The Fostering Service has policies and procedures for children, young people and foster carers for accessing personal records. These were available for inspection.</p> <p>The Fostering Service has a system in place for keeping and recording allegations, complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely. At the time of inspection there were three complaints/allegations being dealt with by the Team Manager. The Inspector was satisfied that they were being dealt with appropriately.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			0
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			0
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			0
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			0
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			0
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	000	Maximum £	000

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- **The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.**

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used by the Fostering Service is identifiable to staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours. From observing the building the Inspector was satisfied that the premises are appropriate for the purpose in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. The Fostering Service has efficient and robust administrative systems including IT, communication systems, facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable cabinets and area for support groups/coffee mornings. The Fostering Service does not have adequate facilities for training for both staff and foster carers at the premises; however, the Team Manager informed the Inspector that they have access at other local authority premises.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager states that the financial process and systems are robust and comply with the general financial management processes and are audited regularly. There is a system of monthly budget monitoring reports. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are paid on time and assistance given for all financial needs regarding safeguarding the welfare of children and young people in their care. The Inspector was satisfied that the standard was met.

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

From viewing appropriate records and discussions with the Team Manager, Group Services Manager, the Senior Officer from Commissioning Unit and foster carers the Inspector was satisfied that the financial processes/systems of the Fostering Service are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting practice.

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**

From discussions with foster carers and from viewing relevant documentation, the Inspector was satisfied that each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses covering the full cost of caring for each child/young person. Foster carers confirmed that payments are made promptly and at the agreed times. Fees have recently been reviewed and increased. The Team Manager confirmed that it is the responsibility of the management to ensure that allowances and fees are appropriate to the level of care being provided by foster carers to any particular child/young person. The Inspector was satisfied that this standard was currently met.

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 Inspector was provided with written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice about the functioning of fostering panel. The pre-inspection report provided by the Team Manager also stated that the Fostering Service has clear policy and procedures for the panel which cover panel business including the recommendations to the agency of approvals and review of foster carers, shared carers and kinship carers. As part of the inspection process the Inspector observed the fostering panel on 4th February 2004 and interviewed the Chair. The Fostering Panel was well formed in terms of its comprising both genders and a culturally diverse membership reflecting the community they serve. Besides the Team Manager and Group Services Manager the panel was largely independently represented by members from education, child protection, foster carer, one of the members has been in foster carer, and ex-councillor. The Inspector was provided with information about prospective foster carers and foster carers for 12 months review prior to the panel.

All panel members are CRB checked, trained and supported to fulfil their duties as panel members.

There was evidence that Chair was able to give clear instructions and managed the panel in a professional manner and dealt with all eventualities correctly. The panel members considered all relevant information and social workers were able to address issues raised by the panel members. There were written procedures regarding decision-making and these were provided to the inspector for inspection. The panel members were observed using a voting system and recommendations were made. The inspector was satisfied that the Fostering Panel is organised efficiently and effectively in compliance with Regulations 24, 25 and 26.

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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There are clear policies and procedures for the Home from Home scheme (shared care providing respite for families with children who have disabilities). The scheme actively promotes and recognises that parents remain the main carers responsible for the health and educational needs of their children. The service has proactive links with the Children with Disabilities Team and Occupation Therapy Service, and there are three supervising social workers with responsibility for the foster carers within this scheme. The pre-inspection questionnaire provided by the Team Manager states that recruitment; assessment, support, training and review of shared carers met the same standards as those of foster carers. The Team Manager pointed out that, the Fostering Service needs to expand to meet the recognised needs of children within the autistic spectrum. The inspector was informed that the Fostering Service is waiting for senior management agreement to re-launch the scheme under the new name of "Family Link".	
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Team Manager of the Fostering Service stated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that the local authority recognises the importance of Kinship Care (family and friends as carers) and has developed policy and procedures specifically around this area. The Inspector was provided with the policy and procedures of Kinship Care. A referral form to the Fostering Team has been developed and the Team Manager of the Family Placement Team has attended Child Care Team Meetings to explain Kinship Care and its importance of promoting this as a viable option. The Team Manager confirmed that the authority has still to put in place consistent assessment, support, training and review of Kinship Carers. It is recommended that the authority should put in place a consistent assessment, support, training and reviews of Kinship Carers. The Pre-inspection questionnaire the Team Manager stated that agreement has been given to recruit a social worker in the Family Placement Service to take responsibility for supporting and reviewing Kinship Carers. Kinship Care payment system is being reviewed.

The Inspector was satisfied that this standard was met.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 4th February & 23rd March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

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

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

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:

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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.