



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Southwark LA Fostering**

47b East Dulwich Road

London

SE22 9BZ

21st to 24th and 30th March 2005

## 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**

Southwark Social Services

**Address**

47b East Dulwich Road, London, SE22 9BZ

**Local Authority Manager**

Susan Sinclair

**Tel No:**

020 7525 4429

**Address**

47b East Dulwich Road, London, SE22 9BZ

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

08/03/04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		21st March 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Eileen Hourigan	077174
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Alison Pritchard	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		None	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		None	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Susan Sinclair – Service Manager	

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

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) 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 CSCI in respect of Southwark Social 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 CSCI 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.

This is a local authority fostering service covering an inner city area with high levels of deprivation and need and a high demand on placements. The team is part of the family placement service for the borough, which includes adoption, fostering and respite care services for children with disabilities.

The fostering team consists of a service manager, team manager, two practice managers, a senior practitioner for the Family Link service and 13 social workers. The team manager deputises for the service manager.

A brokerage team negotiates placements with Independent Fostering Agencies, when suitable fostering placements are not available from in house resources. As at the end of September 2004 there were 337 children and young people being looked after in 175 Southwark foster placements. Regular respite to children with disabilities was provided to 10 children on a regular basis. The total number of registered approved placements at that time was 184.

## 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 twelve months after the previous inspection and the inspectors were pleased to note that all but two of the requirements from the March 2004 inspection had been fully met. The two outstanding requirements were in the process of being met and the Service Manager confirmed that these would be met within the agreed revised timescales. Only two new requirements have been made as a result of this inspection.

During the course of this inspection the inspectors interviewed nine foster carers in their homes, met with a further twelve at a social gathering and received written feedback from seventeen foster carers. This included a range of foster carers in terms of how long they had been approved, ethnicity and the age range of children they care for. The inspectors also met with one foster carer who is part of the family link scheme.

The inspectors received extremely positive feedback from foster carers about the service. Foster carers commented particularly on the excellent support they feel they receive from link workers. They also expressed appreciation for the opportunities to meet other foster carers on a regular basis. The following comment is indicative of comments received from many carers.

*"We are very lucky to have a very supportive, proactive experienced link worker who always advocates whole heartedly on our behalf and the children in our care".*

In addition they identified some areas where they felt improvements could be made. They felt that more children's social workers are needed and they would like more feedback from social workers when children leave their care.

The inspectors met with five young people and received written feedback from a further sixteen. The young people said they were happy in their foster homes and one young person wrote that he felt that he was being *"looked after properly"*. This encapsulated the view of all the young people who responded.

Areas to be particularly commended are the caliber of staff and foster carers. Those whom the inspectors met were knowledgeable, articulate and committed. A recurrent theme from carers and staff was that they felt that they work as part of a team with a shared vision. Foster carers are very well supported with many formal and informal links. Examples of the informal links are social events to bring carers together. The inspectors attended one of these events and were impressed with the care taken by staff to make it a success – everything from the welcoming atmosphere to a great range of food to cater for all requirements. Attendance at this event was very good and many carers told the inspectors how valued they feel as a result.



The inspectors met with a range of staff both within the fostering service and from other departments in the council who have links with the fostering service. The overall view was that the service provided is of good quality and is effectively and efficiently managed. There was evidence that the links between senior managers in children looked after teams and fostering managers are well developed and there are various forums for them to share information.

The new children's guides are also to be commended. They are three guides each for different age groups They are clear and age appropriate. The guides are visually attractive and there are spaces for children and young people to draw and write their views and thoughts. They provide a wealth of information and are available in any language required.

Observation of a fostering panel was part of this inspection. This panel was well chaired and all panel members contributed to the discussions, which were child focused throughout. A young person who has been in foster care is part of the panel. She described the panel as warm, welcoming and respectful of each other's views. This is commended.

The final area to be commended is the short term break service. This scheme has doubled in size over the past year in response to need, There was evidence that it is a well run and managed service.

Overall the findings of the inspection, including direct feedback from carers, children and staff, indicated that there are areas of very good practice. Many people commented on the positive changes and improvements in the service over the past year or so.

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

This standard was met. The agency has a satisfactory Statement of Purpose. They provide children's guides for different age groups. These have been developed since the last inspection and are commended.

#### **Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)**

Both standards were met. The managers are appropriately qualified and have relevant professional childcare experience to manage the fostering service. They demonstrated the ability to provide good and supportive leadership and to respond to the challenges of their roles.

#### **Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)**

Both standards were met. The fostering service is managed effectively and there was evidence that they are delivering a good quality service.

#### **Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**

All of these standards were met. There was evidence that foster carers are appropriately assessed and provide safe, healthy and caring environments for the foster children and young people. The service puts emphasis on valuing diversity and maintaining contact for the children with birth families, as well as encouraging links with cultural, religious and community groups. Good efforts are made to listen to children and young people and enable them to have a say in the service provided. During the past year there has been a major consultative exercise with young people on their experiences of being looked after in Southwark. Staff demonstrated that they recognise the importance of the matching process for the foster child and carer.

A comprehensive training programme is available for foster carers and safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster carer. There was evidence that the promotion of children's health and educational achievement is given a high priority. ,

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**

**(Standards 15-23)** All of these standards were met with the exception of one. There are appropriate recruitment and selection procedures in place to ensure the employment of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The records kept of checks and references obtained on staff were satisfactory in most instances with the exception of the information retained on foster panel members and some staff files which did not contain all the required information. Panel member files must be up to date, and include CRB checks, references and personal profiles or CV's.

Staff were very positive about the support provided by managers. Support to carers is extremely good and training and support groups are very well established. This aspect of the service is commended.

Some comments were made that more administrative support would be beneficial to the service. Given this, the level of administrative support should be reviewed to assess whether it is sufficient to meet the needs of a growing fostering service.

### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

Two standards were assessed; one was met and the other partially met. Records were of a good standard and those seen contained the information required. A system of auditing files had not yet been fully implemented. Files were secured and stored appropriately.

### **Fitness of premises (Standard 26)**

This standard was met. The service is housed in a purpose built office block and is suitable for carrying out the work of the agency. Adequate space is available and there have been improvements to the building since the last inspection in terms of redecoration and the installation of skylights in the conference room to let in natural light. There is space available for training purposes. A satisfactory level of security is provided. The premises are fully insured. The service has satisfactory administrative and communication systems.

### **Financial requirements (Standard 27-29)**

All standards are met. There was evidence of clear financial systems for the control and supervision of the agency's financial affairs.

### **Fostering panel (Standard 30)**

This standard was partially met in that the fostering panel does not include one elected member of the local authority. This was being resolved at the time of this inspection. The panel has developed over the past year and there was evidence that panel members take great care in discussion and decision making. Roles and responsibilities of the managers in relation to panel are clear. The panel chair is suitably experienced and qualified. Meetings are held regularly and panel members receive papers sufficiently in advance. There is a range of expertise among the panel members. Prospective carers attended panel and this is managed appropriately.

### **Short-term breaks (Standard 31)**

This standard is met. The family link scheme provided short breaks for children aged 4 to 10 years with disabilities. There are satisfactory policies and procedures are in place for this scheme. The scheme aims to provide children with a maximum of 30 days /overnight stays per year. The scheme has expanded over the past year in response to demand. It is efficiently run and staff provide good support to carers and families.

**Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)**

This standard was met. There was evidence of an improved service being provided to carers, who were family and friends of the children placed. There are satisfactory policies and procedures for in place for kinship care arrangements. The policy sets out the Councils commitment to recognising the important contribution that friends and family can make in providing kinship care arrangements in the lives of children.

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

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	FSR2002 20	FS15	Panel member files must be up to date, and include CRB checks, references and personal profiles or CV's.  The previous timescale was 31/10/04.	July 30 <sup>th</sup> 2005
2	FSR2002 30	FS25	The provider must ensure that the system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, and timescales to remedy any failings, is implemented.  The previous timescale was 31/10/04.	July 30 <sup>th</sup> 2005

**Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection 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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

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

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

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements 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	FSR 2002 24 (3) (c)	FS30	The fostering panel must include one elected member of the local authority.	July 30 <sup>th</sup> 2005
2	FSR 2002 20 (3)	FS15	All staff files should be audited to ensure they contain all required information.	July 30 <sup>th</sup> 2005

### 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	FS19	The provider should consider enabling foster carers to access some training sessions near to their homes.
2		The provider should review the level of administrative support to assess whether it is sufficient.

\* 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
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• 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	YES
• 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	21/03/05
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40



The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI 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?**

4

A clear Statement of Purpose is available which outlines the aims and objectives of the service. It was last reviewed in February 2005 and contains all information required under the National Minimum Standards. Copies of the Statement of Purpose have been distributed to staff and carers. The children's guides have been developed since the last inspection. Three guides are now available for different age ranges of children. The guides are visually attractive and contain valuable information for children.

A video is still available for all newly accommodated children to watch with their foster carers. A life pack for children has been developed. The pack is issued in a canvas bag and is aimed at assisting foster carers to help children understand their past histories so that they can begin to move on and prepare then for the future. It will be with the child through childhood to adulthood. A comprehensive carers handbook is available for all foster carers.

## 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 current service manager has been in post for 18 months. She has a relevant social work and management qualification and has previously held a variety of social work and managerial positions in childcare services. The fostering team manager, is also appropriately qualified and experienced and deputises in the absence of the service manager. The competence of the management team was evidenced during interviews, discussions with staff and examination of personnel files, written systems and documentation. Individual and group discussion with staff indicated that they were very positive about the quality of the leadership and support received from the management team.

### 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

There was evidence from discussion with the service manager and file checks that the authority recruitment and selection procedures include the statutory checks to ensure suitability to work with children and relevant experience and qualifications. The CRB checks and references for these managers were examined at the previous inspection and this confirmed that they were suitable people to be involved in an agency concerned with safeguarding the welfare of children. The agency has appropriate recruitment and selection policies.

## 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

A range of procedures are in place to ensure a good quality service. These include regular supervision and annual appraisal for all staff. Financial monitoring and reviewing procedures are in place. The Service managers for fostering and Children Looked after meet regularly to discuss areas of difficulties and development. The fostering service informs carers, staff and managers of their responsibilities to declare any possible conflicts of interest.

**Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:**

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

X

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

X

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

All staff have job descriptions and lines of accountability are clearly defined in that the team manager would deputise for the service manager for short absences. All information gathered during this inspection indicates that the 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

The inspectors visited nine foster carers home and the accommodation seen during visits to carers was of a good standard. There was evidence from carers visited, questionnaires received, and examination of files that carers provided safe and nurturing placements for children and young people. Foster carers' preparation and training covers health and safety issues.

### 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 department has a same culture placement policy and there is an equal opportunities policy. This also reflects the children's division position that children's needs are best met in placements that reflect the culture and religion of the child. This service has a clear commitment to ensure that children are provided with a service that values diversity and issues of equality. Training is available to staff and foster carers on these issues. Specialist equipment is provided for children with disabilities, as is access to specialist resources appropriate to their needs.

The service manager reported that the fostering campaigns for new foster carers give an inclusive message to encourage applicants from different walks of life e.g. the gay and lesbian community, single people and single parents and people from black communities to come forward as prospective foster carers.

### 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

Placements are made with consideration of the child's needs, the foster carer's approval conditions and skills. The foster carers with whom this issue was discussed all felt that the placements made were appropriate for their circumstances. The service manager reported that where an accurate match is not always possible that they rely on the knowledge and experience of existing carers who do have some association with a particular country or ethnic group. The African carers group is well used in that respect.

**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

There are child protection policies in place and there was evidence that allegations had been referred appropriately for investigation. Complaints and allegation data are regularly collated. There is an ongoing programme of training provided to carers and this includes courses on the protection of children from abuse, safe caring and managing difficult behaviour. The department has a joint protocol with the police for children missing from care, and a policy for dealing with bullying. The fostering service has a clear policy that corporal punishment is unacceptable. These issues were discussed with some carers visited and they demonstrated understanding and knowledge.

**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

Contact arrangements are usually agreed at the time of the placement at the placement meeting and at subsequent Children Looked after reviews. The importance of contact and expectations of foster cares are set out in the foster cares handbook and is also stressed at pre approval training sessions.

**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

There was evidence that there are a variety of means through which children's opinions are sought, these include questionnaires, contact with social workers, events for children and attendance at review meetings. Young people interviewed and questionnaires confirmed that they feel that their opinions are sought regularly and listened to in relation to all aspects of their lives. Feedback from all young people was that they were aware of how to make a complaint if they wished to.

**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**

Children and young people looked after have increased health needs in comparison with young people from comparable socio economic backgrounds who are not looked after, As a result many children and young people who are looked after experience poor health, educational and social outcomes. Given this Southwark commissioned research with the aim of improving the health outcomes of Southwark's children looked after and to identify a service integration model to meet the needs of children looked after and their carers. The report on the integration project was published in September 2004 with a number of recommendations, all of which are currently under discussion.

There was evidence from files seen and from other information provided by managers that the service is supporting carers in promoting children's development and health. Carers are offered basic health care courses, as well as more specialist topics such as adolescent mental health and emergency life support. Specific training around disability issues is available for respite carers. The Carelink service has been in operation for 2 years offering psychotherapy, art therapy and psychology services and is a valued resource. It is a multi disciplinary team of mental health workers who offer treatment and assessment of Looked after Children up to 16 years old.

Health issues are regularly monitored through the review process. Carers' agreements reflect expectations of carers to meet placement health needs. Carers are expected to make sure that the child or young person has regular dental and optician check ups, access to a balanced diet and opportunities for leisure activities. Foster carers are expected to attend the child or young person's LAC review to provide information regarding the child or young person's health needs and to contribute to the planning and reviewing process.

Foster carers are provided with appropriate information about children's health care needs. e.g. One foster carer described the range of health care needs a child placed has and that action taken to ensure that they are addressed. A specialist nurse is a member of the fostering panel and can advise on children's medical issues as required.

**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 fostering service has access to education specialists who are located in the social work district offices. They provide the service with specialist advice and assistance, particularly around issues to do with statements of special educational needs and exclusion. All looked after children taking GCSE's were provided with tutors and computers were provided for all children of school age, as well as connection to the internet. Supervising social workers encourage carers to help the children with their homework, attend parents' evenings and provide an appropriate environment for study. Educational attainment records were kept on SATs and GCSE results for children in placements.

The service manager reported that response to the educational needs of Children looked after has been greatly assisted by the expansion of the jointly funded Education Team. It is headed by an educational psychologist and jointly managed by the fostering service

manager and children looked after manager. There are plans for one of the education workers to work directly with a group of foster carers around increasing literacy and numeracy through play. There are also plans to further develop the Care Zone scheme, an electronic learning programme and to link up schools with the London Grid for learning. The inspectors were told that the poetry Right to Read course held last summer was particularly memorable for the children taking part. There was evidence that meeting the educational needs of children is given a high priority.

**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

Foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person preparing to move in to independent or semi independent living. Guidelines state that every 16 year old is allocated a social worker from the 16 plus team and a needs assessment completed with the young person and carer within three months of commencing the service. A pathway plan would then be drawn up, identifying what needed to be done to enable the young person to live independently by the time they reach 18 years old. The 16 plus team has been established for 2 years and is managed separately from the fostering service. The carer's annual review looks at preparation for independence as part of the competencies of caring. The inspectors met some foster carers who are caring for teenagers they demonstrated understanding of the need to provide the young people with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills. Foster carers are given programmes to help them work with the young person on the practical skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking meals.



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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are clear written procedures for recruitment and selection and staff involved in recruitment have received training in their operation. Interviews of potential staff are conducted and interview notes are retained on file.

The recruitment process ensures that the staff have appropriate experience, knowledge and skills for their role. Social work staff hold a social work qualification or arrangements are being made for them to obtain one, or their work is closely supervised by a qualified manager.

Four staff files were examined with the assistance of the staffing officer. There were some gaps in the required information as follows:

- Two files did not include proof of identity including a recent photograph.
- One file did not include evidence of a CRB check.
- One file did not include the reason why a member of staff left her previous post.

There was evidence that written references are followed up by telephone enquiries.

Arrangements have been made to ensure that police checks are renewed every three years.

Records are kept of the checks and references and their outcome. All staff files should be audited to ensure they contain all required information.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

18

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

X

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability. Supervision is carried out regularly. All of the supervisory staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. A manager acknowledged that some staff have a caseload that is higher than is ideal but anticipates this being resolved when the size of the social work team increases. There was no evidence that this has had a negative impact on the support available to foster carers or on the assessment processes.

There are systems in place to ensure that reviews are carried out at appropriate intervals. Assessments were carried out within an appropriate time scale.

There is administrative back up provided, one of the posts is filled on a temporary basis and this was raised as a concern by staff. There are currently eleven social work staff employed

who work on both the recruitment and support of foster carers. There are currently two vacancies at social work level. There are two staff who work solely on the Family Link service, providing short term respite placements for disabled children and young people. There are plans to expand the social work and management teams. All of the staff have a supervisor to whom they are accountable and who provides management support and supervision.

**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**

The service manager reported that recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff has continued to be difficult but a recruitment drive is planned. The current team operates well and works cooperatively. The service has recruited a practice manager with considerable experience recently.

The service manager also reported that the team continues to prioritise assessing foster carers who will best meet the needs of Southwark's looked after population.

There is a clear assessment process that defines the fostering task and the skills and competencies required from prospective applicants. The stages, content and timescales of the selection process are made clear and the carers interviewed indicated that they had understood what was entailed in the selection process.

**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**

Discussion with staff, carers and examination of files showed that Southwark social services have sound employment practices for staff and offer good support to staff.

There were job descriptions for all staff in post and appropriate employment policies, which were clear and informative. Equal opportunities employment practices in relation to the agency's recruitment and interview process were evident. Much effort, thought and work is also put into supporting carers with their placements. There is an out of hours service provided to carers via the emergency duty team and the fostering team's own support service. There were appropriate insurance arrangements in place. The department has a clear Whistle Blowing policy

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There is a clear appraisal system for staff and there is access to suitable training. The training needs of staff are identified through supervision and training plans developed. There is an induction programme for new staff which is aimed to be completed within 10 weeks. An appropriate training programme for carers is in place and this includes joint training for staff and carers within this programme.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There was evidence that staff are well supported and they are clear about their duties and responsibilities. All staff have job descriptions setting out their areas of duty together with a staff handbook. Managers confirmed that staff supervision takes place regularly as does an annual appraisal. Staff confirmed that they met together as a group on a regular basis.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>Discussion with management, inspection of documents and carers comments confirmed that there is a clear strategy for the support, training and development of carers, along with a full annual training programme. This had been carefully planned and carers were positive about it. Carers reported that they received good support and supervision and were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. Carers have access to a 24-hour telephone support service. Unannounced visits are undertaken. All carers have an allocated worker and there are support groups for carers. Weekend and holiday respite is provided to carers where appropriate. Carers receive regular telephone contact and visits from their supervising social worker. Carers spoke of the support they receive from staff as a great strength of this agency.</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?**

4

A major strength of the service continues to be the support and supervision it provided to carers and there is good access to therapeutic, educational, health and respite services. Feedback from visits to carers, carer questionnaires and the foster carers coffee morning attended was very positive about the service received. As well as access to the emergency duty team, there is a rota of supervising social workers to provide out of hours support to carers. All carers receive a Fostering Handbook, which contained useful information. The complaints procedure is a borough wide one. The agency provides information regarding the complaints' procedure to carers and all carers whom the inspectors asked about this procedure knew how to make a complaint. The agency maintains records of all complaints together with details of action taken and outcomes. There was evidence from an examination of the child protection policy and procedures and interviews with staff and carers, that all involved were aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to allegations of abuse.

**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?**

4

A range of core training courses for new carers continues to be provided with twelve core topics. These are anti discriminatory practice, understanding the role of the social worker, the law, planning for children, safe caring, child protection, contact and partnership child development, education, health hygiene and HIV, managing challenging behaviour. The foster carer training brochure covering January to March 2005 also provides details of other training courses which carers can access including first aid and computer training. Carers can also access training offered by a neighbouring borough. The inspectors met with one male carer who had attended training here on Men in foster care for male carers only and he described how beneficial it was to him. The pre-approval course for applicants involves existing carers, enabling new carers to benefit from their experience and knowledge. A programme of NVQ training is in operation. The service manager reported that over 100 foster carers accessed the managing behaviour course and the uptake of the NVQ's continues. The programme of training and the development of future training is evaluated and reviewed annually. All training takes place within an anti discriminatory framework and is organised to encourage and facilitate attendance. There continues to be a support group for African carers and the inspectors met several carers who are part of this group. They spoke positively of how important it is to them share experiences together and learn from one another.

## 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 department has a written policy on case recording. The inspectors examined the files for seven foster carers and ten children. The files contained satisfactory information. The issues regarding systems for auditing files remain. The provider must ensure that the system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, and timescales to remedy any failings, is implemented. The service manager intends to ensure that this happens over the next few months. The service assists foster carers to encourage children to reflect on and understand their past and plan for their future. To ensure that all children have a life history book, a Life Pack has been developed. This is to help children understand their past histories so that they can begin to move on and prepare then for the future. It also ensures that they have a record of their lives which assists their emotional well being.

### 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

Confidential records were securely stored and an appropriate written policy and operating system for administrative record keeping was in place. The Human Resources section, located in the same building as the fostering service, holds staff records. Central records are kept of complaints and allegations. Southwark has an "Access to Records" Policy, which provides guidance to staff and carers. Service users are able to see their records in compliance with legal safeguards. The administrative records inspected provided a satisfactory record of information required to run the service. The computerised system had appropriate back up and security safeguards. Southwark uses the Care First IT system. A procedure for auditing files had been developed but not fully implemented as yet. The service manager indicated that this would be done over the coming months.

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

## 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 service is located in a purpose built office block, which has an appropriate security system. Social workers were located in an open plan office with manager's rooms on the same floor. The office itself is of a satisfactory standard, with adequate lighting and sufficient office equipment. The agency had satisfactory administrative systems, IT and communication systems. Safeguards are in place in relation to the security of these systems. The computerised system in use is called Care First. All staff have access to a computer. The premises have a lockable filing system for secure confidential record keeping. The reception staff are welcoming and are known to foster carers. A conference room is available which has recently been redecorated and is available for panel meetings and social events.

## 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 service had appropriate systems for ensuring its financial viability. There was evidence of continuing improvements and developments in the services provided.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has clear financial procedures and appropriate accounting standards and practices. The inspector was told that the authority's financial department regularly monitors the financial processes. The director and the council receive ongoing reports on the financial state of the service. Managers are accountable for their individual budgets.

### 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 inspector met with the Senior finance officer who described the system for payment of carers as operating efficiently and effectively. Carers have access to the finance team to assist with any problems with payments. An issue identified at the last inspection was that, payments of birthday and holiday allowances were often late. Since then fostering staff, rather than field social workers now carries out the triggering of these allowances. This change has improved the efficiency of the system.



## 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?	2
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There are satisfactory policies and procedures for the panel covering the function and constitution of the panel and decision-making. These include the process to be followed when all members of the panel are not in agreement. The current chair of the panel has been in this role for a year. She is suitably experienced and qualified. The panel have access to legal and medical advice, and the advisers are available for consultation. The service manager is the decision maker for recommendations concerning carers made by the panel.

The inspector observed one panel meeting. The panel, which was observed, was well chaired. All panel members contributed to the discussions, which were child focused throughout. A young person who has been in foster care is part of the panel. She described the panel as warm, welcoming and respectful of each other's views. Panel members have a range of expertise including direct experience of being a foster carer. There are satisfactory quality assurance measures in place to monitor the assessment process. Fostering service managers meet regularly with the chair and vice chair of the panel.

Carers are invited to attend panel, when their case is under consideration. The inspector observed one carer at panel and the process of seeking information from the carer was well managed.

The two areas where the panel does not meet standards are in relation panel member files, which must be updated to include CRB checks, references and personal profiles or CV's. and for the fostering panel membership to include one elected member of the local authority.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The family link scheme provided breaks for children aged 4-10 years who have severe and profound disabilities and who are on the disability register. There was evidence from examination of documentation, staff interviews, carer questionnaires and files and interview with one carer who is part of this scheme that the needs of children receiving short-term breaks were met. The support received from workers was seen as particularly important and also being kept informed of training opportunities on a regular basis. The service aims to provide children with a maximum of 30 days/overnight stays a year.

There are two members of staff, one of whom is part time, who work solely on the Family Link service. Safe practices are followed in relation to the recruitment and approval of carers. Carers receive two days of preparation training as well as child protection and first aid training. There is a range of appropriate systems in place to ensure that placements are supported and remain suitable to meet the child's needs.

The scheme has expanded over the past year in response to demand. It is efficiently run and staff provide good support to carers and families.

## 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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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This standard was met. There was evidence of an improved service being provided to carers, who were family and friends of the children placed. There are satisfactory policies and procedures for in place for kinship care arrangements. The policy sets out the Councils commitment to recognising the important contribution that friends and family can make in providing kinship care arrangements in the lives of children.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Action taken by the CSCI 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 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 CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI 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.

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