



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Richmond Fostering Services

London Borough of Richmond

42 York Street

Twickenham

Middlesex

TW1 3BW

28th February – 4th 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

Richmond Fostering Services

Address

Richmond Fostering Services, London Borough of
Richmond, 42 York Street, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1
3BW

Local Authority Manager

Paul Adams

Tel No:

020 8891 7754

Address

Richmond Fostering Services, London Borough of
Richmond, 42 York Street, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1
3BW

Fax No:

020 8891 7682

Email Address

p.adams@richmond.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

01/09/03

Date of Inspection Visit		28th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sandy Patrick	074562
Name of Inspector	2	Gunga Chumun	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) 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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Paul Walsh – Principal Manager Nick Smith – Temporary Fostering Manager	

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
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- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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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 Richmond Fostering Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.

The London Borough of Richmond Fostering Service is a local authority service that provides temporary and permanent foster carers for children and young people.

The service is based in Twickenham, close to other local authority services.

A Locum Fostering Manager has been in post since January 2004 and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the service. The types of service offered are: (a) Short Term Foster Care, (b) Permanent Foster Care, (c) Short Break Scheme and (d) Kinship Care.

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.)

The inspection took place over five days, starting on 28th February 2005. The Inspection Team consisted of two Regulation Inspectors. The Inspection included a pre inspection meeting with the Locum Fostering Manager, Principal Manager for Children Looked After and Leaving Care and the temporary Fostering Manager. During the week of the Inspection the Inspection Team met with senior managers, the temporary Fostering Manager, Fostering Service staff, foster carers, looked after young people and other professionals. The Inspection Team held a meeting for foster carers. Eight carers attended. The Lead Inspector arranged to meet four foster carers and the children they looked after in their own homes. Unfortunately, two foster carers cancelled their meetings. The Lead Inspector conducted a telephone interview with one foster carer. The Lead Inspector attended a meeting of the Fostering Service staff team. The Fostering Panel, which the Lead Inspector had arranged to attend, was cancelled. The Inspection Team was therefore unable to observe Panel discussions. However, Panel papers for 2004 and January 2005 were examined and the Lead Inspector conducted a telephone interview with the Chair of the Panel.

Throughout the inspection process the Inspection Team were made welcome by Managers, staff, carers and the young people who they met with. The information provided by the Locum Fostering Manager prior to the inspection was comprehensive and well laid out and undoubtedly assisted in the inspection process.

Over the course of the inspection, Inspectors were given information from a wide range of parties. Information within this report is not specific to individuals. Where individuals raised concerns about the service, and gave permission for this to be discussed, the Lead Inspector discussed these with the temporary Fostering Manager or Principle Manager. These Managers agreed to investigate specific concerns. In general feedback from foster carers, children and staff indicated that the service was supportive and valued consultation with stakeholders. However, some individual service users spoke about specific incidents where they had felt unsupported or undervalued. With their permission, these issues were discussed with Managers. The Lead Inspector and temporary Fostering Manager discussed ways in which these people could be better supported and the best ways for the service to show how they valued these individuals. The Inspection Team recognises the considerable work to involve a group of foster carers in the developmental work. The service should ensure that other carers are supported and encouraged to contribute to this process.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection routinely sends written questionnaires to foster carers, looked after children and young people and fieldwork social workers as part of the inspection process. On this occasion fifty-one questionnaires were returned. Eight of these

were from foster carers, eight were from looked after children and young people and thirty-five were from fieldwork social workers who place and support looked after children and young people.

The children and young people who completed questionnaires ranged from seven to seventeen years. All eight children reported that they were happy in their foster the home. They reported that carers offered them support, advice, encouragement and asked their opinions about everyday things and about house rules. All the questionnaires indicated that they knew who to speak with if they had a problem. They were asked what the best thing about the fostering service was. Answers included 'the support given to become independent', 'the care we get', 'good care' and 'I am very happy at my foster home'. They were also asked what the worst thing about the service is. The majority of children did not complete this section, although some wrote that they were sad not to be living with their own family. Other comments that children and young people made included that there was a lack of communication from social workers, one person wrote that there was too much interference from social workers. One young person commented that they did not like social workers to visit them at school as this identified them as different from other children.

The questionnaires from foster carers were largely mixed. The majority reported that they were well supported and were appropriately consulted and offered training. However some questionnaires indicated that there was a lack of support and that changes in social workers (particularly children's social workers) had caused problems. One foster carer felt that the service lacked understanding of the type of care that they offered. One questionnaire highlighted that the Fostering Service management was accessible and supportive.

Questionnaires from placing officers and children's social workers were positive about the work that they undertook with the fostering team. Social workers reported that foster carers were supportive of children, involving them in the community and understanding their needs, particularly those who cared for teenagers. They wrote that there were stable, well-founded relationships and that there was a consistent approach to care with clear boundaries and structure. Questionnaires identified that a more diverse range of carers is needed to support young people with their cultural heritage.

The findings of questionnaires were discussed with the Managers during the inspection. Anonymity was respected at all times.

The Locum Fostering Manager was employed in January 2004 on a one year fixed term contract. This was extended for a further six months. A permanent Fostering Manager needs to be employed. Although the Locum Fostering Manager was on leave at the time of the inspection, the Inspection Team were able to meet with him at the pre inspection meeting. A senior Manager and the Principal Manager were overseeing the management of the service in his absence. Both Managers were knowledgeable about the service and were able to answer queries raised by the Inspection Team.

The service has undergone significant development in the past year. There have been changes to practices and procedures, improvements to training and consultation with foster carers and the development of written guidance for looked after children and young people and carers. Foster carers, staff, Managers and other professionals all reported improvements and many attributed much of the success of implementing these changes directly to the Locum Fostering Manager. Staff reported that they were well supported and that his management approach was open, positive and inclusive. Foster carers reported that they valued the work that he had undertaken, in particular his approach to consultation and

inclusion. In general, foster carers who met with the Inspection Team reported that they felt listened to and were treated as professionals, by the Locum Fostering Manager.

The Inspection Team saw evidence of the way in which changes had improved the quality of service delivery both directly and indirectly. The Carer's Handbook and Children's Guide which have been developed are of a high standard and provide in depth information for users of the service. Training opportunities for foster carers have improved and foster carers reported that, in general, the quality of training had improved. A multidisciplinary team of health care and education professionals offers a support intrinsic to the delivery of a quality service and meeting the needs of looked after children and young people.

Throughout the inspection, the Inspection Team felt that Managers, staff and carers shared the objective of continuous improvements to the quality of service delivery. Senior Managers clearly felt that planned development was paramount and that reactive solutions to problem solving would not be beneficial. The Fostering Service staff team were well organised, aware of their roles and responsibilities and demonstrated a commitment to the service.

One issue that was raised by and discussed with almost every party was the problems with recruitment and retention of staff within the Looked After Children teams. Young people and foster carers raised concerns that frequent changes of field social workers caused problems with communication, accessing services and had a detrimental effect for the children and young people. Foster carers spoke about instances where young people had lost trust in the service, when social workers who they were building a relationship left. The Fostering Team staff, Chair of the Fostering Panel and Educational Facilitator also raised concerns about the frequent changes of looked after children and young people's social workers, highlighting problems with communication and knowledge of individual and service needs. The Commission for Social Care Inspection recognises that the Local Authority has taken steps to promote improved recruitment and retention of staff. However, the high volume of discussion generated regarding the problems in this area indicates that this is now a serious concern. The Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure that the needs of looked after children and young people are met. Stakeholders who contacted the Commission for Social Care Inspection almost unanimously identified the recruitment and retention of staff as a serious problem, and in many cases the cause of a deficit in service delivery.

The Locum Fostering Manager and senior Managers were open and discussed the service needs, which they had identified. The Inspectors were given evidence to indicate that work had commenced or was planned to address these needs. One area of need identified is the recruitment of a more diverse range of foster carers who will be able to offer placements to children from different ethnic backgrounds, teenagers, children with disabilities and those whose needs challenge the service. The work being undertaken in this area was discussed and the Lead Inspector observed in depth discussions between staff and the temporary Manager. The March Fostering Service newsletter highlights the importance of involving existing foster carers in the recruitment of new carers.

The overall impression from the inspection was that significant development has taken place and continues. The involvement of foster carers, young people and children in this has been paramount and must continue. Consideration should be given to how best to extend the range of carers involved in developmental work. Despite a small staff infrastructure, staff shortages and periods of sickness in the Fostering Team and the problems caused by staffing in other teams, the team has managed their caseloads well and, in general, foster carers reported that they felt supported and valued.

Two Statutory Requirements and three Good Practice Recommendations were made at the last inspection visit. There was evidence that all of these had been met by this inspection.

Two Statutory Requirements were made at this inspection visit.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The standard was met

The Fostering Service has produced a comprehensive Handbook for foster carers and Children's Guide. These documents incorporate the Statement of Purpose. Information is clear and accessible and the documents are well designed. Foster carers and staff have been involved in the development and review of these documents.

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

2 standards were met

A Locum Fostering Manager is in post. They are appropriately qualified and experienced. Their contract was due to end shortly after the inspection. A permanent Fostering Manager must be recruited. From the feedback, observation and information received the Inspectors concluded that the operation of the service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers best possible child care. Staff files contained the required information.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

2 standards were met

The Locum Fostering Manager and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

9 of the 9 standards were met

Appropriate systems for assessment, checks and training of potential foster carers are in place. There is an appropriate system for matching children with foster carers. Procedures for valuing diversity and promoting equality are in place. Children and young people are consulted and their views are sought during reviews. There have been developments to the service to offer improved support with educational needs. Health care, cultural and educational needs are assessed and met through the service. There are appropriate procedures to support contact with birth families and to support young people who are leaving care.

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

8 of the 9 standards were met

1 standard was partly met

There are systems in place to ensure that checks, including criminal record checks and references, are made on all staff, foster carers and Panel members. Regular training, meetings and individual supervision are offered to all staff and foster carers. Foster carers and staff reported that they felt supported. There have been difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff to the social work teams for children and young people and this has had a negative impact on the delivery of the service to some children, young people and their carers.

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 of the 2 standards were met

Records on Foster Carers, looked after children and young people and staff are appropriately maintained. Information is clearly presented and stored securely. There are appropriate procedures covering confidentiality, data protection and access to records.

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

The standard was met

The service is located in suitable offices, which are appropriately equipped.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 of the 3 standards were met

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

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

The standard was met

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

Short-term Breaks (Standard 31)

The standard was met

Policies and procedures are in place regarding short-term care. There is an allocated team of staff supporting carers, children and parents.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

The standard was met

The Fostering Service has a number of family and friends approved as carers. Appropriate procedures are in place and support is given to these foster carers.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

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?

YES

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	

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.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector **Sandy Patrick** **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager **Gunga Chumun** **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 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	19	FS17	The Registered Person must ensure that suitably qualified and experienced staff are appointed to the fostering teams supporting looked after children and young people.	31/07/05

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	FS2 FS5	Given the fact that the Locum Fostering Manager was due to leave their post shortly after the inspection, the Registered Person must appoint a suitably qualified and experienced individual to manage the Fostering Service.
2	FS17	The Registered Person should ensure that the Local Authority works towards the best means of retaining staff within the Fostering Service.

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

Number of Inspector days spent	5
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	NO
• 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	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	50

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 comprehensive Statement of Purpose has been produced for the service. This is subject to regular review and was last reviewed in January 2005. All staff and foster carers have been issued with copies of this document. Children's social workers are given copies of the Statement of Purpose to distribute to children, young people and parents using the service. Staff and the foster carer group were consulted regarding the review of the document.

The Statement of Purpose clearly lays out the aims and objectives of the service and includes information on services provided, principles and standards of care, management and staffing structure and the arrangements for recruitment, support and supervision of foster carers.

The Fostering Service, in consultation with foster carers, has produced a detailed handbook for foster carers. This incorporates the Statement of Purpose and includes comprehensive information on the processes for support and supervision of foster carers, practicalities, complaints, whistle blowing and child protection procedures. The handbook is a well-designed document. Foster carers who spoke with the Inspection Team indicated that they found the handbook useful, accessible and informative. The Manager reported that all foster carers have received a copy of the handbook.

A separate Children's Guide to the Fostering Service has been developed. This includes information on making complaints and leaving care services. The Manager reported that all children and young people using the service had received a copy of the Children's Guide.

The Manager reported that the Children's Guide was due to be incorporated into the local authority's website in April 2005.

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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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A Locum Fostering Manager has been in post since January 2004. He was initially employed on a fixed term contract for one year. This was extended for a further six months. At the time of the inspection he was away on leave and a temporary Manager was working alongside the Principal Manager for Children Looked After and Leaving Care to oversee the management of the service. In pre inspection meetings with the Locum Fostering Manager and meetings with the Managers overseeing the service they demonstrated good leadership of staff and an in depth knowledge of the service.

The Locum Fostering Manager has an appropriate professional qualification.

Throughout the inspection, the Inspection Team saw evidence and was told by staff, foster carers, other professionals and managers that the Locum Fostering Manager has extensively developed the service and introduced new and efficient procedures and practices. He has worked alongside staff and foster carers, ensuring regular consultation and their involvement in the improvement of the service.

The Local Authority must recruit to the post of permanent Fostering Manager. It is essential that the new Manager continue with this developmental work, with the involvement of staff and carers.

Over recent months changes in the Fostering staff team and staff vacancies have caused difficulties and an increase in work. The temporary Manager stated that he felt the team had managed this well and had worked together to ensure that a quality service was delivered. Staff vacancies have now been recruited to and it is hoped that the pressures of higher workloads will be reduced.

This is the subject of Good Practice Recommendation 1.

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 Inspection Team examined three permanent and one temporary staff files. Files contained evidence of pre employment checks, including two written references, criminal record checks and certificates of qualifications. Files also contained original job application forms, full employment histories, photographs of staff and copies of job descriptions and terms and conditions of employment. A confidentiality statement signed by staff was seen to be in place.

Evidence of appropriate checks on Panel members was seen.

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

Managers and staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff reported that they are able to access support through well-established lines of communication, regular group meetings and individual supervision.

There is an established foster carer group, who meet quarterly, offering support to foster carers. Individual supervision meetings between foster carers and Supervising Social Workers are held at agreed intervals. During the period of staff shortages in the Fostering Team, some carers reported that individual meetings had not continued at the same frequency.

An out of hours emergency team are available for support at weekends and during the evenings.

Each of the persons involved in the fostering service has a duty to declare any possible conflicts of interest to the organisation. This is a Local Authority run service and the Audit Section monitors the finances. The Fostering Manager holds a small budget and this is reviewed regularly to ensure that the budget remains within the allocated resources.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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**

There are clearly defined job descriptions in place for the Fostering Manager and staff. These detail duties, responsibilities and lines of accountability.

The Fostering Manager has been employed on a temporary contract and this was due to cease during 2005. Staff, foster carers, the Chair of the Panel and other Managers within the service reported that the Fostering Manager ran the service efficiently and had initiated and led the development of the service over the past year.

The Principle Manager for Children Looked After and Leaving Care stated that it was important to recruit a permanent Manager who would be able to continue with the quality development of the service, working alongside staff, foster carers, children and young people. The recruitment process for the Fostering Manager was due to start shortly after the inspection. This position must be recruited to.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Manager was away on leave. The service was appropriately managed. The Inspection Team met and liaised with senior Managers who were overseeing the service during this period. Both Managers were knowledgeable about the service. The Fostering staff reported that they were appropriately supported in the absence of the Manager.

Refer to Good Practice Recommendation 1.

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?
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Standard met?

3

The Inspection Team visited two foster carers and interviewed them as part of the inspection process. The assessment process, regular supervision meetings and annual review include checks on the environment to ensure that it is safe and furniture and fittings meet with the London Borough of Richmond requirements.

Prior to approval references are taken on prospective carers and a series of checks, including criminal record checks, are made. Evidence of these checks was seen on file. Evidence of regular meetings and reviews was seen. Foster carers confirmed that checks took place and they were aware of the reasons for this. Information on the assessment process is detailed within the Carer's Handbook.

Foster confirmed that they participated in relevant training, inductions and met with staff and other foster carers prior to being approved.

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?
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Standard met?

3

The Inspection Team observed that fostering service addresses the issues of diversity and promoting equality by organising group discussions, training and in supervision. This is also promoted through the Foster Carer Handbook. Foster children are encouraged to maintain their cultural beliefs and attend functions as necessary. Training on disabilities, diversity and equality, caring for black children and unaccompanied asylum seekers is available within the training programme.

The Fostering Service is actively recruiting carers from ethnic minorities and those who will take children with disabilities. Work is taken place to promote the service and recruit a wider range and variety of 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
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Procedures are in place to match children and young people to carers who are capable of meeting their assessed needs. There is a need to recruit further foster carers to ensure that children with specialist needs, teenagers and those whose behaviour challenges the service can be placed appropriately. One foster carer reported that some young people and children, who did not fall within their approved terms, had been placed with them. These exemptions had been agreed by the Fostering Panel, and the carer reported that the placements worked well. However, this is an indication that a more diverse range of foster carers needs to be recruited in order to offer the most appropriate care to meet individual needs.

Allocations were discussed as part of the team meeting. The Inspector observed that careful consideration was given to the matching process.

Managers reported that improvements in procedures and positive work of the Early Intervention Teams had resulted in a greatly reduced number of emergency placements.

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
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Local Authority Child Protection Procedures are in place. The Fostering service provides guidance which sets out to protect children from abuse and what to do in the event of suspected abuse. This information is included within the Carer's Handbook. Training in child protection is mandatory for all staff and foster carers.

Children are encouraged to attend annual reviews and provide a written contribution. All children and young people should have an allocated social worker who they can discuss any concerns that they have with. Staffing shortages have meant that children have not always had an allocated social worker and frequent changes of social workers mean that trust needs to be rebuilt. This issue is discussed further with Standard 17 of this report.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Depending on the circumstances of each child or young person, contacts are maintained with their birth parents and supervised visits are arranged. Foster carers reported that the procedures for this were suitable and that they were offered appropriate support from the Fostering Service regarding contact with birth parents. Contact is recorded and evidence of this was seen within the files examined. The Carer's Handbook contains information for carers on contact, including the responsibilities of each party and the importance of maintaining this contact where appropriate.

One young person gave an example of how contact had been poorly supported. This issue was discussed, with their permission, with the temporary Fostering Manager, who agreed to investigate the concerns raised.

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

Children who completed written questionnaires indicated that their opinions were listened to and that they were involved in decision-making. Care records seen by the Inspectors evidenced consultation with children and young people. Those completing questionnaires and young people who spoke with the Inspector knew who to speak to if they were unhappy about any aspect of their care. Information on making complaints, services for looked after children, mentoring, reviews and advocacy are included within the Children's Guide.

Young people who spoke with the Inspectors indicated that they had felt unsupported at times, partly due to the changes in the Children's Team social workers. The problem of staff retention within these teams is discussed in more depth under Standard 17 of this report. Where young people raised concerns about specific issues, and gave their consent, these were discussed with the temporary Manager.

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

Foster carers who met with the Inspectors reported that they were given appropriate information on the health needs, including specialist health needs, of the children and young people who they care for. Annual medical checks are in place for children and young people using the Fostering Service.

Information on health care needs is appropriately recorded and evidenced within files.

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

Over the past year the service coordinating and overseeing the education of looked after young people and children has been developed. The Lead Inspector met with the service's Education Facilitator, who described some of the work that has been undertaken. A dedicated multidisciplinary team, including education and health care professionals has been established to work with children, young people, carers, social workers and other professionals. The team liaises with the education services within the borough of Richmond and surrounding boroughs where looked after children are educated. There is a regular clinic for social workers, foster carers and educators to discuss issues relating to looked after children. The team employs a teacher who offers support to children who do not attend full time education. Work has been undertaken with children and young people to promote self esteem, improve educational standards and offer support and access to related services. A regular newsletter is provided for children, young people and their carers offering information and celebrating individual achievements. Special events to promote skills and education for young people have been organised. The service has a number of resources, which can be accessed by staff, carers, children and young people.

Managers and staff within the team spoke positively about the developments in supporting looked after children and young people to meet their educational needs. Foster carers and young people who spoke with the Inspection Team reported that the teacher employed to give additional support was very good.

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

There are systems in place to support young people leaving care. Information regarding leaving the service and Pathway Plans is available within the Children's Guide and the Carer's Handbook.

The systems ensure that young people are consulted about their future and are encouraged to be actively involved in decision making processes and the implementation of the Pathway Plan. Foster carers are expected to provide support and guidance to young people in preparing to move.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear strategy for the recruitment of foster carers. The assessment process includes interviews with prospective foster carers, a series of checks designed to assess suitability and references are taken up. Records of assessments, interviews, checks and referenced were seen within case records examined. Foster carers are encouraged to work towards NVQ Level 3. All Social Work staff are appropriately qualified. Evidence of qualification was seen on files examined.

Foster carers, staff and Panel members are referred for criminal record checks. Adult members within the foster carer's household are also referred for these checks. Evidence of checks was seen to be in place.

There are systems for regular training, supervision and meetings for staff and carers.

Total number of staff of the agency:

12

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

6

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This is a Local Authority run service with a management structure, which has lines of accountability. Social Workers have allocated caseloads and are supervised by their line Manager on a four weekly basis. There are two allocated Administrative staff who support the team. One of these posts was vacant at the time of the inspection, although it had been recruited to and the member of staff was due to start work shortly after the inspection. There is a duty system in operation during office hours to answer any queries. The staff shortages within the children's teams have led to problems with support of children and young people and communication. The temporary Fostering Manager reported that the teams liaised and worked closely together. Quarterly meetings with the different teams were held.

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?**

2

The Fostering Team has experienced staff shortages over recent months and two of the longer serving employees have left. The team is small and staff shortages have an impact on the work of each individual. The temporary Manager reported that staff have worked well together as a team to manage the staff vacancies. The vacancies have now been recruited to. Staff employed within the team are suitably experienced and qualified and there is a structure offering regular support.

The Fostering Service was working towards recruiting more foster carers at the time of the inspection. In particular carers of different ethnic background and those wishing to care for teenagers. There was a clear strategy for the recruitment campaign, involving staff and existing foster carers.

There is a clear process for the assessment and approval of foster carers.

Staff shortages and problems with staff recruitment and retention were identified within the children and young person Social Work Teams. The recruitment and retention of staff to the children and young people Social Work Teams is essential. Problems with communication and support have been identified by members of the Fostering Team, foster carers, children and other professionals. This area of concern was specifically raised by all these parties for discussion with the Inspection Team throughout the inspection process. In order for looked after children and young people to feel appropriately supported they need to establish positive relationships with their Social Worker. The frequency of changes of Social Workers has an immediate and potentially longer-term negative impact for the child or young person. The Local Authority has a responsibility to reduce or eliminate the risks of this. The London Borough of Richmond has introduced a scheme to promote staff retention. The Local Authority must prioritise retention of staff with these teams to ensure that the service meets the needs of the looked after children and young people.

This is the subject of Requirement 1.

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

Information gathered from Managers, foster carers and staff indicated that the Local Authority is a fair and competent employer with sound employment practices. There is an out of hours duty team available to deal with emergencies as they arise.

Foster carers have been involved in the development of the service, including policies and procedures, information for carers, children and young people and the training programme.

There are appropriate procedures covering health and safety. The Carer's Handbook included details of the Whistle Blowing and Child Protection Procedures.

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

The local authority has a comprehensive training programme. Regular training courses are organised and staff are able to access appropriate courses. There is a Local Authority induction programme, which all staff participate in. The Fostering Team staff reported that training was well organised and appropriate. They reported that team training had been particularly beneficial.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Team staff reported that they were well supported. The spoke highly of the Locum Fostering Manager and confirmed that they had been supported in his absence. During the team meeting, staff demonstrated that they had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Team meetings and supervisions are planned in advance and appropriately recorded. During the team meeting, staff contributed and were consulted appropriately. There is an appropriate system for the formal appraisal of staff.

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**

Foster carers reported that they were supported by the Fostering Team and were consulted about the development of the service. Details of meetings, training and supervision are recorded within individual case records. Four case records were examined and found to contain the required information.

A foster carer support group meets on a regular basis. The Fostering Service produces a quarterly newsletter. This is well designed and offers a range of useful information about this and other services.

Foster carers spoke about the inconsistency and changes in the teams supporting the looked after children and young people. Staff retention problems within these teams has been problematic over the year. Some Foster carers reported that this had a serious negative impact on children. Two young people who spoke with the Inspector confirmed this. In addition the young people gave examples where they had felt unsupported by allocated Social Workers. This was discussed with the temporary Fostering Manager. Staff from the Fostering Team and the Chair of the Panel also reported that staffing changes within the children's teams had caused problems with the support.

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**

Each approved Foster carer should have an allocated Supervising Social Worker. At the time of the inspection, staff shortages had resulted in some carers being without an allocated Social Worker for a period of time. Recruitment to the Fostering Team should mean that these carers are allocated a Social Worker.

The majority of carers who spoke with the Inspection Team indicated that they had good support from their Social Worker.

Records of regular supervision meetings between the carers and Social Workers are held and were seen within the four files examined. These indicated that all meetings included discussions around care of the children and personal development.

Foster carers have access to other professional support services and information to provide a consistent, high quality care for the children and young people placed in their home.

Case records included an understanding and agreement to operate within all standards, policies and guidance of the Fostering Service, signed by foster carers.

The Handbook sets out standards, policies and guidance of the fostering service.

There is clear information on how to make a complaint, available within the Foster Carer Handbook. This includes information on the role of and how to access the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Foster carers reported that they have the opportunity to meet and talk to existing foster carers about their experiences and knowledge prior to approval.

A comprehensive and extensive training programme for foster carers has been developed, with the involvement of Carers. The programme includes induction and key training and support to achieve NVQ Level 3. Training is reviewed annually. The foster carer group who met with Inspectors reported that the majority of recent training had been useful, however a number of foster carers reported that one particular course had been unsuitable. This was discussed with Managers. Foster carers reported that training was organised flexibly to accommodate different needs.

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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Individual case records are held for all foster carers and looked after young people and children. The Inspection Team examined records for four foster carers and the young people who they cared for. These were found to be appropriately maintained and evidenced assessments, checks, regular supervision meetings and panel discussions. The files of young people and children were suitably maintained and information was appropriately translated into foster carers' files. There are systems in place to ensure regular file audits, and evidence of these was seen.

Files for two prospective foster carers were examined and were found to contain appropriate information on assessments and checks. The progress of their assessment and approval could be clearly seen.

Four personnel files for staff employed in the Fostering Service were examined, including the records for a temporary member of staff. Required records were in place and there was evidence of pre employment checks, qualifications, criminal record checks and regular supervision with the Fostering Manager.

The Local Authority is piloting a computer database designed to improve the storage, access and use of information. The system is being phased in and, although the Children and Young People Teams are using the system, the Fostering Service Team do not currently use it, although it is due to be introduced during 2005. Staff from the Fostering Service reported that on occasions some information could be difficult to access because they are not yet using the database. This problem should be resolved in the near future.

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

Records required by Regulation were seen to be in place. Information as accurate and up to date and information was clearly presented. Confidential records were stored securely. There are systems in place to ensure regular file audits.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

52

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

104

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

107

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

10

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

18

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

246.26

Maximum £

307.58

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 based in offices in Twickenham, close to other Local Authority Services. The office is appropriately furnished with all necessary equipment, including IT and communication systems.

The computer database, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), was introduced in February 2003 and is being phased in so that the Fostering Service will be using this system within 2005.

Over recent months the service has had administrative staff vacancies. These have now been recruited to. The Management praised the hard and efficient work of the service's administrative staff during the period of staff shortages.

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

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

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This is a Local Authority run service.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are appropriate policies on allowances and payment of foster carers. Information on payments is detailed within the Foster Carer Handbook. Policies were reviewed in January 2005 in consultation with foster carers. The charges are agreed at the beginning of each placement and reviewed annually or sooner if there is a need for it. All foster carers spoken with stated that they receive payments on time with details of breakdown of the costs of the services and for additional payments. Some foster carers reported that there were sometimes delays in additional payments. The Manager reported that new procedures supported prompter payments and agreed to investigate individual cases highlighted by foster carers in their discussions with Inspectors.

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

There are appropriate policies and procedures regarding the operation of Fostering Panels. The Fostering Panels meet at regular intervals. During 2004, additional Panel meetings were organised to manage a larger number of cases than anticipated. The Inspection Team was not able to observe a Panel meeting during the course of the inspection, as the planned meeting was cancelled due to the small number of cases to be discussed. Agenda items were due to be carried over to the next meeting in April. The Inspection Team examined Panel meeting minutes and related paperwork for meetings held during 2004 and January 2005. The Lead Inspector also spoke with the Chair of the Panel.

The Panel includes independent members, medical and educational advisers, and representatives from the Fostering Service. The Chair of the Panel has been a member for three years, and was elected Chair in May 2004. He reported that the group was diverse and had a wide range of values and experiences. He reported that the group were skilful in identifying gaps in information, questioning suitability and comprehending on key issues.

Minutes indicated that Panel decisions focused on positive outcomes for the children and young people. Written information presented to Panel members was thorough and included the applicant's involvement in the assessment and views of the foster child. In depth questioning and discussion was seen to take place at meetings. Applicants are invited to participate in discussions around their case at Panel meetings. Evidence of Panel discussions and decisions was found within individual case files.

The Locum Fostering Manager reported that Panel worked efficiently and other Managers praised the Chair of the Panel for a consistent and dynamic approach. The temporary Fostering Manager reported that Panel members had worked flexibly with the Service to accommodate fluctuation in levels of cases being presented. The Managers also praised the work of administrative staff who coordinated and processed information for Panel members.

Evidence was seen that Panel decisions were listened to and acted upon by the Service.

The Chair of the Panel reported that the Locum Fostering Manager worked alongside the Panel. He felt that the Manager has significantly developed the service. He raised concerns that the high level of staff turn over, particularly in the Children's Social Work Teams, had a tangible impact on the service for the children, young people and carers.

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 London Borough of Richmond Fostering Service operates a regular short break scheme. Short breaks for children with disabilities area arranged through a dedicated team. All carers are approved by a separate Short Break Panel. Short break carers, children and parents are provided with written guidance on the service.
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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 local authority has approved a number of family and friends as carers. There is an appropriate procedure regarding friends and family members as foster carers. Kinship carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker and receive support services, such as newsletters and training opportunities. The Manager reported that the Fostering Service hopes to establish a support group specifically for these carers.

The Inspection Team examined two files for prospective kinship carers. These evidenced appropriate checks, an in-depth assessment process and discussions at Panel.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

There was no involvement of Lay Assessors in the inspection of this service.

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 28th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Comments and an action plan were received from the Provider.

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

Action taken by the CSCI 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 11th May 2005, 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 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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S0000041835.V208307.R01

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