

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service

Fostering & Adoption Service

855 Uxbridge Road

Hayes

Middlesex

UB4 8HZ

11th March 2003 12th March 2003 13th
March 2003 14th March 2003 24th March
2003

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service

Address

Fostering & Adoption Service, 855 Uxbridge Road, Hayes,
Middlesex, UB4 8HZ

Local Authority Manager

Mrs Marion Rodin

Tel No:

01895 277852

Address

Fostering & Adoption Service, 855 Uxbridge Road, Hayes,
Middlesex, UB4 8HZ

Fax No:

01895 277851

Email Address

RJones@hillingdon.gov.uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

N/a

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		11/03/03 9am	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Gavin Thomas	G10GT1
Name of Inspector	2	Pauline Griffin	G10PG1
Name of Inspector	3	-	
Name of Inspector	4	-	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)		Not used	
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)		Not required	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

The Fostering Service of the London Borough of Hillingdon is located in purpose-adapted Portokabin Offices on the Uxbridge Road, Hayes which is about 2 miles away from the Civic Centre, Uxbridge. The Service has approximately 140 Foster Carers, 35 of which live in the Greater London Area and provide specific ethnic care to asylum seeking children. Respite care is offered to carers of looked after children and a small number of carers offer preventative respite for the Hillingdon Community. There is a short break scheme for carers of disabled children. Family/friends Care is currently being developed. The Team Manager is accountable to a Service Manager. There are two Assistant Team Managers, 9 Social Work posts (one currently covered by agency) plus 2 vacancies and one Fostering Support Worker. Management has a stable background in the team but securing permanent Social Work staff has proved difficult due to the location of the offices and competition with other London Boroughs in the employment market.

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.)

Prior to 1 April 2002, it was not a requirement for Local Authority Fostering Services to be inspected by the National Care Standards Commission. This report is the first by the National Care Standards Commission under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, and therefore serves as an audit of the service against the new requirements, identifying developments needed to meet the requirements in a reasonable period of time. Any more urgent issues are identified in the report. Whilst all standards were assessed, a more detailed assessment was undertaken on standards that have significant welfare impact for the children who use the fostering service. The Social Work team demonstrated sound knowledge of the work of the Fostering Service and support strategies, which are in place for Foster Carers. Whilst supervision/support of Carers is being maintained at a good standard, the Inspectors noted that developmental work is required to meet with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Under section 47 (5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service fails to satisfy regulatory requirements, which are not substantial.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection fully actioned?

N/A

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 National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	Reg 3	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must be revised to include the criteria as stated in Standard 1.4 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.	24/08/03
2	Reg 3 (3)	FS1	A children's guide must be devised and issued in accordance with this Regulation. The NCSC contact details must be included in the Children's guide.	24/11/03
3	Reg 20 (4) Schedule 1	FS15	The service must ensure that all existing staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure Check. All new staff must have a satisfactory CRB before starting work.	24/09/03

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	FS1	Elected members should approve the Statement of Purpose as stated in standard 1.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
2	FS1	The information relating to insurance cover as given in the Statement of Purpose should be checked for typographical error.
3	FS2	The Team Manager should work towards achieving an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent management qualification by 2005.
4	FS17	Continuous efforts should be made to recruit permanent Social Workers to make up the full staffing complement.
5	FS19	The Team Manager should consult with those Foster Carers who are experiencing difficulty in attending training sessions.
6	FS3	Arrangements should be made to ensure that evidence of vetting documents kept in the Human Resources Department are maintained at all times.
7	FS4	Systems should be put into place to monitor and maintain records as stated in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.
8	FS6	The Fostering Service should ensure that all Foster Carers receive written information on health and safety.
9	FS19	Training programmes should be produced for Social Work staff and Foster Carers to demonstrate the level of training provided and undertaken. Foster Carers should be consulted about training arrangements.
10	FS24	An audit should be carried out to bring all files in keeping with Schedules 2 and 3 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.
11	FS25	Processes should be put into place to ensure all notifiable occurrences as stated in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Regulations 2002 are reported to the NCSC without delay.
12	FS25	The complaints log should be reinstated.
13	FS32	The Fostering Service should demonstrate that adequate training and support is provided for family and friends who are approved carers.

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

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• 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	11/03/03
Time of Inspection	9.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	76.00

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

The scale ranges from:

London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service

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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.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A copy of the Statement of Purpose was available to the Inspectors. Overall, this document was informative. However, the document must be revised to include the support and review processes for carers and the numbers of children placed in the fostering service. Information relating to insurance cover for Foster Carers as detailed in the Statement of Purpose should be checked for typographical error.

The Statement of Purpose had not been formally approved by the elected members of the council and was still in draft form. Information issued by the National Foster Care Association was available. A children's guide was in place. This guide covered both residential and foster care. The guide did not relate specifically to the fostering service. The fostering service must produce a children's guide to meet with the requirements of Standard 1.5 of the National Minimum Standards of Fostering Services.

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?

2

The Fostering Team Manager has a Diploma in Applied Social Studies and a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). The Fostering Team Manager has extensive experience in working as a Social Worker. He also has experience in Family Placement schemes and Residential Units. The Service Manager is a qualified Social Worker. She also has 30 years experience in the care sector and extensive childcare experience. The current service Manager does possess a management qualification, a Masters in Business Administration.

The Inspectors noted that there was effective leadership and management provided to the team at the time of the Inspection.

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?

2

Written and verbal references were taken up for managers. Police checks are made every 3 years. Records were seen of checks and references during the inspection.

The Inspectors noted, however, that some of the Personnel files examined in the HR Department were incomplete. The Local Authority must ensure that evidence of vetting documents are maintained and available for inspection purposes at all times.

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?

2

There was evidence of clear roles for managers and staff and clear lines of communication between managers, staff and carers. There are procedures in place to monitor and review the finances of the service. Foster Carers confirmed that they receive their allowances as agreed with the Local Authority. The Fostering Service informs carers, managers and staff on the application forms of the need to declare conflicts of interest. The Manager is aware of the need for more clarity in the issue of conflict of interest and is treating this area as a priority within the service. There was no evidence that processes are in place to monitor and maintain records to meet with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulation 2002.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

All staff, including the manager, confirmed that they were in receipt of a job description. The levels of delegation, responsibility and accountability are clearly defined. There are clear arrangements in place for cover when the Service Manager or the Team Manager is absent. The team were aware of these arrangements. The Team Manager was very clear about his duties and accountability.

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?

2

The Inspectors visited a randomly selected group of four Carers in their homes and also spoke to four children. The homes inspected met the standards expected. The accommodation provided for the children was in accordance to their assessed needs. Risk assessments and health and safety checks are carried out to identify hazards that could present a risk to the individual child. The outcomes of these assessments are presented to the fostering panel. Only 2 of the four Carers visited had a brochure/information pack. They therefore had no written guidance on health and safety issues and responsibilities. The Inspectors were told by all four sets of Carers that they had been informed of the NCSC inspection and the processes used. One child displayed an attitude to the Inspectors that the placement was not supplying her emotional needs and this information was passed to the Manager at his request to enable a review to be made.

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

Staff informed the Inspectors that the Service gives high priority to valuing diversity and promoting equality. The Service aims to match the child with the fostering placement as much as possible. Emergency placements frequently mean that matching is not fully satisfactory and a decision is made in consultation with the child's social worker. Joint visits are made to see the child and the Carer by both the child's social worker and the support social worker to ensure that they work consistently for the benefit of the child. The Inspectors were informed that training for Carers includes valuing diversity and promoting equality. This is also part of the 6 monthly reviews of all looked after children. Training also includes anti discriminatory practice. Any child with disabilities placed with a Carer receives specialist services and support. Satisfactory systems were in place.

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

The Inspectors interviewed Carers and spoke to them informally at the monthly self-help group meeting. The Carers confirmed that placement information and matching processes are satisfactory and overall, made positive comments regarding their Link Workers. The Social Services Officer who supports the Carers demonstrated to the Inspectors how she accesses/provides specific information regarding such things as cultural, religious, ethnic and emotional issues to ensure the children's needs are met and compensate for any gaps in the matching process. The joint funded facility with Health/Education, the Abacus Centre, is used for valuable specialist advice/information. When emergency placements occur, the matching process is not strictly adhered to. The Inspectors were informed that the professionals worked in co-operation to ensure that disruptions in placements were minimal as a result.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The induction/foundation training course 'Choosing to Foster' covers the issue of abuse and neglect. The Carer's handbook/pack includes 'Safe Caring Guidance'. The Fostering Team adopts the principle from the 1989 Children Act that the welfare of children is priority and uses this in all strands of its practice. A qualified Social Workers is on call out of hours with backing from the Duty Social Work Team. All the Social Worker Staff are qualified. They provide supervision to a small group of Carers and make monthly visits to their homes. Social Workers receive regular supervision from their Managers. The Carer's interviewed by the Inspectors were aware of the policy regarding corporal punishment. The Inspectors found that of the four sets of Foster Carer's interviewed; only 2 could produce written information/handbook/pack. Area Child Protection Procedures were in place.

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

100

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

Discussions with Foster Carers explained that arrangements are in place for children to maintain and develop family contacts as set out in their care plans. This was confirmed by their supervising Social Workers. Contact with family/friends is included in the induction training "Choosing to Foster" and is also covered in the Carer's Handbook. Social Workers and Link Workers provide joint support strategies to Carers who have to manage difficult and emotional issues.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

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

Various methods of communication are in place to ensure that young people's views are heard and acted upon. However, the service must ensure that young people are made aware of their right to contact the National Care Standards Commission should they have any concerns or complaints about the Fostering Service. The contact details for the National Care Standards Commission must be included in the young people's guide when this document is produced.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

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

The Fostering Service is in the process of producing its first Foster Carers handbook. This document was available for inspection purposes but in draft form only. The handbook covers a very wide range of topics including health matters, managing different behaviours and good parenting skills. All prospective foster carers must attend the "Choosing to Foster" training events as part of the assessment process. Qualifying foster carers receive on going support, guidance documents and access to a range of resources to assist them in the care of young people. The Social Services Officer is a valuable link between the foster carers and resources available to them. This arrangement supports good practice.

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?****4**

The supervising social workers monitor the educational needs of children. Foster carers spoken to explained that there were no current issues with children attending school. Observations and discussions with foster carers and young people also confirmed that support and household routines ensured that young people were given adequate time for home study. Files examined confirmed that educational arrangements were in place for children. The fostering service aims to keep young people in their own schools. Foster carers also attend school functions and open days.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The Social Services Officer explained that she provided network support to Carers along with Link Social Workers in supporting children and young people for moving on. Foster Carers confirmed this. The types of support offered include budgeting, shopping, cooking and personal care. The Inspectors examined a wide range of literature available to the Social Work team and Foster Carers when assisting young people to move on. The Manager explained that the sixteen plus team co ordinate pathway plans with foster carers and young people in preparation for them moving on.

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

All staff appointed to the Social Work team have a formal and relevant qualification. Records examined confirmed this. Records examined also indicated that the Social Work team offered a wealth of knowledge and experience to perform their duties individually and as a group. Some of the files examined were not well organised. The Inspectors were informed that the Local Authority has acknowledged this and work is being done to bring all files up to date. CRB checks must still be carried out for some of the present team. Foster Carers spoken to commended the Supervising Social Workers for their support and guidance.

Total number of staff of the agency:

2

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a clear management structure. Caseloads were clearly defined and prioritised in accordance with the demands for supporting foster carers and children. The Social Work team were supervised regularly and procedures were in place for monitoring performances. The Manager and the Assistant Managers conduct supervisions. The Inspectors observed a team meeting. This meeting had a planned agenda and was informative. Administrative support in place includes "Super Users" within the team to assist with any IT issues. Social Work staff did report however, that there are ongoing technical issues with the email system, "CareFirst" package and updating the system with relevant data. The Assistant Team Manager explained that on going discussions are in place with IT consultants to remedy the problems.

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**

Staffing arrangements include a Service Manager, Team Manager, two Assistant Team managers, seven supervising Social Workers and one Social Services Officer. There are two vacancies to make up the full compliment of supervising Social Workers. The Team Manager explained that the level of support given to foster carers and children is not compromised during this period when ongoing attempts are in place to recruit additional staff. A recruitment drive was in place at the time of this inspection. The Service Manager explained that recruiting Social Work staff is an ongoing issue within the Borough and London wide. Robust procedures are in place for the assessment and approval of foster carers. All prospective foster carers must show a commitment to initial training and meet the Borough's criteria.

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**

Discussions with the Social Work team and Foster Carers confirmed that there are clear recruitment procedures in place. Foster carers also confirmed that they had access to an out of hours support system provided by the Social Work team. Staff were positive about the service and the support mechanisms.

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?****2**

The fostering service provides ongoing training for both the Social Work team and foster carers. However, a training programme was not in place to demonstrate all training undertaken collectively and individually. Social Work staff confirmed that training and development needs are discussed in supervision. Foster carers were offered a variety of in house training, which includes: stimulus and activities, safety with children and assisting children with their life stories. Training also included Health and Safety and First Aid. Some foster carers explained that training coincides with school runs and there is also a lack of crèche facilities. For these reasons, it is not always possible for them to attend. The Team Manager is required to address this matter with the foster carers. The social work team have access to the corporate training programme.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****4**

The Social Work Team were in receipt of a contract of employment. The Social Work Team confirmed that they receive monthly supervisions and six monthly appraisals. Staff also confirmed that they retain a copy of their supervisions. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis. This was confirmed at the time of the inspection. Staff spoken with, explained that the Team Manager and Service Manager are supportive and readily available to assist and advise.

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**

Arrangements were in place for children's reviews to be carried out three monthly and six monthly. The Fostering Service has put together a strategy to bring all annual reviews up to date. At least 75% of annual reviews were achieved at the time of this inspection. Foster carers spoken to confirm that they receive monthly visits from their supervising social workers and at times, these visits are more frequent. This supports good practice. Carers did not have any issues with regards to the communication systems between themselves and the Social Work team.

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**

The Team Manager explained that all Foster Carers would be issued with a copy of the Foster Carers handbook once this is an approved document. In the meantime, however, Foster Carers are provided with a source of information including operational policies and procedures. Telephone support is available to Foster Carers. The Team Manager explained that any allegations of abuse would be recorded and kept on file. The local Area Child Protection Committee procedures would be used in the event of alleged abuse cases. These procedures were available for inspection purposes.

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**

The Social Services Officer explained that support groups are arranged for Foster Carers to attend when it is convenient for them to do so. This enables Foster carers to exchange information and draw on each other's fostering experiences. This support group also enables the children to meet with others within their peer group. The meeting attended by the Inspectors was a positive experience. One of the Assistant Team Manager's is currently in the process of updating the annual reviews for Carers. This takes into account training and development for Foster Carers. The Team Manager explained that training and self-development programmes for Foster Carers is under discussion and will be developed in partnership with the Looked After Children (LAC) project.

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?

2

The Inspectors carried out a tracking process on 10 files. The Assistant Manager explained that the format of entering data on children's and foster carers files has been reviewed. Overall, the files were well maintained with the exception of some, which require updating. All files must be in keeping of Schedules 2 and 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

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?

2

Files held with the fostering team were secured in lockable facilities. The Team Manager explained that children's files are kept with the area Social Work Team. Staff files are kept with the Local Authority at the Civic Centre. The Team Manager also explained that a file audit had been carried out. However, there was no indication that an ongoing monitoring system was in place to ensure the upkeep of the files. The fostering service did not have a log for recording complaints. This record should be reinstated. Although the Team Manager reported that there have been no recent reportable occurrences, arrangements should now be made to ensure that reportable occurrences are made to the NCSC without delay. Records requested for the purpose of this inspection, were made readily available.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

163

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

225

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

199

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

11

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

4

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

231.21

Maximum £

275.29

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The premises and facilities are appropriate to support the operation of the service. Although the premises are located in a lorry park, the spaces used by lorries are mainly used at night. This does not hinder the work of the fostering service. The premises has easy access for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Internal facilities include baby changing facilities, disabled toilet, three meeting rooms, designated offices for the service manager and team manager, sufficient desks to seat all Social Workers, three fax machines, a reception area with seating, a water dispenser and a small kitchen. The premises are protected with a security alarm system. Access is by means of a key coded entry only. The premises are used as a base for training, sessional work with children, fostering panel meetings and a resource base. The premises were clean and well maintained.		

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This standard does not apply to a Local Authority Fostering Service and was therefore not inspected on this occasion.

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?

9

This standard does not apply to a Local Authority Fostering Service and was therefore not inspected on this occasion.

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 team manager reported that foster carer allowances are reviewed annually and raised in accordance with the rate of inflation. This is done at corporate level. All payments are made via the BACS system and paid on a weekly basis. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that their allowances are agreed at the start of a placement and paid promptly by the Local Authority.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Inspectors observed a Fostering panel as part of this inspection. Members of the panel met with the requirements of Regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations 2002. Members of the panel included a medical advisor, an independent chair, an elected member of the Local Authority, minute taker, four independent members and members of the Social Work team. The preparation and conduct of the fostering panel meetings was to be commended. All members spoke openly and constructively when considering applications for prospective Foster Carers and reviews for Foster Carers who are already established. One prospective Foster carer, whose application was being considered, attended the meeting. The Inspectors interviewed the panel chair and minute taker. Both were aware of the roles and responsibilities of the panel. The Chair (who is employed by the Local Authority but independent to the Fostering Service) explained the procedures, which are in place for decision-making processes.

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?	3
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The Fostering Service provides short term breaks for children and use policies and procedures of the Department for this practice. The Fostering Service provides respite breaks for several carers. The respite carers provide weekend breaks for other carers of looked after children placed with them. There are a small number of carers who offer short, regular respite for children as a means of preventing their coming into the care of the Local Authority. There is also a short break scheme for Carers of children with Disabilities called "Family Link". The Children with Disabilities team manage this scheme.

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?
The Inspectors were informed that the Fostering Service is committed to supporting family and friends carers. The Fostering Panel at which the Inspectors were present approved a "Link" carer. The Team Manager explained that discussions were in place to initiate a working group which is being set up to review the placement of children with relatives and friends. There are no current arrangements in place to offer ongoing support or training for this group of Carers. Consideration is being given to develop the service in this area.	1

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)**

A Lay Assessor was not used on this occasion.

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector Gavin Thomas **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 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 24th May 2003 of London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

An Action Plan has been received from the provider and agreed by the NCSC. A copy of the provider's comments are available at the Area office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

☐

Comments were received from the provider

☐

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

☐

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

☐

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

☐

Action plan was received at the point of publication

☐

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

☐

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

☐

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

☐

Other: <enter details here>

☐

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Marion Roden of London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service 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	<u>Marion Roden</u>
Signature	<u>Marion Roden (signed)</u>
Designation	<u>Service Manager</u>
Date	17/06/2003

Or

D.3.2 I Marion Roden of London Borough of Hillingdon Fostering Service 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:

[illegible]

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

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