



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Newham Fostering Service**

**16 Wordsworth Avenue  
Manor Park  
London  
E12 6SU**

*Lead Inspector*  
Sharon Lewis

*Announced Inspection*  
20<sup>th</sup> – 24th February 2006      10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

*Every Child Matters*, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Newham Fostering Service
<b>Address</b>	16 Wordsworth Avenue Manor Park London E12 6SU
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8430 5117
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Newham Social Services
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Jennifer Ann Barville
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      24th January 2005

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Newham Fostering Service currently comprises of three distinct teams.

The Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team recruits, assesses and prepares prospective foster carers for approval.

The Fostering Support Team aims to support foster carers through supervision. Support is provided through regular visits, telephone calls, training sessions and support groups.

The PAMS (Placements Monitoring Team) function includes liaising with the Fostering Support Team to match placements, the monitoring of placements within the private and voluntary sector and the processing of foster carers payments.

This current structure is due to change however under the imminent restructuring, which is detailed in the Management section of this report.

# SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This Announced Inspection was undertaken over five days in February 2006. This is the agency's fourth inspection against the National Minimum Standards introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002. The overall objective of this Inspection is to ensure children are receiving the best possible care and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Four foster placements were visited. Questionnaires were received from four young people, one foster carer and six placing social workers. The majority of the feedback received was positive. Young people described the best thing about the fostering service as "their foster carers". Foster carers were very satisfied with their supervising social workers and remarked that training had greatly improved. Areas identified for further development has been highlighted as recommendations in this report.

Individual interviews were held with the Head of Service Children's Services, the Service Manager, Fostering Team Managers and the Panel Chair. Individual discussions were also held with six foster carers, who attended the Support Group.

Group discussions were additionally held with Recruitment and Assessment, Fostering Support staff, a Senior Team Manager and a teacher in the Education Support Team and young people who attended the Children's Rights Group. A Foster Carer Support Group and part of a Fostering Panel were also observed.

Foster carers, children's, staff personnel, policies and procedures and a range of relevant documentation were examined. A tour of the premises was also undertaken.

The Inspector would like to thank all children, foster carers and staff members for their assistance with this Inspection.

## **What the service does well:**

Newham fostering service is commended for their support for foster carers. Therapeutic counselling support is available to assist foster carers. An example of this is in event of placement breakdown. Monthly support groups are held and a bi-monthly culturally specific support group is provided for Asian foster carers. Foster carers benefit from a mentor scheme and a regular newsletter.

Newham fostering service is commended for their commitment to foster carer training. An annual foster carer training brochure is produced and foster

carers are able to access training for social work staff, if there are vacancies. The fostering service provides a NVQ programme for foster carers and a English language support scheme.

Newham fostering service is commended for their system for promoting children's health and development. An integrated team provides dedicated Looked after Children nurses, a specialist sexual health worker and drugs worker.

The fostering service is commended for the educational support available for children. Newham have a system where fostering households are provided with a computer. All foster carers have a specific education manual. Children benefit from the provision of an Education Support Team. This team includes designated teaching, educational welfare and Connexions staff. Individual tuition is available for GCSE's and Newham assists with university rent payments.

Newham is commended for having a Children's Rights Service. The Children's Rights service supports a collection of projects that includes an advocacy service, counselling service and a consultation group.

Newham fostering service is commended for their commitment to the needs of young people preparing for independence. Additional support is available from the specialist education and training worker for care leavers and a mentoring scheme.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

All placements are now appropriately supervised by an allocated supervising social worker. There is a clear support and supervision agenda and all foster carers provided positive feedback in relation to this arrangement.

The fostering service is due to restructure in March 2006. This restructuring will promote more efficient and effective management. The new Foster Carer Support team will benefit from two Private Fostering support work posts, two Practice Managers with specialist respective leads on Private Fostering and Kinship Care. Consideration is also being given to a third Practice Manager post.

Newham is a recently established Integrated Children's Service, having joined Social Services with Education. This enables a single, strategic, overreaching plan for children encompassing all services.

## **What they could do better:**

This Inspection resulted in four requirements and seven recommendations being made.

The fostering service must ensure children are provided with a Children's Guide, which specifically relates to the fostering service. Children and young people must be provided with the necessary information, which relates to their fostering experience.

Children's planning must be more stringently monitored. Emergency placements must not exceed twenty-four hours and foster carers must not exceed numbers. The matching process should detail how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs and identify areas where foster carers need additional support. Fostering teams should have greater involvement in placement planning, to eliminate drift.

The Human Resources Department must ensure personnel files contain all the information required by regulations, to promote the protection of children.

Quality assurance and continuous monitoring should be further formalised to measure outcomes and achievements within the fostering service. Children must benefit from the cycle of development within the service.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

**The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

### 12

Newham fostering service is commended for their system for promoting children's health and development.

## EVIDENCE:

Foster carers receive basic training on health, hygiene issues, care for minor accidents and specific first aid training for babies and young people. Health records were examined in the foster carer's homes, which confirmed that health needs of a child were routinely met. Fostering households are additionally provided with a leisure card, which enables free use of the borough's fitness facilities.

Files evidenced that children's health needs were addressed in the review process and as part of the supervisory visits. Evidence was seen of placements being supported by the funding of counselling sessions and the therapeutic input of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Health outcomes for children being Looked After have improved. Ninety four percent of children had received their health assessments and dental checks, in the year up to 30.9.05. Fewer children in this category are becoming parents, there is timely access to substance misuse, CAMHS, contraception services and all are registered with a General Practitioner (GP).

Newham is commended for their integrated team which provides dedicated Looked after Children nurses, a specialist sexual health worker and drugs worker. There are additional plans to introduce a family planning nurse. This team co-ordinates all statutory annual medicals, personal health plans for children and delivers foster carer training.

Newham has a strong Strategic Planning Forum, which consists of senior managers from health and the local authority. This forum is planning to widen their remit to include education in line with principles of integrated Children's Services. An annual report is produced by the Primary Care Trust, which details the specific work undertaken with children looked after by Newham.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):**

### **3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30**

Newham fostering service provides nurturing foster placements. Child protection enquiries are responded to appropriately. The Panel is efficient and effective. Staff and Panel recruitment practices, however must be more robust.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### SUITABLE FOSTER CARERS

A total of four foster carers' homes were visited during this Inspection. Foster carers homes were found to be clean, comfortable, warm, adequately furnished and decorated. Children's bedrooms reflected their individual interests and personalities. Children's well-being was promoted by age appropriate and culturally reflective books, toys and equipment. Placements evidenced the ability to meet the specific physical, emotional, educational, mental and social needs of each child.

Foster carers understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process. All of the foster carers visited and interviewed during the Inspection positively contributed to the process. All foster carers interviewed demonstrated a genuine commitment and responsibility to improve the quality of life for children placed in their care.

These included taking a strong advocacy role, liaising with other professionals, solicitors, immigration officials and the Red Cross.

All files contained a comprehensive health and safety checklist and foster carers receive appropriate first aid training.

## MATCHING

The fostering service has produced matching procedures. Matches are dependent on carer vacancy, approval and age range. Newham endeavour to primarily use their in-house carers, placements made in the private & voluntary sector are subject to more stringent matching criteria.

During the Inspection foster carers raised the issue and an anonymous complaint was received, in relation to the fostering service's supposed preference for using foster carers in the private and voluntary sector. This issue was discussed with the appropriate management and it was found that placements are made as a matter of urgency, in the best interests of the child.

Files examined evidenced general written foster placements are in place. There was no analysis however of why the placement would meet the child's needs. It is recommended that a brief analysis is recorded detailing how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs. It should also identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate any gaps in the matching. In addition the fostering service must ensure emergency placements do not exceed 24 hours and foster carers must not exceed numbers.

Where transracial or transcommunity placements are made, the fostering service provides the foster family with interpreting services through Language Line. Foster carers are commended for making links with community groups to meet religious needs of children, using their informal social networks and researching specialist food shops and books to assist them in their provision of transcultural care.

All children visited had a good self-identity, which was promoted, in their placements. A practical example of this was young people having a world map with flags of each country. Young people proudly highlighted their country of origin.

## CHILD PROTECTION

A range of training courses addresses child protection and clear procedures are detailed in the Foster Carers Handbook. This includes a course aimed specifically for male support carers. The fostering service appropriately keeps a record of all allegations and the subsequent outcomes. Action taken included further addressing foster carers training and development needs. These issues were also brought to the Fostering Panel. The fostering service has developed a system to report all allegations to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

## FOSTERING STAFF

Discussions with staff evidenced that social work staff had a good understanding of foster care and possessed the appropriate personal qualities, knowledge and skills.

Newham has a corporate recruitment procedure, which provides clear written procedures for appointing staff. In the past Newham have targeted social work recruitment campaigns overseas. Six personnel files were examined and evidenced two missing police checks, one file additionally lacked proof of qualification and another proof of identity. Personnel files must be maintained in accordance with Schedule 1, The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

## FOSTERING PANEL

Newham's Fostering Panel is properly constituted and comprises of relevantly qualified and experienced people. A Children's Services senior manager who has extensive experience and expertise chairs the Panel. The Panel Chair demonstrated the necessary professionalism and personal qualities necessary to promote the needs of children.

Newham's Fostering Panel was noted to have a marked sense of independence and a strong identity. The Panel was child focused and demonstrated they were committed advocates for the best interests of Newham's children. The need for the child's 'stability' was inherent throughout discussions.

The Panel was efficient, effective and well chaired. All members contributed appropriately, were encouraged to voice their opinions and points of clarification were requested. Cases promoted lively, pertinent debate in a relaxed, unhurried atmosphere. Panel members highlighted the strengths of each case, concerns and areas for further development. Panel also requested case updates and sought additional consultation from young people. An

example being the innovative idea to introduce exit interviews for young people.

The Fostering Panel has clear written procedures in relation to the purpose, membership and decision-making. Panel member agreements are in place and Panel receive regular training. Good practice was highlighted in relation to positive feedback re: assessments. Social work staff benefit from having their Team Managers support during case presentations.

The agency decision maker is the Head of Children's Services. The fostering service should continue to ensure that formal meetings are held between the Agency Decision Maker and Panel Chair, to discuss quality assurance and other issues, which promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

The Fostering Service recognises the need for the Panel to be more culturally reflective of the community it serves. Newham is however commended for having a Chair of African Caribbean origin. Newham's Fostering Panel would further benefit from greater male representation and independent membership.

Examination of Panel members' files evidenced that all files did not contain the appropriate information. The fostering service must ensure where necessary, Panel members' files contain Criminal Record Bureau checks and two references.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

**The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

### **7, 13 & 31**

Newham fostering service excels in their promotion of educational achievement and appropriately values diversity. Newham does not provide a dedicated short-break fostering service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### VALUING DIVERSITY

The 2001 Census hailed Newham as being the most ethnically diverse borough in Britain, where more than 110 languages are spoken. The fostering service has a good volume of Asian and African/Caribbean foster carers. An in-house interpreting service is in operation to support foster carers in meetings, reviews, training and in the assessment process. This service is provided by social work staff and foster carers trained in the interpreting role.

Newham fostering service ensures that its foster carers provide care, which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. Foster carers' preparation, training, handbook, policies and procedures incorporate the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality. Training courses are available for foster carers to address enhancing children & young people's self-esteem and assertiveness.



An integrated draft vision statement has been produced to meet the needs of children and young people living with disabilities. It states "Our vision in Newham is to provide child centered, family focused holistic care and support for all disabled children and their families, to meet their individual needs, using resources from all sectors in an equitable and harmonious way".

Discretionary funding ensures that each child has encouragement, equal access and opportunities, to develop and pursue their talents, interests and hobbies.

## EDUCATION

The fostering service is commended for the educational support available for children. Newham have a system where fostering households are provided with a computer. All foster carers have a specific education manual, which is due to be updated.

Foster carers visits and files evidenced foster carers are aware of their role in regards to school contact and creating an environment where learning is valued.

Children benefit from the provision of an Education Support Team. This team is committed to promoting and improving the health and educational attainment of all children looked after by Newham right through into adulthood. The team has forged strong strategic links and integrated joint working across Education, Health and Connexions services.

The Education Support Team co-ordinates all Personal Education plans for children looked after by Newham. The team includes designated teaching, training and Connexions staff. Young people benefit from personal and careers advice. Additional support is given in securing school placements and short term home tuition.

Individual tuition is available for GCSE's and funding available for additional private tuition. Newham has an Education Scrutiny Commission. Educational attainment is monitored in line with the Department for Education and Skills annual performance assessments. Results from the Summer 2005, evidenced of the sixty-nine young people scheduled to take GCSE's, forty actually sat exams and thirty-nine achieved at least one pass.

Currently Newham are corporate parents for twenty-four young people attending university. The borough is commended for financially assisting young people with their university rent payments.

## SHORT BREAK CARERS

Newham does not offer a specific short break service for children with disabilities. The Disability Team provides additional support to families through community care packages, which includes respite care.

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

**The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

### 10 & 11

Newham fostering service is commended for their children’s consultation system. Contact is appropriately promoted within the fostering service.

### EVIDENCE:

#### CONTACT

There are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. Contact arrangement procedures are detailed in the foster carers’ handbook. Foster carers are encouraged and supported to maintain contact in a manner consistent with the child’s care plan and any contact order. Guidelines are in place regarding supervised contact and the need for a written risk assessment. Additional support is also available from social work staff.

#### CONSULTATION

Newham is commended for having a Children’s Rights Service. The team consists of a Manager and three part-time workers and is supported by a pool of twenty-three sessional advocates. Young people additionally have access to a direct email address [childrenrights@newham.gov.uk](mailto:childrenrights@newham.gov.uk). The team will shortly be moving to their own building in Manor Park.

The Children’s Rights service supports a collection of projects that includes an advocacy service, counselling service and consultation group. The Children’s

Rights Reference group meet on a monthly basis. This group includes a range of young people who have experience of foster care. The group is commended for having a young person chair this meeting. Young people are rewarded with five pounds of vouchers per hour of attendance and reimbursed their travel expenses.

Young people are consulted on a range of services, issues, information, processes and policies. Evidence was seen of their consultation regarding the Draft Children and Young People's Plan. The Children's Rights Reference group additionally jointly organised a consultation fun day in August 2005.

Discussions with young people and their files evidenced that they were consulted on all aspects of their care. Young people contributed to the annual review process. The Children's Right's Service is commended for producing a colourful, youth orientated guide to the children review process.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

**The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

### **14 & 29**

Newham fostering service is commended for their commitment to the needs of young people preparing for independence. The fostering service has an adequate fostering allowance payment system.

### **EVIDENCE:**

#### PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD

The fostering service undertakes to help young people develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult life. The Foster Carer Handbook provides clear written requirements of what is expected in terms of preparing young people for independent or semi-independent living. Foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance.

Newham is commended for the additional support available from the specialist education and training worker for care leavers and a mentoring scheme.

## FOSTER CARER PAYMENTS

There is a written policy on fostering allowances. An increase in foster carers fees is currently being considered. Foster carers receive information about their allowances and all reported that they are paid promptly. Increased payments are available for holidays and festival grants for Christmas or Eid.

Discussions with foster carers however highlighted a lack of clarity in relation to financial reimbursement. The fostering service should provide clear guidelines and criteria for discretionary payments and financial reimbursement claims. Foster carers additionally requested an annual financial statement to assist in their tax self assessment. It is recommended that this request is actioned.

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

**1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 & 32**

Newham fostering service is commended for their foster carer support and training. The fostering service restructuring will promote more efficient and effective management. The Children's Guide to fostering must meet regulatory requirements.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Statement of Purpose covers all information detailed in Regulation 3, The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The fostering service is aware that the Statement of Purpose will need to be updated to reflect the details of the proposed restructuring. It is also recommended that the Statement of Purpose includes the numbers of complaints and their outcomes as outlined in Standard 1.4, National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

The borough has produced a filofax, which is provided for all children looked after by Newham. In discussion with young people, foster carers and examination of the filofax it was noted that children are not provided with a specific guide to fostering as detailed in regulations. The fostering service must ensure children are provided with a Children's Guide, which specifically relates to the fostering service. This guide must include a summary of the Statement of Purpose, fostering procedure and the address and telephone number of the Commission.

### MANAGEMENT OF THE SERVICE

The Service Manager has held responsibilities for Placements Services since June 2003. The Service Manager has approximately thirty-five years experience in social work and has eight years senior management experience in Children's Services. Qualifications held include a professional social work qualification, a Masters degree and Certificates in Child Care Policy and Practice and in Social Services Management. The Service Manager is currently undertaking a Shared Leadership course.

Newham is a recently established Integrated Children's Service, having joined Social Services with Education. During this Inspection a Joint Area Review was additionally being undertaken. A draft Children and Young People's Plan for 2006-2012 has been developed which provides a single, strategic, overreaching plan for all services.

Newham's Children, Young People & Families Service Plan 2005-2006 details the borough's commitment to investing in their children and young people. According to the 2001 Census, Newham has a higher proportion of younger people in its population than any other part of the country, and is the most ethnically diverse.

Newham aims to ensure "children and young people can fulfil their potential in every aspect of their lives." Six major objectives have been highlighted that



Newham's children and young people: Grow up safe and feeling safe, healthy and enjoying living in Newham; Do well at school and have choices for further education and training; Enjoy creative and challenging experiences; Make a positive contribution to society and to their communities; Make the most of the job opportunities and the scope for enterprise in Newham, the rest of London and further afield; Not to be held back by discrimination.

All service planning within Newham encompasses the principles of Every Child Matters Outcomes framework, developed by the Department of Education and Skills. In addition to a wider range of major national initiatives.

## MONITORING AND CONTROLLING

Newham fostering service is shortly due to restructure. There are clear roles for managers and staff and well-established lines of communication. In addition to accountability between managers, staff and foster carers.

Regular meetings are held across Childrens Services at Service Manager level. Performance indicators are in place. The Service Manager meets on a monthly basis with the Head of Children's Services and there is a good relationship between teams.

The fostering service has developed an overall service development plan. The plan is linked to national priorities and objectives. The plan includes the community strategy, corporate improvement and shared key priorities.

Evidence was also seen of a fostering recruitment action plan. It is recommended that each team develop individual action plans with realistic timescales, to evidence a cycle of continuous improvement and quality assurance. An annual evaluation of the service should also be produced. Children would also benefit from the fostering teams having greater involvement in placement planning, to eliminate drift.

## MANAGED EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY

This Inspection highlighted the great efforts made to promote an effective and efficient fostering service. The Mayor of Newham recently highlighted the need for more foster carers for children in his 'My view' newsletter. The interview with the Head of Children's Services highlighted that "Fostering is at the forefront of the agenda" and is "key to providing opportunities for our children".

Vanguard Consultancy and the Commission for Social Care Inspection have highlighted areas of duplication and the need to maximise effectiveness across the fostering and adoption teams. The proposed restructuring will be implemented by March 2006.

Three teams will be formed Foster Carer Support, Carer Recruitment and Assessment and Adoption Support and Family Finding. The teams will be headed by three Senior Team Managers.

The main impact for the current Fostering Recruitment Team is the inclusion of recruiting and assessing adopters. The new team will be supported by the transferring of three social workers from the current adoption team. In addition to the provision of two Practice Manager posts.

The new Foster Carer Support team will benefit from two Practice Managers/Senior Practitioner posts with specialist respective leads on Private Fostering and Kinship Care and to two Private Fostering support work posts. Consideration is also being given to a third Practice Manager post.

The advantages of the proposed restructuring have been identified: as improve chances of permanent recruitment to manager posts; streamlined teams to improve carer recruitment and reduce duplication; improve staff morale and increase ownership of the service vision and aims; target key areas of service delivery and increase professional development; provide career opportunities through the introduction of the senior Practitioner role; build on the positive strengths of both individuals and teams; introduce resources to meet the new private fostering requirements and increase administration support.

## ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

Newham fostering service has a transparent management structure with clear lines of accountability. Discussions with staff and staff files evidenced the provision of professional supervision and consultation. There is adequate administrative back up, office equipment and infrastructure to provide an efficient effective service.

All fostering service social workers understand the role of the children's social workers, and there is a clear understanding about how the fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together.

## SUFFICIENT STAFF/CARERS

## Staffing

The fostering service has a virtually permanent and stable workforce. Social work staff hold social work qualifications. Staff policies encourage the retention of staff. Staff are able to work from home, receive clear workloads and access to a range of training opportunities.

Staff benefit from a good system of peer support and reported that they felt supported and valued by their team managers. Staff appreciated the fact that managers made decisions give direction and are prepared to take their ideas and suggestions to senior management. Social work staff reported they liked "working for Newham, because it is non-profit making". Group and individual discussions with staff and management evidenced their hard work and staff commitment to good outcomes for children.

## Foster Carer Recruitment

The fostering service has developed a recruitment strategy and action plan. The service aim to increase the number of in-house carers by 50%, address the shortage of white foster carers, extend their recruitment catchment area and retain current in-house carers.

Campaign activity has included attendance at 'The Big Sunday' Olympic celebration event, press advertisements, posters at large supermarkets, Stratford Stations, advertising on buses, leaflets in libraries and other contact centres, information exhibitions in Stratford shopping Mall, Canary Wharf, Asda Beckton and Lakeside, a radio interview and the launch of a campaign with a celebrity guest. Self-addressed postcards are available to enable prospective applicants to express their interest.

Experienced foster carers are involved throughout the process by participating in recruitment drives, information sessions and preparation groups. The fostering service offers flexibility in facilitating preparation groups on Saturdays and holding both day and evening information sessions.

There is a clearly set out assessment process for carers. Foster carers are offered assistance in completing application forms. Competency based assessments are undertaken. Statistics are maintained to establish the number of enquiries, source, outcome of initial visits and assessments undertaken.

In the past year six foster carers have moved to private and voluntary agencies or resigned because of unresolved issues. Three foster carers additionally raised concerns during the Inspection. It is recommended that the

fostering service additionally consider a retention strategy, which complements their current recruitment strategy.

## FAIR AND COMPETENT EMPLOYER

Out of hours management and support services are available for foster carers. A whistle blowing policy is available and staff and foster carers evidenced an awareness of this policy. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and insurance for carers, children and staff, which covers all legal requirements.

## STAFF TRAINING

Newham demonstrated a commitment to the training needs and development of staff. Staff felt "they are offered a good range of training" and are encouraged to obtain their post qualifying qualifications. Courses include a specific induction for Children and Families staff, in-service training for new social workers which contributes to the underpinning knowledge for the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work (PQSW), a range of training developed by the Area Child Protection Committee, lunch time seminars, half day workshops, specific training on child care related issues and joint training with Adult Services.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT

The fostering service operates within an accountable and supportive structure. Staff discussions and examination of documentation evidenced that staff are properly accountable and are well supported within the fostering service. Staff had job descriptions in place. Staff generally receive regular supervision and were lack of supervision has been highlighted this has been appropriately addressed by management. The majority of staff have personal development plans and shortfalls are being progressed.

## MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF CARERS

Newham fostering service is commended for their support for foster carers. Therapeutic counselling support is available to assist foster carers. An example of this is in event of placement breakdown.

Monthly support groups are held, alternating between day and evening meetings to maximise attendance. Observation of the support group evidenced a creative, fun, thought provoking learning environment. Foster carers evidenced good peer support through the sharing of ideas and their experiences. Foster carers are additionally paid travel allowances for attending. A bi-monthly culturally specific support group is also provided for Asian foster carers.

The fostering service produces a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter highlights developments within the service, training, consultation, clarification of policies, staff and foster carer updates/successes, activities, events, poems and inspection information. Foster carers receive long service certificates and evidence was seen of acknowledgment for individuals' hard work e.g. sending flowers. In addition to general rewards with a recent New Year party for foster carers and children.

Foster carers are supported by a baby-sitting pool. A mentoring scheme for foster carers is being developed to match experienced foster carers with their new or inexperienced colleagues. This scheme would provide additional one-to-one peer support and advice. In addition to assisting with networking and adjusting to the fostering environment.

The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the foster carer. Supervisory social work visits are undertaken on a six weekly basis; with at least one unannounced visit a year. The fostering development team is commended for having a clear agenda for supervisory visits. These alternate between the more structured supervision visits and informal reflective support visits. Annual review reports are prepared and are presented to the Fostering Panel.

## SUPERVISION OF FOSTER CARERS

Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support.

All foster carers are provided with a Foster Carers' handbook, which is due to be revised to include the Children and Young People's procedure. All foster carers interviewed fully understood their fostering responsibilities. Foster care agreements ensure foster carers have a full understanding of what is expected of their roles.

## FOSTER CARER TRAINING

Newham fostering service is commended for their commitment to foster carer training. An annual foster carer training brochure is produced and foster carers are able to access training for social work staff, if there are vacancies. Mandatory training courses include Supervision and working with your Supervising Social Worker, Working with Parents and Managing Contact, Safe Caring, Working with sexually abused Children, Mental Health Issues and Counselling Skills and Educational needs of children in care.

The fostering service provides a NVQ programme for foster carers and an English language support scheme. In addition to a range of specialist workshops and early years and child care training. Documentation evidenced that foster carers had attended a range of training courses and courses are routinely evaluated. Foster carers are supported to attend training through reimbursement of their travel and babysitting costs.

## CHILDRENS CASE RECORDS

Nine children's files were examined for tracking purposes. Information was available with regards to the basis of the placement and details of the young people's legal status.

Documentation evidenced that appropriate, accessible records are kept, in relation to the fostering service and the individual foster carers and foster children. There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files, and clarifies what information is kept on the foster carer's files and what information is kept on the child's files.

## ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

The fostering service basic information is maintained by the CareFirst database. Staff receive specific information technology training and on site support. The restructured teams will be additionally improved by the introduction of the CareFirst 6.3 case management application. The new software with managed implementation will be the core to delivering significant financial and service quality benefits in the Carer Recruitment Team. This implementation is expected to begin in April and take two weeks to complete.

The fostering service keeps and updates separate records for staff, foster carers, children, complaints and allegations. Information about the procedures for dealing with complaints is widely available. Examination of the complaints and allegations evidenced that the fostering service managed issues appropriately.

Confidential records are stored securely at all times and there is a clear policy on access. There is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff for the keeping and retention of case files.

The system for keeping records is congruent with the Looking After Children System/Integrated Children's System. Written entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, and distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information.

## PREMISES

The fostering service is located in purpose built premises, off East Ham High Street. Fostering teams benefit from having a range of team rooms, a selection of office space, small library, kitchen, water cooler, waiting/ seating area and a conference room. All staff have their own desk, however there are plans to introduce a hot desking system. The ground floor is wheelchair accessible with a ramped entrance. Newham's cultural diversity is celebrated with a welcome sign in various languages on the outdoor entrance.

The premises has a small carpark and time limited metered parking is in operation in Wordsworth Avenue and surrounding streets. The nearest underground station is East Ham on the District Line. A range of bus routes also serve the area. East Ham High Street includes a wide range of national chains alongside culturally reflective shops and amenities.

The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records and an appropriate security system. Records are securely stored in filing cabinets. The premises and its contents are adequately insured. The agency was found to have adequate administrative and information technology systems.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY and PROCESS

The fostering service is able to respond financially to children's individual needs. The fostering service as previously mentioned, fund additional education and provide computers.

Procedures exist to manage situations of financial crisis. Regulations and guidelines imposed upon Local Authorities are complied with. The Head of Childrens Services stated that there is no overspend and financial spreadsheets confirmed this. The service is stringently managed commitments and budgets are regularly monitored and reviewed. Financial forecasts and trends are routinely produced and scrutinised.

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS CARERS

Kinship care is currently being developed within the fostering service. Newham is focusing in the right direction by appointing a specialist Practice Manager/Senior Practitioner post to lead on this unique and valued area of work.

Kinship carers are encouraged to apply for Residence Orders, with financial support. This process assists in removing children from the care system and provide the much needed security and stability. The fostering service is aware of the areas for improvement. It is recommended that a specific kinship care action plan is formulated to innovatively address the proposed areas of development.



# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion  
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	2
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	2
<b>30</b>	2

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	N/A

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	4

<b>ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	4
<b>29</b>	3

<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	2
<b>2</b>	3
<b>4</b>	3
<b>5</b>	3
<b>16</b>	3
<b>17</b>	3
<b>18</b>	3
<b>19</b>	3
<b>20</b>	3
<b>21</b>	4
<b>22</b>	3
<b>23</b>	4
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	3
<b>26</b>	3
<b>27</b>	3
<b>28</b>	3
<b>32</b>	3

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? No

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS1	3 (3) & (4)	The fostering service must ensure children are provided with a Children’s Guide, which specifically relates to the fostering service.	01/09/06
2.	FS8	38 (1)	The fostering service must ensure emergency placements do not exceed 24 hours and foster carers must not exceed numbers.	01/05/06
3.	FS15	20	Personnel files must be maintained in accordance with Schedule 1, The Fostering Services Regulation 2002.	01/05/06
4.	FS30	20 (3)	The fostering service must ensure where necessary Panel members’ files contain Criminal Record Bureau checks and two references.	01/05/06

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS1	The updated Statement of Purpose should include the numbers of complaints and their outcomes.
2.	FS4	Each fostering team should develop individual action plans.  An annual evaluation of the service should be produced.  Fostering teams should have greater involvement in placement planning, to eliminate drift.
3.	FS8	The matching process should detail how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs.  It should also identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate any gaps in the matching.
4.	FS17	A foster carer retention strategy should be considered.
5.	FS29	The fostering service should provide clear criteria and guidelines for discretionary payments and financial reimbursement claims.  Foster carers should additionally receive an annual financial statement.
6.	FS30	It is recommended that the Fostering Panel is more culturally reflective of the community it serves, has greater male representation and independent membership.
7.	FS30	It is recommended that a specific kinship care action plan is developed.

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