



**Making Social Care
Better for People**

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Newham Fostering Service

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

Lead Inspector
Paula Eaton

Announced Inspection
13th December 2006 09:30

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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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 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

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

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

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 20th February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Newham Fostering Service is situated in social services offices in Manor Park, London E12. The offices are close to local transport links and accessible to wheelchair users. The service comprises of three distinct teams that are all based in these offices.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team recruits and assesses prospective foster carers and adopters to ascertain their suitability for approval before presenting their case to panel.

The Fostering Support Team supports foster carers with the fostering task by visiting, telephone contact, dealing with any issues that arise, facilitating foster carer support groups and providing regular training sessions.

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.

Each team has a manager in place and there were two service managers in post at the time of the inspection.

The service offers short term and long-term foster placements; respite care and kinship care placements.

SUMMARY

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

This annual statutory inspection took place over four days. Time was spent in the offices of the service viewing case records, policies and procedures and interviewing staff. The service managers and team managers were spoken to. Three supervising social workers were interviewed, as were two placement and monitoring officers and a practice manager from the recruitment team. Four foster carers were visited in their homes and one young person was seen.

Staff assisted with the inspection process and were helpful throughout.

What the service does well:

The service has excellent health resources available to meet the needs of children and young people who are in foster care.

The service has excellent projects/resources in place to ensure that children and young people are consulted with in a variety of ways.

The service has a motivated and committed staff team.

The service is developing new initiatives for supporting and retaining foster carers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Support for foster carers has improved since the last inspection and new initiatives have been developed to improve support further.

The recording for the service has also improved.

What they could do better:

The service could improve monitoring systems to improve performance and efficiency and ensure that issues are addressed within reasonable timescales.

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 or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

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.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service promotes the health and development of children and young people who access the service.

EVIDENCE:

All approved foster carers receive a Foster Carer's Handbook, which contains information about foster carer's responsibilities with regard to meeting the health needs of the Looked After Children in their care.

The service has an established health team to support Looked After Children and their carers. This team consists of two Looked After Children's nurses; a sexual health worker, a drugs worker, teenage pregnancy nurse and a family planning worker had also been recruited since the last inspection.

Looked After Children are given a 'staying healthy' pack when moving in and this is in the form of a 'door tidy' and contains information and toiletries such as deodorant, a toothbrush and toothpaste. Young people also have access to health information on the Children's Rights website pages and in the Children's Guide for the department.

Foster carers were able to describe how they were meeting the health needs of the young people in their care by taking them for regular health check ups as required and recording the outcomes of any appointments. One foster carer in particular was looking after a child with very complex health needs and disabilities. This involved taking the child to many hospital appointments for treatment and physiotherapy. An Occupational Therapy assessment had also been carried out for this child and the resulting report was seen.

The young peoples files indicated that information is obtained on the details of their healthcare needs prior to a placement being made. It was evident from the records viewed that children and young people were registered with a GP and receiving regular health checks such as dental checks and eye tests.

The fostering service also provides a Foster Placement Support Service. This service assists foster carers and young people with managing any behavioural difficulties that are affecting the placement and/or the young person's well being. The service consists of a Clinical Psychologist and Systematic Family Therapist. These professionals are based within the Children and Families Consultation Service. If longer-term mental health or therapeutic needs are identified the service will refer the child/young person to other more appropriate services. This service is also available to Kinship carers and the young people placed with them.

Newham also has a support group in place called 'Positive Vibes' specifically to support children and young people affected by HIV and AIDS.

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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service has a good number of appropriately trained and experienced staff. The service matches children to carers of the same ethnic, cultural or religious background where possible and ensures that any gaps in the matching process are addressed. There are good systems in place to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect.

EVIDENCE:

The service is managed by individuals who are qualified and experienced to fulfil their roles. It was evident from the employee records viewed that Criminal records Bureau checks are renewed every three years. There was also evidence in the records viewed that references are verified prior to individuals commencing employment.

The four foster carers homes visited were all warm, homely and comfortable environments for the children placed in them. It was evident from the records viewed that health and safety checks of the foster carers homes were taking place on an annual basis. However, the Inspector was concerned that issues highlighted in health and safety checks were not been followed up and addressed. For example for one particular foster carer who is the long term

carer for a child with disabilities it was noted in the 2005 health and safety check that the child had outgrown the cot he was sleeping in. There was no evidence in the records viewed that this had been followed up and the issue was raised again when the next health and safety check was completed in 2006. At the time of the inspection the foster carer had only just received a bed for the young person, which meant that the child who has profound physical and learning disabilities was left for a year sleeping in a bed that was too small. Although the Inspector acknowledges that there were other issues being addressed with regard to this foster carers living situation it is not acceptable that this issue was not addressed sooner. It was also noted that the foster carer had been transporting the child to and from hospital appointments in a relative's car and that suitable safety restraints were not in place for the child. Again this issue had not been addressed and was only just being followed up at the time of the inspection.

The service does assist foster carers by providing equipment such as bedding, stair gates, fire guards and smoke alarms if needed.

The service has appropriate matching procedures in place. The Placement and Monitoring Team (PAM) are primarily responsible for finding an appropriate placement for children. Two PAM Officers were interviewed during the inspection, they were able to describe the referral process and the matching considerations made prior to a placement being made. For example, they said that they would consider the child's race, religion, culture and ethnicity, that they would look at the location of the child's school and family and any contact arrangements to be maintained. They also said that they would look at the foster carers situation, the impact the placement may have on other children in the placement as well as the skills and experience of individual foster carers. They also said that wherever possible they would discuss a placement with the supervising social worker before going ahead. The supervising social workers spoken to confirmed this.

The PAM Officers are also allocated cases for planned placements to arrange meetings and ensure consistency. Long-term placements are presented to panel for approval. The PAM Officers spoken to said that when emergency placements are made that do not fully meet the needs of children alternative placements are made as soon as possible.

The Foster Carers Handbook contains information on trans-racial placements, however this should be expanded to include information on how foster carers will be supported to address any gaps in the matching process.

The service has all of the appropriate policies and procedures in place regarding the protection of children and young people. For example, satisfactory Child Protection, safer caring, anti-bullying, behaviour management and missing child/young person policies and procedures were seen. The service follows the London Wide Child Protection procedures and

staff receive regular training updates on Child Protection issues. They also receive training on domestic violence and the links with Child Protection and risk assessments in child protection. Foster carers also receive training in safer caring and the preparation training also covers Child Protection issues.

The service has adequate systems in place to collect information on the numbers of allegations made in foster care. A summary of the allegations made from February 2006 was seen. Clear information regarding the nature of the allegations and the outcomes were recorded and appropriate action had been taken.

The Foster Carer's Agreement and behaviour management policies and procedures in place make clear that any form of corporal punishment is unacceptable.

The employment records for three members of permanent staff and two agency staff were viewed. These records were all in order and up to date.

The fostering panel was not observed during this inspection. The information kept for two independent panel members was viewed, appropriate checks had taken place and all of the required information was in place. Panel members receive annual training and are expected to observe a panel meeting and attend a training day prior to becoming a member of the panel. The panel procedures were viewed, these were satisfactory, however, these need to be expanded to include what process should be followed if panel members are not in agreement about a recommendation. At the time of the inspection the procedures just stated that the differing opinions would be recorded. The panel meeting minutes were viewed for two panel meetings. These were comprehensive and it was clear that detailed constructive discussions had taken place and that any identified issues had been followed up.

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.

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

7, 13 and 31

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service values diversity and strives to meet the diverse needs of the looked after children it cares for in the local community. The educational provision for the children placed is satisfactory. The short-term break service provided for parents ensures that parents remain the main carers for the child where appropriate.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has appropriate policies and procedures in place regarding equal opportunities and valuing diversity and the service aims to match foster carers with children and young people from the same cultural, religious and linguistic background wherever possible.

Newham is a very diverse community and the service strives to ensure that the foster carers in the borough reflect this diversity. The assessment process explores the attitudes of prospective foster carers with regard to diversity issues.

The service had recently celebrated Black History month by arranging a celebratory event for foster carers and children. This included putting a large map of the world on the wall and encouraging children and foster carers to place a pin with their name attached to the place in the world that they were from.

One foster carer said that her supervising social worker had helped her find out information about the Vietnamese community and to locate the nearest Buddhist temple for a young person in her care. She had also provided the young person with an electronic thesaurus to help him with the translation of Vietnamese and English words.

Newham has an active Children's Rights service that organises some social activities and events for children such as ice-skating and fun days. It was also evident from talking to foster carers that they encourage young people to pursue any hobbies or interests.

Newham has a computer initiative in place that loans computers for the use of Looked After Children in foster care and they will also provide desks for children over the age of eleven who require them. The service has an Education Handbook in place for foster carers that provides very detailed information about all aspects of education and expectations.

The service provides a short-breaks service for birth parents and foster carers as required. Parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs where appropriate.

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.

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

10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Contact arrangements are made clear and foster carers are supported to ensure that appropriate contact is maintained between children and their families. The service consults children, young people and foster carers in various different ways to ensure that their views are heard.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a policy on contact arrangements and information is also included for foster carers in the Foster Carer's Handbook. All of the foster carers visited were aware of the importance for children of maintaining contact with their families and significant others. One foster carer said that her foster child's siblings visited often at the house and another foster carer described how the young person in her care went to a relative's house for dinner regularly. Contact arrangements were clearly recorded in the records viewed and any restrictions made clear.

The service consults with children and young people in various ways. As mentioned earlier Newham has an active Children's Rights service for young people up to the age of twenty-five. They also have a Looked After Children's reference group that meets monthly where issues are discussed and young people are encouraged to contribute their views regarding service issues. For example, the minutes for two recent meetings showed that the Green Paper, the organisation of a fun day and pathway plans had been discussed with the young people.

The service also has a Befriender scheme in place for Looked After Children between the ages of ten and seventeen. This scheme helps to promote young peoples social and leisure networks and care leavers over the age of nineteen are trained and supported to provide this service.

Children, foster carers and parents or the person with parental responsibility are consulted prior to foster carers annual reviews in the way of questionnaires. The format for the children and young people is produced in a very child friendly format.

Children and young people are given information about how to make a complaint.

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)

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

29

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Foster carers are paid a sufficient allowance to ensure they are able to meet the needs of the children placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

Detailed information regarding allowances is provided in the Foster Carers Handbook. Extra financial support can be agreed for placements where children have complex needs and additional monies are provided toward the cost of annual holidays, birthdays, cultural celebrations etc.

The foster carers spoken to were clear about how the allowance should be used and said that they received their payments promptly. Foster carers save money for each child placed with them. The London Borough of Newham regularly reviews the foster carers allowance.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 32

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service provides good support and training for foster carers. The service has a stable and well-managed staff team and adequate systems in place for monitoring and evaluating service performance.

EVIDENCE:

The service has an appropriate Statement of Purpose in place that contains all of the required information. It had been reviewed and updated in November 2006. Newham has a Children's Guide in place that contains very detailed and lengthy information about all aspects of Children's services and being Looked After. Although the service is to be commended for the detail in this document it is too detailed and not in a suitable format for children and young people. The service must produce a 'child friendly' Children's Guide specific to the fostering service that outlines all the information and contact details children require.

The service has a clear management structure in place. The service has had some difficulties retaining management staff for the service, which has led to some staff feeling unsettled and frustrated, as some projects have taken a long time to be approved and implemented as a result. However, a new service manager had joined the service and posts for team managers were being advertised at the time of the inspection. There were also social work staff vacancies that were in the process of being filled.

Supervising social workers have a caseload of up to fifteen foster carers, which staff generally felt was manageable. However, social workers felt that they were expected to carry out various administration tasks that were not part of their role, for example letters for support groups and the paperwork for Criminal Records Bureau check renewals.

The PAM Officers said that the service only uses Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) that have been approved by PAN London and that inspection reports were sometimes viewed for IFA's and that occasionally they were visited as part of the monitoring process.

It was noticed that foster carers annual reviews were not always taking place on time. It is important that there is an effective monitoring system in place to ensure that reviews take place on time.

All of the social workers spoken to said that they receive professional supervision on a monthly basis and that on going training and development is provided. For example, one PAM Officer said that Newham was supporting her to complete her social work qualification and the other was completing NVQ level 4 training.

The service has adequate recruitment strategies in place. Proposals were in place to update the service website to include a recruitment page incorporating information on fostering, Kinship care and Private Fostering. Foster carers are mainly recruited through word of mouth, advertising in local newspapers, some radio advertising and by setting up stalls in local shopping areas and at community events.

The service has a comprehensive assessment process in place for prospective foster carers. All of the assessments viewed were detailed and covered all areas of competency.

All of the foster carers spoken to felt supported by the team especially by their supervising social workers. One foster carer said 'When I need help I get it, I just have to ask'. Support groups are held each month and are alternated between evenings and afternoons to allow everyone the opportunity to attend. A crèche is available for children during the day time support group and some childcare costs are met. The foster carers spoken to said they found the support groups useful to share ideas.

There is also a quarterly newsletter for foster carers two of which were seen. They contained information about activities and events that had taken place such as the Black History Month celebrations and a picnic in the park. They also contained useful information about out of hours services, retirement ages for foster carers and information on new staff members.

A proposal had been put forward for developing a mentoring scheme to train/recruit a pool of about fifteen experienced foster carers to provide support and guidance to new and inexperienced foster carers. This scheme was due to be implemented shortly. A Valuing Foster Carers group had also been set up to look at ways of increasing the support for foster carers.

As mentioned earlier it was noted that foster carers annual reviews were not always taking place on time. This needs to be addressed.

Foster carers receive an informative handbook that they can refer to. Supervising social workers were aware of their responsibilities regarding visiting foster carers and foster carers said that they were visited at least six weekly and that the number of visits had improved. One foster carer also said that she had regular email contact with her supervising social worker in between visits.

Complaints and allegations are appropriately managed and monitored and the department had only had five complaints in the last twelve months.

A training programme has been developed for foster carers and a training brochure produced. Prospective foster carers complete preparation training and then once approved complete induction training. Then carers are expected to complete nine mandatory courses within their first two years as a foster carer that include, Children's Rights, Education of Looked After Children, First Aid, Life Story Work, Separation and Identity, Safer Caring, Mental Health issues and counselling skills and Preventing Allegations. Other training courses are also offered and foster carers are given the opportunity to complete their NVQ level 3 training. One foster carer said that the training provided was very good

and that it had 'opened her eyes' to what the fostering task would entail. Training is addressed at the foster carers annual review.

The case files for four children were viewed. These were generally in order and up to date and contained all of the required information. Records viewed during the inspection were generally up to date and in order and all records were kept securely.

Assessments of Kinship care arrangements are completed and then presented to the fostering panel for approval. One Kinship carer was visited during the inspection. She said that support was available when she needed it and that she received regular visits from the department. Regular visits take place and support is provided as required.

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	1
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	3

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

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

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

YES

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

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. (Timescale of 01/09/06 not complied with)	01/08/07
2	FS6	27(2)(d)	Issues raised during health and safety checks of foster carers homes must be followed up and addressed within acceptable timescales.	01/02/07
3	FS21	29(2)	Annual foster carer reviews must take place on time.	01/04/07

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	FS8	The section in the Foster Carers Handbook relating to trans-racial placements should be expanded to include information regarding how foster carers will be supported to address any gaps in the matching process.
2	FS16	A more effective system for monitoring annual foster carer reviews should be developed.
3	FS30	The fostering panel procedures section on disagreement between panel members should be expanded to include how such matters will be resolved.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

East London Area Office

Ferguson House

113 Cranbrook Road

Ilford

London

1G1 4PU

National Enquiry Line

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI