



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**London Borough of Waltham Forest Fostering
Service**

**Fostering and Adoption Assessment Team
1C The Drive
Walthamstow
London
E17 3BN**

Lead Inspector
Harun Rashid

Announced Inspection
26th January 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

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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 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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	London Borough of Waltham Forest Fostering Service
Address	Fostering and Adoption Assessment Team 1C The Drive Walthamstow London E17 3BN
Telephone number	020 8496 2437
Fax number	
Email address	richard.paton@soc.lbwf.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Barbarba Foster
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 5th January 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The aim of the London Borough of Waltham Forest's fostering service is to provide a quality fostering service to meet the needs of the diverse local community. They are committed to the provision of a range of placements and placement choice. Fostering services include task centred (short term), shared care/respice, pre adoptive and permanent placements and placements with friends and family for children between 0 -18 yrs who are looked after by the local authority under the Children Act 1989. Where the needs of children and young people cannot be met from within the local authority fostering service, provision is commissioned from independent fostering agencies. These agencies are monitored by the Access to Resources Team and also through arrangements made within the Pan London Agreement, (this is an organisation comprising the London Boroughs who have come together to negotiate contracts and organise monitoring of children's services provided by the independent sector). The London Borough of Waltham Forest embraces diversity and difference in all aspects of its work and strives to provide foster carers who reflect the racial mix of the local community.

SUMMARY

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

The statutory announced inspection was conducted by two inspectors from 26/1/06 to 31/1/06.

Prior to this, a pre-inspection meeting took place on 8/12/05 with the lead inspector and the management of the fostering services in order to devise the inspection programme. The lead inspector met a number of foster carers and children on 10/12/05 in the Christmas party in Chingford. The lead inspector attended fostering service's panel meeting on 13/12/05 and interviewed ten foster carers on 13/1/06. The lead inspector also visited two foster carers and children in their own home on 30/1/06.

The lead inspector examined the agency's policies and procedures.

The lead inspector examined four staff files; eight foster carers files, children files and interviewed nine members of staff including team managers, deputy managers, social workers and an administrator.

What the service does well:

The service ensures young persons/children's health and well being at all times. They have access to on site LAC nurse and a paediatrician.

All managers and social workers are qualified and have working experiences in childcare.

Foster carers were recruited from a diverse ethnic community mainly living in the borough.

The agency provides training to its staff and foster carers in order to meet young person/children's needs adequately.

All staff receive regular supervision from their line managers and foster carers receive four weekly supervision and support from their support social workers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The management worked hard with the staff team in order to meet most of the requirements and recommendation made at the last inspection.

All managers and social workers attended competency based assessment training. They are now completing F1 and F2 assessment forms, which is very comprehensive and detailed with information.

Since the last inspection the agency employed four deputy managers and two of the posts in assessment team were funded by Choice Protects Grants.

What they could do better:

Following concerns have been raised through this report.

The registered provider must amend the group manager's job description by including her role and responsibilities as a registered manager of the fostering services.

The manager to ensure that all health and safety checks are completed on foster carers home at least annually.

The manager to ensure that any placements made outside approval category have appropriate exceptions in place.

The registered provider to ensure that observers of panel do not take part in panel for approval of foster carer.

Record keeping was poor in some areas and further work is needed in this respect.

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.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- 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 outcomes for the following standard(s): 12

Foster carers support each child to receive health care and enable them to assist with physical, emotional and social development. The agency provides onsite medical assistance for looked after children.

EVIDENCE:

Foster children have written health record called "Health Fax". The Health Fax is developed by Waltham Forest Community Services and Waltham Forest NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT). This contains relevant information on the health needs of every child, the health services available to them and general health advice. In addition to this there is health screening and nurse designated to work with children. The agency has recruited another new part-time Looked After Children (LAC) nurse since the last inspection. Therefore at present a full and a part time LAC nurse employed by the agency in order to support looked after children/young persons with meeting their health care needs. A paediatrician and LAC nurses are based in the agency's premises and all children have access to these medical services at all times.

The placement agreement of the agency contains a full description of the health needs of the children and clear procedures governing consent for children to receive medical treatments.

Foster carers handbook contains information about health promotion, hygiene and first aid. Foster carers ensure that all children receive health care, which meets individual needs for physical, emotional and social development. Allocated social workers monitor children's health and wellbeing during their four weekly visits.

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, and 15 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 and 30

The inspectors are concerned about the accuracy of information presented to panel, how the panel was run and recommendations being made without relevant checks in place. This potentially places young people at risk.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service employ team managers and social workers who are suitably qualified and have experiences in relevant field. The agency ensures safeguarding and promoting welfare of looked after children. Four staff files were examined during the inspection process including two new recruits. The agency obtained two reference letters for appointed staff prior to appointments. The management informed that telephone enquiries were made to follow up written references. All documents including staff's qualification records, a full employment history, photocopies of current passports and Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosures.

However, the registered provider to amend group manager's job description by including her role and responsibilities as a registered manager of the fostering services. This is an outstanding from previous two inspection report; failure to comply with this within new timescale the Commission will consider to take enforcement action.

Two Fosters carers homes were visited by the lead inspector. All homes were warm, adequately furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and were free of avoidable hazards. Children have their own beds and spaces available for privacy. As part of foster carers induction training health and safety issues are covered.

However, at the time of the discussion with foster carers on 13/1/06 a kinship foster carer informed that currently she is accommodating six children (including two of her own) in two bedrooms. This carer's file was examined by the lead inspector and discussed the matter with the management. It was evident that this carer had a review on 23/1/06 and it was recorded that the local authority has agreed to provide all cost for a loft conversion. The work should commence at the end of January which will create another two bedrooms and a toilet/bath for the looked after children.

Health and safety checks are completed as part of foster carers reviews. However one case tracked showed no evidence that the health and safety check on the accommodation was completed at the 05 review. The inspector was informed that the check was complete but no evidence could be produced at the time of inspection. Previous check in June 04 showed no concerns. Concerns with regard to health and safety were highlighted on documentation take to panel for the foster carers review.

Through the tracking of care it was noted that in the past that young people has shared rooms, one case was later deemed inappropriate. The inspector discussed this with service and was informed that current practise is that no placements are made if young people have to share unless the placement is a young baby sharing with the carers. Is it recommended that existing placements where young people share rooms are reviewed and assessments are completed to ensure that children and young people are appropriately placed. Decisions taken must be clearly recorded on foster carers file.

Protocols and guidelines have been put in place to assist the Access to Resources team in their roles of matching for potential placements and gate keeping. Request for placement have to be agreed by the managers of placing social workers and documentation received prior to placement. Weekly placement/LAC panel considers all requests for placement and reviews these three monthly basis. The agency aim to effectively match with appropriate carers of the same racial, religious and cultural background. Where a full match had not been possible the closest match available had been offered. However, in two cases two white children were placed with Asian families. One child is approximately one year old and waiting to be adopted. The other child who expressed his wish to remain with the Asian family this was recorded on his file.

Through the tracking of care a case indicated concerns that there had been concerns with regards to a trans cultural placement. There is no evidence to show how the agency provided the foster family with additional, support and

information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of her/his heritage.

There was also concern as the foster carers registered highlighted that carers had young people placed outside age approval or had more young people placed than approved for. This was discussed with management who acknowledges that exceptions were always in place.

In the borough there are fewer white foster carers than white children needing placement. The agency has formed a consortium with the London Borough of Havering to address this issue.

All foster carers were given training in safe care and child protection. Carers interviewed were aware of safe care issues. The agency has a guideline on the non-use of corporal punishment. Child protection guidelines were included in the foster carers information manual. Foster carers were provided a written procedure for use if a child is missing from home.

London Borough of Waltham Forest has a written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children. Foster carers and staff files were examined and all have enhanced CRB checks in files.

The management team, social workers have several years of working experiences in social care with children and young peoples. Staff interviewed have knowledge of childcare practises and informed the inspector that they have read previous inspection reports and familiar with Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

The lead inspector attended panel meeting on 13/12/05. The panel represented professional expertise in health and education. The panel members also consisted of a councillor and a member who had experience of being a looked after child. Panel members attended various training including competency based assessment training.

The lead inspector noticed that a foster carer had to wait more than six months for the approval of the panel. The reason was given that allocated social worker's assessments were not up to the standard. As a result new social worker was allocated for re-assessing the foster carer.

The independent chair of the panel was interviewed. She has completed her three years term and the agency is in the process of recruiting a new chair.

There was evidence seen on panel minutes where there were outstanding issue for example minutes of November 05 no reference for a foster carer however

panel still made a recommendation to approve. This is deemed poor practise, as all relevant paperwork must be in place prior to presentation to panel to ensure that panel are fully informed.

In one case approval was recommended in October 05 however a reference from the previous independent agency was outstanding. A young person was placed prior to this being received, which again is deemed poor practise.

The September minuets were used as part of case tracking; major concerns were raised as the panel minutes reflect that observers of panel took an active part. Once more this is poor practise, as this does not reflect an independent panel. Through the cross-tracking of information further concerns were raised as some of the information given to panel was factually incorrect and it is the inspectors view that important information was omitted. For example dates were omitted which changed the context of the information being presented. Additionally there was an issue regarding failure of carers attending training however panel did not have full information of the problems that had occurred.

Inspector had access a selection of minutes of previous panel meetings; it was noted that the months of September 05, November 05, and December 05 were not quorate as at present the panel has social worker representation but they do not work within the fostering service as such there was no social worker representing the service present. It is clear that is the responsibility of the chair of the panel to ensure that fostering panel meeting are conducted in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations.

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 and 31

The agency recruited Foster carers from diverse community groups and promote equal opportunities. Carers support each child to receive health care and enable them with child development. The agency provides short-term breaks for children when requested.

EVIDENCE:

Children's questionnaires and discussion confirmed that they were given basic key information about help and support available for them. Foster cares ensure that they provide care to children which respects and preserve their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Carers employed in the borough were of a mixture of racial backgrounds including Afro-Caribbean, Asian and white European. However, as stated before that in the borough there are fewer white foster carers than white children needing placement. The agency formed a consortium with the London Borough of Havering to address this issue. Foster carers interviewed informed that they encourage children to develop their interests and hobbies both inside and outside the home.

Unaccompanied children who are asylum seekers are now being persuaded through the mainstream process on LAC panel and placement procedure thus enabling these peoples to access placement and fostering services in same was as others.

Valuing diversity was raised as a concern during a panel meeting for one carer however there was no evidence that this was addressed by the supervision social worker. One social worker stated in interview that valuing diversity was discussed with foster carers, however it was not evidenced in any recording on file. It is the inspectors' view that supervising social workers must be proactive in this area and record such issues.

Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they provide environment in which education and learning are valued for example, they encourage children to attend school and offer support with home tasks. All foster carers are provided with a computer (by the agency) for use by children /young persons in foster care. Children were spoken to were happy with this arrangements. There is a mechanism whereby school attendance is monitored by an educational advisor of the local education Authority. Panel minutes indicated that, an education advisor attends LAC panel meetings on regular basis. However, pre-inspection materials forwarded to the commission failed to highlight the panel member with expertise in education. Children who are excluded/discharged from their school have access to alternative options through Fairbridge.

The Foster Placement Agreement identify where financial responsibility lies for all school costs, including school uniform, schools trips and equipment. The group manager informed that six of their former LAC children are currently attending various university courses.

Following the recommendation of the previous inspection report the management of the agency has developed a specific written policies and procedures for the short-breaks for children in foster care. The inspectors were informed that this support is provided on a case-by-case basis. However, foster carers informed that there is in adequate respite services are available in the borough. The inspectors were informed that fosters carers arrange short-term breaks between themselves. It is recommended that further work be done to ensure that carers are receiving adequate support.

The group manager informed that they provide short-breaks for children as and when required from private and voluntary sectors. The agency also purchases activity based respite care from the organisation like P.G.L. At present a child with multiple disabilities receives a fortnightly respite service from a private/voluntary sector. The management informed that this can be arranged as and when required basis. Fosters carers also arrange short-term breaks between themselves.

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 and 11

The agency assists foster carers and children to maintain contact with their natural parents. Carers listen to looked after children and their wishes and feeling are recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has a clear procedure how appropriate contacts arrangements should be conducted. Contacts are usually taking place in carer's family home or previously agreed setting like fostering service's premises. Carers views on maintaining contact were assessed prior to them being recommended to panel. Carers visited informed that they kept records of contact visits and how these had progressed. Views of children were sought and given weight in determining contact arrangements. Financial support is provided to carers for transport or other costs involved in ensuring contacts take place at the desired frequency and in suitable places.

The service has a review process; wishes and feeling of children are noted during the process. The inspector was informed that a quality questionnaire to children prior to the annual review. This information included in the annual review process by the quality assurance manager. Eight Children/ young person spoken to and 33 children's questionnaires received confirmed that they were listened to by their foster carers. During the inspection it was noted that files were lacking in children's views. This is particularly important at foster carers annual reviews.

The complaint procedure of the service was issued to all young people of suitable age as part of the child information book. Carers support children how to raise any concerns or complaints to appropriate authority. It was evident

from the examination of file that a child was able to complaint against his foster carer who had hit him. The child was removed from the home and the agency is in the process of removing the foster carer from the register.

The group manager informed that all complaint received against the service is logged on centrally to the council's complaint section. The agency does not maintain records of all informal and formal complaints received and how these were dealt with. It is therefore recommended that this be done for tracking purposes and to assist the Quality Assurance monitoring of the service.

Children are given contact number and address of the Children's Right Officer to contact should they needed to. Quality assurance forms are being completed to give feedback from social workers, young persons and foster carers when a child leaves any placement.

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 and 29

The agency ensures independent living training for young persons in care. Foster cares receive weekly allowances on time and this is paid in line with nationally recommended rate.

EVIDENCE:

A policy for preparing young people for independent living was in place. Carers received training on preparing young people for independent living. The planned training programmes for the young peoples enable them to work towards independence, promote awareness of drug and alcohol problems, and provide sex education training. Preparation for leaving care are provided by Pathway Plan who provide services for children are sixteen plus.

There is a written policy on fostering allowances. This is and current allowance levels are published and provided annually to each carer. Since the last inspection the allowances have been increased which is now provided in line with nationally recommended rate. The management informed that from April this year foster carers will receive an increase of 2.5% in their weekly allowances. The management provides breakdown of allowances to carers.

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 and 32

There is a clear management structure of the agency. The agency provides regular supervision to its staff members. Social workers have awareness of child care practise. However, the record keeping of supervisory visits were poor.

EVIDENCE:

Following the recommendation of the previous inspection report, the management has developed the Statement of Purpose further. This has clearly stated the aims and objectives of the service. The London Borough of Waltham Forest fostering services using British Association for Adoption and Fosterling's (BAAF)' A guide for children and young peoples' as the children's guide. The agency also developed a written Children's Charter and a separate guide for children and young people how to complaint whatever type of placement they are in.

The group manager, as overall manager of the agency, is experienced in childcare and in the management of fostering services. She is a qualified social worker and obtained B.A. in social administration, postgraduate diploma in applied social studies and also post graduate diploma in organisational and development in public services. She has been working in childcare since 1976 and holding senior management positions since 1995. The borough has nominated her for the public servants of the year award 2006.

Ten members of staff interviewed were aware of lines of communication and of accountability between management, staff and foster carers. Information on fees and charges was included in the prospectus provided to placing officers. Statements of the amounts paid to carers were detailed in the information provided. The group manager is the budget holder who has access to weekly budget information, which is electronically maintained by the borough called 'SAP' system.

Staff files examined and ten staff interviewed confirmed that they all had clear job descriptions, which set out duties, and responsibilities, the level of delegation and responsibility of the managers and lines of accountability were clearly defined. In the absence of the group manager, her peer (the family support services group manger) substitutes for her in order to make decisions.

A clear management structure existed. Three team mangers (and adoption team manager) were operationally line managed by the group manager and they all receive monthly supervision. Deputy managers and link social workers are line managed by their managers who supervise foster carers and ensure reviews and approval of carers took place when required.

Staff and carers undertake ongoing training for professional development. Eight carer's files examined indicated that they maintain training portfolio.

All team managers and social workers are qualified and have working experiences in childcare settings. There has been improvement in recruitment since the last inspection; the agency has recruited two deputy managers in assessment team and two other deputy managers in other two teams.

The borough has a retention package for managers and social workers. Following the recommendation of the previous inspection report, the agency has introduced competency-based assessment and managers and staff attended training.

Foster carers receive 4 weekly supervision from the support social workers. Where concerns rose with carers practise this was processed through in supervision. The lead inspector received 38 foster carers questionnaires and interviewed 13 foster carers, vast majority of them expressed their satisfaction with out of hour's service they received.

Through the tracking of care it was noted that in one the first visit to a foster carers by the supervising social worker was unannounced this is deemed poor practise. The recording of supervisory visits was poor. One file tracked supervision reports were not found and had to be searched for on the electronic system.

Additionally it was found that no record had been made of a visit to a carer for six months. The team manager informed that although 4 weekly support visits took place as planned however the allocated social worker failed to record these on contact sheet or ISIS.

Additionally concern was raised as the electronic system does not indicate the actual date of the visit and not all reports were copied to file. One of the electronic formats had been updated printed and updated by hand. Additionally the foster carers had not signed some reports.

There was no evidence within the supervision records of the supervising social worker helping foster care to develop skills where weak areas had been identified. For example with regard to matching and valuing diversity, which have been highlighted in this report and separate recommendations have been made.

There is a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers, children and staff. Carers and staff attended health and safety courses. The agency has a public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers.

The training programme was seen which was distributed to staff and carers. Training for carers were planned including life story work, behaviour management, children exposed to substance misuse. A foster carer showed life storybooks of the children to the inspectors. Staff interviewed confirmed that the training programmes of the agency is very comprehensive and supportive for their professional developments. All members of staff mentioned that they have attended competency based assessment training, which equipped them to complete comprehensive F1 and F2 assessment forms.

There was a weak area identified with regard to out of borough placements and as such foster carers sometimes do not attend training. There was a lack

of evidence to show how the agency facilitates attendance by foster carers, for example by including convenient times and venues and by providing childcare and reasonable expenses. It is the inspector view that the supervising social Workers could address some training issues through supervision sessions.

All staff have clear written details of the responsibilities expected of them, together with the policies and procedures of the agency. Each team conduct a weekly meeting and management meetings take place on fortnightly basis. Staff interviewed confirmed that they were receiving monthly supervision from their supervisors and six monthly staff appraisals. Minutes of the staff meetings and supervision were available for inspection.

Foster carers interviewed (except two kinship carers) and 38 questionnaires received confirmed their satisfaction with the training provided by the agency. Training evaluation of the agency indicated that 92% of the foster carers found the training was enjoyable and met their training needs. The agency encourage carers to attend Foster Carers Support Group meeting where they can meet together to discuss various issues with regard to sharing information and raise concerns as required. During the meeting foster carers informed that they and children in their care would benefit from a having a 'Contact Centre'. The group manager informed that it is one of the highest priorities for them this year.

On approval Foster carers signed agreement with the agency which clarify their role and responsibilities to children and to the agency. Carers receive supervision from their support social workers on four weekly basis.

Eight foster carers files examined had copies of supervision notes. Feedback received from carers confirmed that they were all supported by the agency and staff were available to them to listen to their concerns.

Record about allegations of abuse are kept and monitored and there is a policy, which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the agency register for example a child alleged that his foster carer hit him. The child was removed from the carer immediately and child protection meeting took place and the manager informed that this in the process for removing this foster carer from the agency's register by the panel.

The agency provides pre-approval and induction training for each carer including opportunities to benefit from experience and knowledge of existing carers. A newly appointed foster carer informed that she attended pre-approval training and she also met other Asian foster carers which helped her to make a decision to be a foster care. The training fits within a framework of equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practice and training on safe caring provided.

Foster carers were clear on the agency's requirements on record keeping.

Foster carers who does not have English as their first language they can maintain their records in their first languages. The agency offers translation facilities to those records. Carers interviewed confirmed that they were clear as to the type of information, which needed to be shared with the social workers. Cares provide dairies to record significant events and its was evident during the inspector's visit to carers that they kept record of events took place.

Separate accessible records were hold for staff, foster cares, children, complaints and allegations. With the exception of the case already referred to support social workers record their 4 weekly visits to foster carers on 'ISIS' an electronically record system. It was evident that support visits information recorded in ISIS were printed out and placed in carers' files.

During the inspection concerns were raised as one of the fosters carers file did not contain key information. On discussion with management it was apparent that there were several files. It is important that all key information is transferred on to the working file. It was additionally noted that the files were disorganised and there were inconsistencies in receiving for example dates of when the young people were placed. It was also noted that documents not signed dated correctly.

From the tour of the premises and discussion with staff and foster carers it was evident that the premises are suitable for its stated purpose. The office has suitable computer systems for administrative functions. The agency is suitably served by phone and fax facilities. Records are stored in a lockable cabinet. Appropriate insurance certificate was displayed.

The agency operates in line with the London Borough of Waltham Forest policies and procedures with regard to financial systems. The agency has written sets of principles and standards governing its financial management and accounts are maintained and properly audited by registered accountants. The group manager informed that the agency is financially viable and government funding for fostering services is available to improve the placement choice.

The group manager informed that deputy manager's posts were funded by Choice Protects grants to support foster carers. Assessment team appointed two deputy managers, one of whom takes lead on managing kinship services and other on private fostering services. Kinship foster carers are provided training and carers interviewed were aware of their roles and responsibilities. There is a support group for kinship carers where they are able to discuss various issues affecting them and share information with others in the group. However, two carers spoken to indicated that they were not always informed of the training and support groups. It is recommended that information regarding kinship foster carers' support group and training programmes be provided to all kinship carers on an individual basis and monitor this accordingly.

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	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	2
6	2
8	2
9	3
15	3
30	1

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	2

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	3
4	3
5	3
16	3
17	3
18	3
19	3
20	3
21	3
22	2
23	3
24	3
25	2
26	3
27	3
28	3
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	FS3	21.1(b)	The registered provider to amend the group manager's job description by including her role and responsibilities as a registered manager of the fostering agency. (Time scale of 01/06/05 not met)	30/06/06
2	FS6	23	The registered provider must ensure that all health and safety checks are completed on Foster Carers home at least annually. Copies of such checks must be recorded on to foster carers files.	31/03/06
3	FS8	33	The registered provider must ensure that any placements made outside approval category have appropriate exceptions in place.	31/03/06
4	FS30	28	The registered provider must ensure that observers of panel do not take part in panel	31/03/06
5	FS30	27	The registered provider must ensure that all information is up to date and accurate before cases are presented to panel	31/03/06
6	FS30	25.2	The registered provider must ensure that panel is quorate at all times in line with regulation	31/03/06

7	FS22	35	The registered provider must ensure that all supervision sessions are recorded accurately, agreed by carers and made available on foster carers files.	31/03/06
8	FS25	30	The registered provider must ensure that all staff maintain accurately and keep up to date records as specified in the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and Schedules 1-8.	31/03/06

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	FS6	Is it recommended that existing placements where young people share rooms are reviewed and assessments are completed to ensure that children and young people are appropriately placed. Decisions taken must be clearly recorded on foster carers file.
2	FS8	It is recommended that supervising social worker record support provided to foster carers where transracial placements to enable the young person to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of their heritage.
3	FS7	It is recommended that supervising social workers must be proactive in valuing diversity and record any issues that need addressing and how this is to be achieved by the foster carers and social worker working together.
4	OP31	It is recommended that further work be done to ensure foster carers are fully aware of the information regarding short-breaks for children that further work is done to ensure that carers are receiving adequate support.
5	FS11	It is recommended that young people views are clearly recorded on individual files.
6	FS23	It is recommended that the agency look at how out of

		borough placements are to be supported and develop clear guidance for supervision social worker.
7	FS11	It is recommended that the agency maintain a record of all complaint received and how these were dealt with.
8	FS32	It is recommended that information regarding kinship foster carers' support group and training programmes be provided to all kinship carers on an individual basis and monitor this accordingly.

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