



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### London Borough of Haringey Fostering Service

**Childrens Division  
40 Cumberland Road  
Wood Green  
London  
N22 7SG**

*Lead Inspector*  
Tola Akinde-Hummel

*Announced Inspection*  
29th November 2005      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

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<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8489 1981
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<b>Email address</b>	
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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	London Borough of Haringey
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Ms Rachel Elizabeth Clare Oakley
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	0
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      17th January 2005

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

The Haringey Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains and supports a range of fostering resources to meet the diverse needs of Haringeys Looked After Children. At the time of inspection the fostering service provided fostering placements to 172 children and have recruited 18 foster carers in the last year. The fostering service is divided into three teams, the under 11's team the over 11's team and the Long term and Kinship care team. Each team has a manager and supervising social workers. A senior team manager has recently been recruited to oversee the work of the three teams and the independent reviewing officer and the learning and development co ordinator. There are two administrative posts within the teams and a designated panel administrator for the fostering and adoption panels.

# SUMMARY

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

Two inspectors, Mrs Tola Akinde-Hummel and Ms Rebecca Bauers conducted the inspection over a total of five days. The days involving inspection activity included 29, 30 November, 1,2, and 6 December (evening).

The methodology followed included interviews with the Service Manager and the Senior Team Manager, The three Team Managers and a selection of supervising Social Workers involved in the support to foster carers whose records were selected for case tracking. The Learning and Development manager and the Chair of the fostering panel were also interviewed. The fostering panel was also observed and the inspectors also attended a foster carer support group where approximately twenty-five carers were in attendance.

The case tracking of nine files of young people and eight foster carer files took place including visiting three foster carers and meeting three young people. One carer was interviewed by telephone. Surveys were distributed by The London Borough of Haringey to foster carers and young people, these were analysed to help inform the inspection.

Policies and procedures were sampled to find out if systems are in place and how accessible they are to young people, foster carers and staff working within the service.

Young people returned a total of seventeen questionnaires, and foster carers returned fourteen.

Some foster carers surveys and foster carers present at the foster carers support group highlighted some issues in relation to the staffing levels in the service as foster carers stated that their telephone calls and emails are sometimes unanswered. Other foster carers stated that they do not feel valued by the service whilst doing a good job in difficult circumstances. This was echoed at the foster carers support group. Nine foster carers stated that they are not asked their opinion about how services are organised.

The young peoples surveys are overwhelmingly positive. Young people had positive attitudes towards their placements and the support offered within the fostering service. Fifteen young people believe their opinions are listened to with ten young people stating this happens most of the time. Fifteen young people know how to complain and who to complain to. All young people stated they were supported with their education, receive guidance on keeping safe and are able to spend their own money. However many young people are unclear if they have a written plan of care. This may be due to the terminology used in the CSCI surveys which differs from that used by the fostering service.

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

Staff within the fostering team generate a level of enthusiasm amongst themselves about the future development of the service. They are optimistic that change can take place in a creative and planned manner.

The teams are supportive of each other and are innovative in their ideas. Work is underway to begin a men who foster group that male foster carers will help set up and will then manage themselves. The fostering service is a nurturing and supportive environment and this support runs across teams. Staff generally feels they are well supported by managers and where there are limitations can seek support from colleagues. Staff state that they regularly receive supervision and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

The service introduced action-learning sets for foster carers facilitated by supervising social workers who received training developed by an independent organisational consultant. These sets have proved successful with carers who have developed ways of dealing with difficult issues, have improved communication with the department, and enhanced their caring role in relation to young people. The staff who facilitate the sets have found them useful and other team members have said they would like to be involved in the project.

The fostering service has made progress in developing the relationship with the education department to improve the educational attainment of young people. This has resulted in an increasing number of young people having their Personal Education Plans prepared.

The area of diversity is addressed throughout the service and whilst the recording must be improved the practice is sensitive and thoughtful in meeting the needs of young people.

Supervising social workers generally maintain regular contact with foster carers and this is perceived as positive by foster carers. The recording of link sessions is generally good.

Foster carers receive regular payments and have access to the payments administrator who is described by carers as efficient. Foster carers receive details of training available and value this from the service.

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

The previous inspection made recommendations relating to ensuring that the absence of personal education plans was addressed. This issue is continuously raised at management level in a way that suits the service. The record of allegations are properly filed with a summary outlining the circumstances of any allegation and the outcome. Haringey have now recruited onto the panel a member who has had experience of the care system. The outgoing chair of the local authority fostering panel has described this appointment as invaluable.

The fostering service has also made progress in addressing the issue of incomplete paperwork to the panel and the timely presentation of first reviews at panel. This was confirmed by the chair who said that measures were put into place to offer training on assessments and to request explanations from team managers if reviews were delayed or paperwork incomplete. A dedicated reviewing officer completes first reviews and is supported in this role if there is a backlog.

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

The service has recently appointed a new Senior Team Manager and the expectations that she will improve systems are high. The service managers work plan includes the review of written materials in the service. This is consistent with the inspection findings. The foster carers handbook must be updated to include guidance specific to Haringey fostering service. This will ensure that foster carers follow the proper policies and procedures and this will minimise confusion and risk to young people in their care.

Foster carers criminal records checks must be updated in a timely fashion to ensure their continued suitability as foster carers looking after vulnerable young people. The lack of consistency when dealing with criminal convictions of foster carers must be addressed to ensure that all cases are dealt with according to the statement of purpose and governmental guidelines. The process by which these decisions are made must be clear and recorded on file. This will ensure that risks to young people are reduced.

In order for foster carers to do their job to the best of their ability it is essential that all relevant information relating to the young person be shared. This promotes an environment of trust and understanding between all parties for the benefit of the young person and will limit the risk of placement breakdown.

With the appointment of a learning and development coordinator the area of training will be scrutinised in order to develop this part of the service. Training required by foster carers must be properly identified and put in place ensuring that their views are elicited in the process and kinship carers are not marginalised. The paperwork already in place to monitor and review training needs should be launched to give supervising social workers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the paperwork and start using it. Supervising social workers must also be more vigilant at checking the daily logs of foster carers to ensure they are keeping proper records in order to protect the young person and themselves and to make clear that this forms part of the foster care agreement.

The recommendations are to further improve the service and to promote areas that operate well. The recording of diversity needs and how these are met should be clear in supervising social worker records. Allowances paid to foster carers workers must be clear and include information about how foster carers can attain skills level 2. Whilst progress has been made in relation to



educational achievement, foster carers would like to see this raised again as they believe more needs to be done to change the mindset of young people in the care system and the negative image that they believe seems to be accepted by teachers. This is an area along with contact issues that foster carer's face that could be addressed in the foster carer support groups. The groups should be reviewed with a view to enabling foster carers to manage themselves and the agenda. Foster carers require the supported of the service to do this.

The review of staffing is recommended following comments made by staff and foster carers about the workload, lack of feedback by busy supervising social workers and the continued success in recruiting foster carers that require assessing and ongoing support. It is acknowledged that part of this review has already taken place in relation to kinship care and learning and development, however in order to meet the demands of a growing service temporary changes may benefit in the long term. Team managers must revisit the out of hours arrangements to ensure they are being forwarded information relevant to the fostering service. Team managers advised that the previous road shows were a success in establishing the role of supervising social workers to social workers in district offices. This must be done periodically to ensure that relationships continue to develop and information is shared appropriately. Supervising social workers whose foster carers receive training outside of that provided by the fostering service must obtain copies of the certificates and place them on file. This will ensure that a record of relevant training is available and will assist the learning and development manager when undertaking an overview of training needs.

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**

## **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 outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

12

In general the health needs of young people in the fostering service are considered and support is available to ensure maximum health of young people.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The files of nine young people and their carers were examined. These files confirmed that the health needs of children and young people in foster care are addressed. Three young people were spoken to during the inspection and these discussions confirmed that young people are registered with a GP and supported to attend other health appointments such as the dentist, psychotherapy and paediatric appointments. With the exception of young people placed with relatives abroad, all young people had attended their statutory medical appointments. The fostering service has good links with the Looked after children's nurse and foster carers in the support group and those interviewed individually, stated that whilst they have not made direct contact with the nurses they have met with them during training courses and are aware that they can call upon them for assistance if necessary they would arrange this through their link worker or the young persons social worker.

Several foster carers stated that they had received first aid training but were sure they were in need of refresher training but this has not been highlighted during supervisory visits, or by the training officer. The fostering service must ensure that all foster carers must complete this training as a priority.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

3,6,8,9,15,30

The person appointed to manage the fostering service is suitably qualified and competent. The staff and foster carers files demonstrated that they are suitable and competent to work with children and young people although there has been a lapse in ensuring CRB checks are renewed every three years for foster carers to safeguard the young people placed with them.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Commission has been notified of the relevant details of the person currently appointed by the Local Authority to manage the local authority fostering service, in accordance with regulation 10 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Haringey Fostering Service recruit foster carers through advertising campaigns and have just started a new preparation group consisting of 15 interested people. The fostering service is very active in the area of recruitment. Eight foster carers files were inspected. All foster carer files had detailed assessments carried out by the service prior to approval. This is in accordance with the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidelines. Young people have their own rooms and these are comfortable. Foster carers consider this to be the young persons personal space and respect this. Where there have been issues relating to the organisation of the foster carers, these are

addressed by the supervising social worker and the foster carer. Foster carers confirmed that they covered issues relating to health and safety during the preparation group, which they found useful.

The fostering service in Haringey has a large majority of carers from African and Caribbean origin. This means that not all placements are appropriately matched. Where placements are trans-racial or trans-cultural, foster carers are supported by the service to meet the needs of the young people in their care. This is done in a number of ways. Some foster carers seek support from each other to meet the needs of young people in their care. One foster carer interviewed ensures that the two young people placed with her access their own culture by taking them to events relating to their heritage, ensuring that they have access to books and videos depicting positive images of their history and heritage and engaging them in dialogue about their identity. These young people are also supported to maintain access to their relatives to further identify with their culture.

Haringey Fostering service provide training for foster carers on safe caring and protection from abuse for young people in their care. The organisation has implemented training for carers on managing challenging behaviour and it is planned that this will be extended in the next year. This was identified as a need following the analysis of allegations completed by the recently appointed link child protection advisor.

Of the seventeen surveys returned, fourteen young people stated that their carers advise them about keeping safe. Safe caring guidelines to foster carers form part of the placement plan and are agreed prior to the young person entering the placement. All foster carers spoken to at the support group, four foster carers interviewed and fourteen returned surveys confirm that carers are aware of the fostering service's position on corporal punishment and have received this in writing from the service.

The fostering service child protection advisor manages and oversees the investigation of allegations against carers. The service manager states that this has resulted in allegations being handled effectively and in a timely manner. The fostering service collates information relating to all allegations made against foster carers. This was seen during the inspection and included outcomes of all investigations undertaken.

As described previously, foster carers do not consistently receive information about young people in their care, which will ensure sufficient measures are put into place to protect other people living in their household. This must improve to ensure safety and prevent placement breakdown. All foster carers are familiar with the procedure relating to missing children, although foster carers in the support group did not find this information particularly helpful. This is included in the foster carers handbook, which requires updating with child protection guidelines for foster carers relevant to the policies and procedures of the service.

Whilst there was some positive feedback from foster carers spoken to and from surveys received with regard to the training undertaken by foster carers some clearly had not undertaken basic training for some time and had certainly not had refresher first aid training. One foster carer stated the last time first aid training was undertaken was about three years ago. This must be addressed to ensure that foster carers have the basic knowledge to practice first aid safely and appropriately in the event of needing to.

The records for staff and foster carers were examined and found to mostly be complete. All staff files contained detailed information including three references, full employment histories and the relevant CRB checks to demonstrate their suitability to work with children and young people. However the foster carers files did not always contain up-to-date enhanced CRB checks, some had not been renewed in the last three years. This must be rectified to ensure the protection of the young people who may be placed in their care and their continued approval as foster carers.

The fostering panel was observed as part of the inspection process. The panel consists of nine members, eight of whom attend regularly. One independent panel member has not attended often and their continued absence must be addressed. The panel does not presently have a permanent member from the medical profession. The panel chair and the service manager of the fostering service have addressed this issue. An arrangement has been arrived at whereby the medical advisor will be available for those panels where a medical view may affect the outcome of any recommendations made by the panel. This is to be implemented in January 2006 with a review of its effectiveness in April 2006. Following a recommendation made at the previous inspection, the fostering panel now has a panel member with personal experience of the care system. The chair stated that this is already proving invaluable.

The panel operates well. The chair begins the panel business by looking at previous minutes and ensuring outstanding issues raised at the previous panel have been addressed. These typically apply to satisfactory medicals and the return of criminal records checks. This allows a clear audit of recommendations made at previous panels.

The panel chair then encourages discussion from panel members about all cases presented and elicits the views of the panel on each case presented. Pertinent and relevant questions are raised during this discussion. Individual members will then put forward these questions to supervising social workers and prospective foster carers. The voting of all members of the panel is clear and individuals express their agreement or disagreement with the recommendations being made. In accordance with guidelines the panel advisor does not have voting rights. The chair will then summarise the findings of the panel and recommendations made.

The panel are particularly good at giving reasons for their recommendations or deferrals. These appear in the panel minutes. During the panel observation, cases presented included foster carers de registering by mutual agreement, recommendations to approve a prospective foster carer, first review and

changes to a foster carers terms of approval. The fostering service make every attempt to ensure that foster carers do not operate outside their terms of approval and team managers interviewed showed an awareness of the process should this be the case.

The panel chair informed the inspectors that this was the last panel she would be chairing and was able to give an overview of how the service has developed. The chair explained that the panel has a quality assurance system and for two years met with the deputy director and service manager every six months. Due to changes in the management structure in the last year this has been more difficult and does not happen as often although concerns are fed to the service manager who then takes them to the relevant place. This could be to team managers in relation to the quality of reports. The chair of the panel stated that with the service manager they attended managers team meetings and put together a programme of training to assist with the improvement of assessments presenting to panel. The general quality of assessments was satisfactory, however fostering assessments completed by independent assessors are not always complete and pose difficulties when the assessing social worker does not attend panel to answer to the report presented. During the panel a suggestion was made about how to overcome this issue. This was acknowledged by the panel advisor as an idea to further explore.

The panel chair stated that any disagreements amongst panel members are spelt out in the minutes and individual members are named if they do not want the recommendation to go ahead. This gives ownership to all members. All draft panel minutes are read by the chair and amended accordingly prior to the minutes being agreed at the next panel. The panel has only had applicants attending for the past year and this has changed the way in which the panel operates, which the chair describes as positive. Panel members received training on this from the Catholic Childrens Society. The panel chair confirmed that new members are given an induction with a written pack. Training for panel members is twice a year where discussions about individual training needs and the needs of the panel as a whole are identified. Panel members can meet with the boroughs legal advisor and any other council officials they feel will benefit their role on the panel. Members are also encouraged to contact the chair and ask any questions relating to the panel.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

7,13,31

The fostering service promotes the diversity of young people looked after and encourages foster carers to assist young people to explore their culture, religion and ethnic background. This minimises any isolation young people might feel and recognises their uniqueness. The fostering service must ensure that issues of diversity are properly recorded to reflect their good practice.

The fostering service take the education of looked after children seriously and makes attempts to improve their life chances.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Whilst the vast majority of foster carers are from ethnic minorities the issue of identity is a feature in the training of foster carers. Foster carers stated they have sufficient information on the ethnic backgrounds of children in their care and attempt to meet their needs in consultation with social workers.

The fostering service makes every attempt to meet the diversity needs of young people in their care. Team managers and supervising social workers explained that this is done by ensuring carers understand the needs of young people and agree how these will be met. These include facilitating the attendance at church or mosque, promoting privacy to pray in their bedrooms, accessing community groups from young peoples cultural background, ensuring meals are prepared that reflect their diversity and engaging in community activities relevant to young peoples background. The fostering service also ensures that young peoples wider family and social network are



accessible where appropriate to provide access to their ethnic and cultural identity. Three young people spoken to stated that they continue to have contact with their relatives and enjoy this. One young person also has contact with extended family members and the others maintain regular contact with their siblings.

One file examined demonstrated how a Muslim foster carer supports non-Muslim young people. This is agreed with the foster carer, young person and relevant social workers. Foster carers spoken to state that they understand the expectations of the service in meeting the cultural needs of the young people. This level of clarity was not evident in all records examined. The fostering service clearly does excellent work in addressing diversity but this should be better reflected in the recorded information on files, particularly the supervising social workers reports. The service manager stated that in the last year social workers across the borough had attended courses relating to diverse environments and recording as this issue was identified as an area for improved recording.

Of the seventeen young peoples surveys, fourteen indicated that they have hobbies, which they are encouraged to pursue. The records of the case files examined demonstrated that foster carers support young people to engage in activities such as basketball, drama and attending cinemas and after school clubs. One foster carer stated, " We attend football matches on a Sunday to give encouragement as do all other parents, we would not like him to feel different or left out which he would do if we were not there supporting him".

The Fostering service is actively monitoring the education of young people in their care. The links between the fostering service and Looked After children's education team is positive. The files of young people show that personal education plans (PEP) are completed with targets set for young people. One young person interviewed said " I had my PEP meeting yesterday and I have my new targets set". The young person had a copy of her targets and stated that with the help of her foster carer she will work towards meeting them. The fostering service and looked after children's education service have made efforts to involve over 11's foster carers in raising the educational achievement of young people. This has been done by introducing workshops for carers to attend to help them understand the GCSE curriculum and to support young people with their homework. An event on the educational achievement of young people looked after was held at the Tottenham Football Ground in October 2005. The service manager showed figures relating to the achievement of looked after children in the education system. There has been improvement but figures are prone to fluctuation depending on the amount of time that young people are looked after, and if they are no longer looked after at the point of taking exams.

Plans within the fostering service are afoot to target the educational achievement of under 11's. This is to ensure that should the under 11's remain

looked after for a considerable length of time the importance of education is embedded from an early age. An event is being planned with the education department to take place in the New Year. Foster carers for the under 11's will receive support from the education Department and the fostering service to help raise achievement levels. During the foster carers support group meeting foster carers were positive about the efforts made by the department to raise the educational standards of young people looked after but believe that a more concerted effort is needed by all involved with young people to raise their expectations and encourage young people looked after that education is a positive way to increase their life chances. All seventeen of the young peoples surveys returned stated that they are supported with their education by their carers.

## **Making a Positive Contribution**

### **The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

10,11

The fostering service promotes contact for young people taking into consideration the strength of family ties and recognising the importance of maintaining these for the benefit of young people.

The children's guide is user friendly and informative ensuring young people know where to seek assistance should they require it.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Of the young peoples files examined, there was evidence of contact between young people, their parents and other relatives. This is also clear in the young peoples placement plans and followed up in their review of arrangements. All young people spoken to had a positive attitude about the contact arrangements and clearly value this. One young person stated " I am saving some of my pocket money, my carer will take me to buy a cake that we can share with my family at our next contact".

The recommendation for the supervising social workers to explore with foster carers the opportunity for friends to visit the home has begun. However the returned questionnaires from young people demonstrate that eleven young people are able to visit friends but only six surveys stated that friends could visit the young person in their environment. Supervising social workers stated that they have had the discussions but there seems to be little development, clearly more work is needed in this area.

During a whole fostering service team-meeting members of staff discussed the organisation of a support group for young people looked after. Foster carers who have already expressed an interest will be supported to facilitate this. The fostering service has an excellent children's guide, which assists them to navigate their way around the service and directs them to other services that may be of use to them. Young people spoken to confirm that they received the children's guide when they were accommodated. The guide includes a pencil case, small CD type holder with useful telephone numbers and addresses, information booklets and a filofax. The information contained explains the role of Haringey looked after service, and other services provided to looked after children. The information explains young peoples right to complain and what they can expect from services such as reviews and money. Leaflets explain how to access educational support and counselling. The format whilst only in English is bright, attractive and useful.

Surveys revealed that fourteen of the seventeen young people know how to make a complaint and know who to complain to. Foster carers agreed during the support group meeting that young people are well aware of their rights and know how to complain. Foster carers highlighted that as well as rights young people also need to learn about responsibilities.

During the foster carers support group, carers expressed that they are happy to support contact arrangements, however the newer carers stated that as this is an area of potential conflict with parents, training for foster carers would be helpful to manage the contact and clarity should be given around the carers role. The foster carers interviewed had varying opinions about the expectation of the fostering service in relation to recording. This is addressed elsewhere in the report. However all foster carers confirmed that they record significant events and evidence of this was seen during the inspection.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

29

The fostering service generally pay an allowance to foster carers on time, although current policies with regard to payments have not been reviewed and updated to reflect changes in payments nor is their clarity with regard to the level of payments foster carers can receive and for what.

## EVIDENCE:

Foster carer's spoken to individually and a as group stated that generally they were paid correctly and on time and that this had been a significant improvement since BACS was introduced. There seemed to be a few carers' who had experienced delays in receiving payments when they had taken foster children on a respite arrangement. However the guidance given to foster carers with regard to expenses, level of payments in terms of skills levels and other entitlements did not provide clear consistent information and had not been reviewed to reflect changes in the need to pay tax. It is recommended that these policies are reviewed and updated.

# Management

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

1,17,21,22,23, 24,32

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service although there is some discrepancy between practice and what is written. The children's guide is child friendly and there is ongoing work to make it more accessible.

Staff members are supported well by managers, they are qualified to undertake their roles and responsibilities and moral is good, although the

fostering service would benefit from having additional staff. Foster carers' are generally well supported by supervising social workers, although the out-of-hours support needs to be reviewed along with foster carer support groups and unannounced visits.

Training programmes are not currently being implemented to best meet the foster carers training needs including kinship carers and so foster carers are not always appropriately trained nor is there a record to identify if they are. The foster carers' handbook is inadequate and does not contain all relevant information for foster carers to help them feel well informed.

Case records for young people were generally well maintained. Foster carers are not always completing daily logbooks for the young people, which is a breach of the foster carers agreement.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service's statement of purpose meets the requirements of this standard and contains all relevant information with regard to recruitment procedures; CRB'S and clear aims and objectives of the fostering service. The children's guide is a child friendly document and all young people spoken to stated that they had received the guide. The survey returned to the Commission confirmed this also. The recommendation made for the accessibility of the guide to be available to young people who have a difficulty speaking English had been partially progressed according to the newly appointed senior team manager and it was an ongoing piece of work.

It was evident from looking at one foster carers file that the management of convictions as identified from CRB certificates are not necessarily being managed in line with the local authorities procedures and the fostering service statement of purpose. This must be prioritised so that clear decision making can occur and be documented in instances when decisions are made about foster carers suitability to be a foster carer where it is identified that they have a criminal conviction. The fostering service had taken a decision to take on a foster carer who had a conviction for one of the areas listed under appendix D ` of their procedure people banned from working with children.' This is not consistent safe practice and must be reviewed.

The fostering service provider must ensure that their practices involving both assessing prospective foster carers and ensuring that their suitability to act as foster carers, incorporates the matters specified in Regulation 37 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. Within the context of the inspectors identifying specific foster carers who was noted to have a conviction, particular attention must be given to ensuring that the fostering services processed

complies with those matters specified in Regulations 27(5)(6) and (7) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The fostering service is predominately staffed by permanent staff; retention is good, sessional workers are employed to carry out reviews and very occasionally agency staff are used. The fostering service is expanding with the number of foster carers increasing. During discussion with staff and team managers it was evident that staffing levels did not always appear to be adequate to meet the requirements of each of the teams and the number of foster carers. It is recommended that the staffing levels are reviewed to ensure that sufficient staff are available to meet the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose and the needs of the foster carers. Staff morale was generally good. Staff files demonstrated that staff employed are appropriately qualified and competently trained to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

There is a clear strategy in place to support foster carers although this is not always implemented fully. Each foster carer has a supervising social worker who meets at least once every six weeks to have documented link work sessions, although in some instances the supervising social workers have had some difficulty in meeting up with foster carers and some of the link work reports had gaps of three months. Unannounced visits are not evidenced on file and staff acknowledged that they had not been undertaking unannounced visits to foster carers. Foster carer reviews are occurring annually. All files had relevant assessments and signed foster carer agreements on file. Foster carers surveyed confirmed that they generally felt well supported.

The foster carers handbook was seen and was found to be incomplete. Foster carers spoken to on an individual basis and as a group explained that they had not always received a copy of the handbook and that important omissions and guidance around child protection procedures and support for the foster carer was not clear. This must be rectified.

The foster carer support group attended reflected the mixed feeling about the support provided by the fostering service. Of the twenty-five foster carers in attendance a third felt that they had not always been provided with information prior to placement or information around how contact was arranged and the expectations on the carer. It is recommended that this be reviewed to ensure clarity of role and expectations. The general feeling was that the support groups were a good way to meet other foster carers to discuss issues. Although the groups needed to be developed to facilitate more productive discussion to effect change and professionalize the foster carer role. There was much talk of the need to promote ownership of the support groups and for the agenda to be set by the foster carers. Discussion ensued with regard to the out-of-hours support service. All foster carers were aware of the fostering service out-of-hours support, the issue seemed to be when needing



to contact the emergency duty team of the borough and not getting immediate support due to the queuing system and then the lack of follow up. The communication across EDT and fostering service should be reviewed to facilitate more effective communication and to ensure that relevant information is shared and acted upon.

The fostering service has a good training programme in place although the implementation of this has proved to be a problem. Of the foster carers files examined only one contained evidence of any training attended, although no certificates in support of the training undertaken were held on file. Foster carers stated that they had attended regular training sessions and that their supervising social workers had asked them about their training needs. Through discussion with staff it was evident that the way in which foster carers training needs are identified and collated are hap hazard and sporadic. There was no system in place to identify what training foster carers had attended; what their future training needs were and what refresher training is needed. Training programmes need to be developed to meet the specific needs of kinship carers. It is hoped that with the newly appointed learning and development training co-ordinator in place, the training strategy will be developed and implemented effectively to ensure that all foster carers have completed relevant training in line with their terms of approval and continue to develop.

The nine case records of young people examined were orderly and contained information relating to number of looked after episodes, number of placements, placement plans, reviews of arrangements case records, any legal issues, records of social work visits to young people, educational and health. The recommendation made at the previous inspection to look at ensuring personal education plans are in place is addressed through communication at manager level. The service manager advised that positive links with the Looked After Education team and the senior Education Psychologist who sits on the fostering panel has developed. They meet regularly to look at all placement needs and issues. The inspectors found evidence of a personal education plan on all files with the exception of the young people placed with relatives overseas.

During discussion with foster carers it was identified that the daily logbooks held for each foster child were not always being completed daily as per the signed foster carers agreement. This must be monitored by the supervising social worker to ensure that foster carers are complying with the foster carer agreement they have signed and also for the welfare of the foster child.

# 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>	2

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

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

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

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

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

NO

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	FS12	17(1)	The fostering service provider must ensure that all foster carers receive basic training on health including refresher first aid training.	01/03/06
2	FS15	27 SCH 3	The fostering service provider must ensure that enhanced CRB checks for foster carers are renewed every three years and that this is evidenced on their files.	31/01/06
3	FS15FS1	3(5)	The fostering service provider must ensure that the fostering service is at all times conducted in a manner, which is consistent with its statement of purpose. Particularly in relation to appendix D 'people banned from working with Children'. The review of practice in relation to a particular case must be conducted by the Fostering Service as a matter of urgency.	31/12/06
4	FS22	17(1)	The fostering service provider must review the 'foster carers handbook' to ensure up-to-date, relevant information with regard to the fostering service is included. Particular attention	01/03/06

			must be paid to the child protection reporting procedures and the support available to foster carers during this time.	
5	FS22	17(1)(3)	The fostering service provider must ensure that appropriate information is given to foster carers prior to the placement of a foster child.	31/01/06
6	FS23	17(1)	The fostering service provider must review and document the training needs of foster carers to ensure that training needs are identified, relevant and actioned in line with their terms of approval.	01/03/06
7	FS23	17(1)	The fostering service provider must review the delivery of training to ensure that all approved foster carers receive appropriate and timely training. Training must be reviewed annually in line with the needs of the foster child.	01/03/06
8	FS24	28(5)(b) Sch 5	The fostering service provider must ensure that the supervising social workers monitor foster carers to ensure that they are adhering to the foster carer's agreement to record 'daily' in the daily log books of the foster child.	01/03/06
9	FS32	17(1)	The fostering service provider must ensure that a training programme is developed specifically to meet the needs of Kinship carers.	01/03/06

## 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
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1	FS7	It is recommended that the fostering service provider monitor supervising social workers documentation with regard to demonstrating diversity issues and how these are met by the foster carer.
2	FS29	It is recommended that the information provided to foster carers with regard to allowances, expenses and payments is reviewed to ensure clarity of entitlement for level 1 and 2 and the fact that their earnings are subject to tax.
3	FS14	It is recommended that a concerted effort is made to work with teachers, foster carers and social workers to support foster children's educational needs and to eradicate the 'labels' that the foster child and teachers may be using. For example, low educational expectations because 'I am in care'
4	FS17	It is recommended that the staffing levels are reviewed across the fostering service to identify if the full time equivalent staffing complement is adequate at all times to meet the needs of the fostering service and is in line with the statement of purpose.
5	FS23	It is recommended that clear guidance is provided to foster carers setting how contact takes place and the expectations on them to participate or not as the case may be.
6	FS21	It is recommended that the current foster carer support groups be reviewed to promote ownership of the groups to effect positive, constructive support and change. In addition, to promote consistent professionalism amongst foster carers.
7	FS22	It is strongly recommended that supervising social workers visit foster carers at least once a year unannounced and that this is fully and clearly documented.
8	FS22	It is strongly recommended that the 'out of hours' service be reviewed to ensure that it is effective in supporting foster carers outside of office hours. It is recommended that the communication between the local authorities EDT, district social workers and supervising social workers is reviewed to ensure co-operative working and to open the communication channels to ensure that appropriate information is passed on.
9	FS23	It is recommended that training certificates for foster carers are copied and held on their files.

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