



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**Camden Fostering Service - Children and
Families**

**115 Wellesley Road
London
NW5 4PA**

Lead Inspector
Ms Jill Marriott

Announced Inspection
16th February 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Camden Fostering Service - Children and Families
Address	115 Wellesley Road London NW5 4PA
Telephone number	020 7497 2911
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Camden Social Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 07/02/05

Brief Description of the Service:

Camden Fostering Service is a local authority service providing care for Camden children who are looked after. The fostering service is committed to providing quality placements for children and young people who are not able to remain with their birth families. A range of placements, are available including short-term foster care, permanent placements, kinship care and respite care.

Initially when a child is referred a kinship placement within the wider family network will be sought. Where this is not possible a placement with an approved Camden Foster Carer will be used.

It is the aim of the Local Authority to ensure all children are matched with appropriate carers who can meet their identified needs.

Camden Fostering Service aims to work in partnership with children and their families, foster carers, and relevant professionals to ensure that all children and young people looked after have care plans, which are reviewed regularly and clearly set out the future plans for the child.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was announced and took place over a three-week period, which started on the 16th February 2006 and included the activities on the dates below.

16/02/06 – Planning meeting + reading staff files.
22/02/06 – Team meeting
22/02/06 – File reading
24/02/06 – Home visit to Foster Carer.
27/02/06 – File reading
28/02/06 – Observation of Foster Panel
01/03/06 – Home visit to Foster Carer
01/03/06 – Home visit to Foster Carer
02/03/06 – Meeting with Service Manager
03/03/06 – Home visit to foster carer
03/03/06 – Home visit to child.
07/03/06 – Meeting with Carer's Group
09/03/06 – File Reading
09/03/06 – Files reading. Feedback to Manager
10/02/06
15/03/06 – Meeting with the Young Peoples Consultation Forum.

There were 33 questionnaires returned to the Commission from Camden Foster Carer's and Young People.

The inspector would like to thank carers and young people who welcomed the inspector into their homes and all of the staff, carers and children who took part in the inspection.

A special thank you goes to the "Young Peoples Consultation Forum" who invited the inspector to observe and participate in their meeting.

What the service does well:

Camden Fostering Service is committed to providing quality services for children and carer's. There is a well-advertised recruitment campaign, a specific worker has been recruited to encourage and support carer's from underrepresented groups to apply and become foster carer's.

Questionnaire returned to the commission by carer's showed that they feel well supported by the supervising social workers and have access to good quality training.

Children's Questionnaire returned to the commission were mainly positive and talked about having good food, care and support. Some talked about missing family and friends. One child's questionnaire asked the inspector to mention that her foster carer treats her very well and she feels that she is part of a family and she loves them.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A number of improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is a stable staff group and agreement by senior managers to expand the team to meet the needs of the increase in foster carers. Records show that regular carer's supervision both announced and unannounced takes place. A range of information regarding services, policies and procedures are available in booklet form. These booklets are informative and interesting they have been sent to carers and are available in local offices.

Case records are being transferred from paper files to computerised systems (Framework I) The system will enable social workers to access record as they are needed. The system is password protected and has an efficient backup system should the computer fail.

What they could do better:

It is clear that Camden Fostering Service is good service offering good support to carers and young people.

Some young people who spoke to the inspector said they felt there were too many changes of workers for them especially as they reached 15+.

They felt this was a time in their lives when they needed stability. They said, "Everything seems to change at the wrong time"

Returned questionnaires from carers said that the support from the supervising social workers was good but there were lots of changes in children's social workers and this area of the service needs to improve. It was recognised by the inspector that these identified areas do not necessarily relate directly to the fostering team. The fostering service needs to be moved to more appropriate accommodation.

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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

Standard 12 was assessed at this inspection.

Camden Fostering Service in this and in previous inspections have evidenced that staff and carer take a proactive role in promoting children's health. Children are further protected by Camden's policies and procedures relating to the health of Looked after Children.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector spoke with staff, carers and children, examined files and inspected policies and procedures

From the information available there is evidence to demonstrate that the Camden Fostering Team provides services, which ensure children's health and developmental needs are met. Information regarding the steps to be taken with regard to the health needs of looked after children is contained in the Foster Carers Handbook. Foster carer's are clear about their responsibilities in respect of the health of the children placed with them. The health of young people is discussed during carer's supervision and at Looked after Children's reviews. Evidence seen on files showed that children have regular medicals, and that each child is registered with a G.P.

Dental, vision and hearing checks are recorded on files and younger children are linked with a health visitor.

Where appropriate the specific health needs of young people with disabilities form part of the child's placement plan.

Files seen evidenced that the health of the children placed with Camden carer's is tracked through the Looked After Children review process.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 3, 6, 8, 9,15 and 30 were assessed at this inspection.

The Management Team of Camden's Fostering Service are suitably experienced and qualified for the posts they hold. The recruitment practices of the agency are in line with regulatory requirements for staff and carers.

The service ensures as far as possible that children and young people are suitably matched with approved carers. The approval process of carers is centred on safe care practice. The foster panel is organised effectively

EVIDENCE:

Evidence was seen on staff files to show that the manager, deputy managers and the fostering staff team have appropriate qualifications and experience for their posts.

The inspector visited a number of foster homes during the inspection. Carer's told the inspector that they were aware of the inspection and understood they may be visited as part of the inspection process. The homes visited were warm, clean and well maintained. In almost all cases foster children have their own rooms and only younger sibling groups on occasion share rooms. From the files seen and from discussion with carer's it was evident that their homes are visited regularly as part of the carer's supervision. Health and safety of the placement is inspected during supervision sessions and any issues arising are considered and recorded on file as part of the supervision process and as part of the annual review of approval. In general

the households visited met the required standard. Through talking with carer's, key staff and through inspection of files the inspector tracked the process of referral and placement of children. Referrals and placement plans were seen on the children's files. Evidence showed that as much information as possible is received and considered prior to matching and placing children. Children are as far as possible placed with carers who closely match their own gender, ethnicity, language, cultural, religious and racial background when placing young people disability issues are also considered where appropriate. Where on occasion children are placed with carers from a different background support is offered to ensure the carers are fully aware of the child's needs.

It was evident from tracking the placement of one child that there was an issue with regard to the lack of space in the foster home. Although a recommendation has been made in respect of this issue, the inspector is aware that this placement is deemed to be the best place for the child and records seen show that the fostering service is doing everything possible to assist the family to move to more appropriate accommodation.

The fostering service has an appropriate child protection policy and procedure, which links into the London wide procedures. Supervising social workers and carer's told the inspector that during pre approval training, carer's receive training in safe care. The training sessions include recognising abuse, how to respond to signs of abuse and how to care for children who have been abused. Safe Care training is aimed to develop foster carers awareness and understanding of issues related to the protection of children. Camden places a great importance on "safe care" the Carer's Handbook contains information, policies and guidance relating to good safe practice. Policies and procedures regarding anti bullying, missing from care and unacceptable punishment are all included in the handbook. Safe Care is discussed with carers during home visits and training is up dated regularly. Carer's who met with the inspector were aware of the child protection policies and procedures.

All child protection allegations made in Camden are reported to the relevant agencies and to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The fostering manager keeps a record of allegations and complaints and they're outcomes, these are referred to in the statement of purpose.

Staff files were inspected they showed evidence that the recruitment procedures are being followed and all references and relevant checks including CRB disclosures are received prior to employment being offered. Information supplied by the personnel team showed that references are verified But not always by telephone but by ensuring the reference is on headed paper and has the organisation stamp on it. Procedures for verifying references are being reviewed to ensure safe practice.

The inspector observed the Foster Panel, which approves, reviews and terminates approval of carers. The panel is well organised with appropriate

well-informed members. All panel members are recruited subject to appropriate checks including up to date references and CRB disclosures. The inspector observed the panel considering the approval and re approval of carer's, carer's who attended panel were made to feel comfortable and were treated with respect. Appropriate questions were asked and points raised regarding the approval reports.

Although panel reports were generally of good quality in some cases the ethnicity of the child or family members was incorrect. This caused some confusion and social workers were reminded to ensure the correct ethnicity was entered on all reports.

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):

Standards 7, 13 and 31 were assessed during this inspection

Children and young people are placed with carers who are able to meet their assessed needs relating to gender, language, ethnicity, religion, culture and race. Where appropriate disability issues are also considered.

The Fostering Service works with the child, carers and all relevant agencies to ensure the best educational outcomes for children and young people.

Foster carers are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to the children placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

From attendance at a staff meeting and the Foster Panel and from discussion with staff and carer's there was evidence to show that children and families are provided with a service, which values diversity and promotes equality. Camden Fostering Service has an equal opportunities policy, which is shared and discussed with carers throughout the recruitment and approval process and through ongoing support, supervision and training.

Equality issues related to race, gender, ethnicity, culture, language and disability are considered throughout the matching process of each child as are the basic issues such as safe care, experience of working with specific ages and caring for young people with behavioural issues. It is only once all of the issues have been considered a final decision, regarding the appropriateness of the placement will be made. Where it is not possible to offer a same race placement a same race carer is usually available to offer support to the child

and carer to assist the placement. Children's needs are reviewed regularly in carer's supervision and at LAC reviews.

Camden are actively recruiting carers from specific ethnic backgrounds as well as continuing to advertise for carers from all sections of the community. The foster carers handbook includes a section, which covers "Valuing Diversity". Foster carers receive training on identity and diversity issues.

From the files seen and from information gained from discussion with staff and carers it was evident that high priority is placed on the educational needs of children and young people. Camden Fostering Service has a small library, which is used as a "Paired or Shared Reading Scheme", the scheme encourages carer's and children to read together.

There is also a team, which offers specific education support for looked after children (Education of Young People in Public Care). The team is dedicated to raising achievement and working closely with children, teachers and carers. It also ensures that Personal Education Plans are implemented and reviewed regularly. Personal Education Plans or reference to them was seen on the children's files tracked at this inspection.

The education team also offers help and advice to students of all ages this includes support with study revision, preparation for SATS, provision of books and educational software for computers.

It is the role of carer's to keep in contact with the child's schoolteachers and attend school open evenings and special events. Carer's told the inspector that they were clear about their role regarding children's education. Evidence of this was recorded on files.

All carers recruited by Camden undergo the same induction and approval process. Fostering agreements and placement plans were seen by the inspector on files tracked. Each placement plan takes into account the legal status of the child and includes the roles and responsibility of the carer and the child's birth parent if appropriate.

The role and responsibility of short break carer's is made clear at the planning stage of each placement.

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):

Standards 10 and 11 were assessed during this inspection.

Contact arrangements for children with their families, is clearly recorded on files.

Camden Fostering Service and its carers are aware of the need to work in partnership with and consult with children and young people. Files examined showed evidence that children are consulted about their placements.

EVIDENCE:

There was evidence on each child's file regarding contact arrangements. The recordings include the venue for contact, whether it is supervised or not and the role of the carer.

Placement plans seen by the inspector include times and dates of contacts and whether or not it takes place.

Carers said they were committed to enabling children to meet regularly with their families, they told the inspector that they were aware of their responsibilities regarding family contact prior to having a child placed with them.

Evidence seen on children's files showed that they are consulted about their placements during visits by the supervising social worker. Children are seen by the supervising social worker at least once every two months. Views of young people are used to form part of the carer's review of approval report.

The fostering service work closely with the Senior Participation Development Officer to ensure young people are consulted about services available to them and how they can be improved.

There is an excellent Young Peoples Consultation Forum, which enables young people to get involved, have a say, learn new skills and meet new people. The

forum meets every two weeks, is well attended and offers many opportunities to the young people in Camden.

Camden has also produced two information packs for children looked after one is for older children and one for the younger age group. The packs are excellent they are informative easy to read and thoughtfully produced by Social Workers and children.

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):

Standards 14 and 29 were assessed during this inspection.

The fostering service in partnership with the carers supports young people to prepare for adulthood.

Foster carers receive allowances and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for children placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

Children's file seen included a care plan. Independent living skills are identified and included in care plans as appropriate following the Looked after Children's review. Learning skills for independence are age related and cover very basic skills to those required for living independently in the community.

Supervising social workers work with carer's and children during home visits to identify independence skills needed for day-to- day living. A "Preparation for Adulthood" training course is also available to carer's.

The Leaving Care Team become involved with young people at the age of sixteen years. The pathway plans for adulthood are developed with young people and their carers at this stage. Young people in general told the inspector they are involve in the plans for their future.

Evidence on file and information gained from staff and carers showed that carer's are aware of their allowances and agreed expenses and are paid regularly and on time. Carers said they are able to contact their supervising social worker if any problems arise regarding finance. The carer's handbook includes information regarding payments and expenses to carer's.

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):

Standards 1, 4, 5, 17,20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28 were assessed at this Inspection.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose and children's guide to the service. The fostering service is monitored regularly and the management is effective and efficient. There is a team of suitably qualified staff who are properly supervised and supported. Foster carers have access to good quality training and regular supervision with named workers. Children's case records are kept up to date and are held on a computerised system, which is password protected.

The finances of the service are monitored regularly and are audited by the council's accountants.

The premises used by the fostering service are not adequate. This matter is being addressed and it is hopeful that the service will be moving to more appropriate accommodation this year.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector was given a copy of the Statement of Purpose for the fostering service. The Statement of Purpose and the children's guide to the service were up to date and clearly described the services available.

This fostering service is well managed with a good monitoring system in place. From discussion with the manager and social workers and from job descriptions seen it was clear that all members of the team are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Budget information was seen during the inspection the budget is reviewed monthly and reflects the services provided. Camden fostering service is financially viable with properly maintained accounts audited by the council's accountants.

The manager's job description was seen and accurately reflects her role.

Members of the team who spoke with the inspector were aware of the role of the manager and whom they should approach when the manager is absent.

The service has an adequate number of suitably experienced staff and carers.

There has been an increase in the number of carers approved over the past year and senior managers have agreed to expand the staff team to cope with the increased workload.

The fostering service at present uses qualified independent social workers to assist in the recruitment and approval of carers. It is envisaged that as the team expands there will be a specific assessment team identified within it and this will decrease the need to use independent worker.

Staff salaries have increased recently and this has gone some way to ensuring the stability of the team.

Foster carers fees have also risen, it is expected that the fee increases for carers will over a period of time be covered by the recruitment of more in house carers reducing the need to use expensive private and voluntary placements.

Evidence was seen during the inspection of good quality supervision and training for staff and for carers.

Camden has a continual recruitment campaign in place and adverts for foster carers can be seen across the borough and surrounding areas.

There is a clearly set out process for the assessment and approval of prospective foster carers. Carers are recruited in line with the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance. The fostering service successfully recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of the children for whom it aims to provide a service.

All carers receive a copy of the Foster Carer's Handbook, which includes all necessary information, policy and procedure documents and guidance for working with children and young people. Policies and procedures and working practices are discussed in carer's supervision and at the carer's support group.

The service is working towards holding all case records on computer (Framework I). At present the system is in transition and children's records were tracked at this inspection through the computer files and from paper files. All relevant information was available to the inspector on one system or the other.

The inspector was impressed with the computer system, which is password protected and has adequate back up to ensure the safety of the records held on computer.

The premises used to provide the service is not appropriate disability access is limited and the building is in disrepair. Areas such as toilets are in need of repair and redecoration. The fostering team is the only social service based there all work undertaken with carer's is done off site. The inspector was told that the team hopes to move to more appropriate accommodation in the coming year.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

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

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
13	3
31	3

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

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

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

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.	FS7	27(2a) Sched. 3(7)	The Responsible Individual must ensure that reports of Foster Carer's approval or re approval contain accurate details of the child and carer's ethnic origin in every case. (also 34 Schedule 6 (1)(b))	30/04/06
2.	FS26	23(1)	The Responsible Individual must consider the appropriateness of the Gospel Oak Office for the Fostering Team. The premises are not disability accessible. The toilets on the first floor are in need of repair and redecoration. This requirement is repeated	30/06/06

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	The Responsible Individual must ensure that Foster Carer's are able to provide adequate safe space for each child placed.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Camden Local Office

Centro 4

20-23 Mandela Street

London

NW1 0DU

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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