



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service**

Station Road

Barkingside

Ilford

Essex

IG6 1NB

16th January – 5th February 2004

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service

**Address**

Station Road, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NB

**Local Authority Manager**

Ms Ruth Holmes

**Tel No:**

020 8708 7870

**Address**

London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service  
Station Road, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NB

**Fax No:**

02087087887

**Email Address**

ruth.holmes@redbridge.gov.uk

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

N/A

**Date of latest registration certificate**

N/A

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

4/3/2003

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		16 <sup>th</sup> January – 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Ms Harina Morzeria	073519
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	N/A	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	N/A	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>	N/A	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		N/A	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		N/A	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Ms Ruth Holmes – Principal Officer-Fostering & Adoption Service	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

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**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service is located at Station Road, Barkingside, Ilford. The fostering service provided by the borough is located in the Social Services Fostering and Adoption Team. The principal officer for the service is Ruth Holmes, and the management responsibility within the team is shared between three team managers, who provide management support across the two teams for fostering and adoption. The principal management responsibility for social workers in the fostering support team lies with Rose Roach De Cordova.

The teams are split into two sections, the development team and placement support team. The development team provide recruitment, training and assessment of foster carers, with the support team providing post approval support to foster carers as well as linking children and foster carers.

The fostering service provides:

Recruitment of foster carers

Training for prospective and approved foster carers

Assessment of prospective foster carers

Presentation of assessment reports to the fostering panel

Fostering placements - short term, shared cared/respice, pre-adoptive and permanent placements and placements with friends and family.

Post linking support

Annual foster carer reviews

Investigation of complaints/concerns regarding foster carers

Monthly drop in for foster carers

Flexi carers scheme

Training events

Telephone helpline (operated by two foster carers)

## **PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **Inspector's Summary**

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

The inspection of the London Borough of Redbridge Fostering Service was undertaken over a period from mid January to mid February 2004. The inspection included questionnaires, visits to three foster carers' homes, discussions with foster children, attendance at a support meeting for foster carers, observation of a panel meeting, discussion with a range of staff and support personnel, plus an interview with the Chair of the Panel.

### **Statement of Purpose ( Standard 1)**

This standard was met. There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of the services and facilities they provide.

A children's guide to the fostering service is also provided and is distributed to them via the children's social workers.

### **Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)**

Both the standards were assessed and met by the fostering service. The principal officer and her team managers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the service effectively. At the time of inspection they were found to be suitable people to run a service concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

### **Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)**

Both the standards were assessed and found to be met.

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently and there are systems in place for monitoring the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

### **Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**

Seven of the nine standards were assessed and met. Two were partly met.

At this inspection the inspector was satisfied that the service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. A policy and procedure is in place to promote diversity and equality. However appropriate matches for a child is reliant on the availability of suitable carers and sufficient, comprehensive information being received from the social work teams responsible for placing the children. The fostering service is to be mindful, where trans-racial placements take place, that the foster family is provided with additional training, support and information to enable the carers to provide the child/young person with the best possible care. Meeting the educational needs of all young people placed with foster carers must also be given a high priority as required.



### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15- 23 )**

Four of the nine standards assessed were met, five were partly met.

The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people. Staff confirmed that they receive support, supervision and training opportunities to carry out their duties. However, there have been difficulties recruiting suitable permanent social work staff, which has had an impact on the level support provided to foster carers. The effectiveness of the training programme also needs to be re- evaluated to ascertain whether the current training offered is suitable and relevant for all the groups as identified in the report.

### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

Of the two standards assessed, one was met and one was partly met. The fostering service do attempt to ensure that all appropriate records are kept in relation to each child and young person. However, foster carers need to be made aware of the importance of maintaining and keeping up to date and comprehensive records for each young person in their care and ensuring that these are accessible.

### **Fitness of premises (Standard 26)**

This standard was met. From observation of the offices occupied by the fostering service the inspector was satisfied that the premises are appropriate for the purpose in accordance with this standard and the Fostering Services Regulations.

### **Financial requirements (Standards 27 – 29)**

All three standards were assessed and met. The financial systems in place are operated and maintained in accordance with sound financial practices. Foster carers allowances and expenses are paid promptly and are reviewed annually.

### **Fostering panels (Standard 30)**

This standard was met.

Clear written policies and procedures are in place. The panel is organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, with the objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

### **Short – term breaks (Standard 31)**

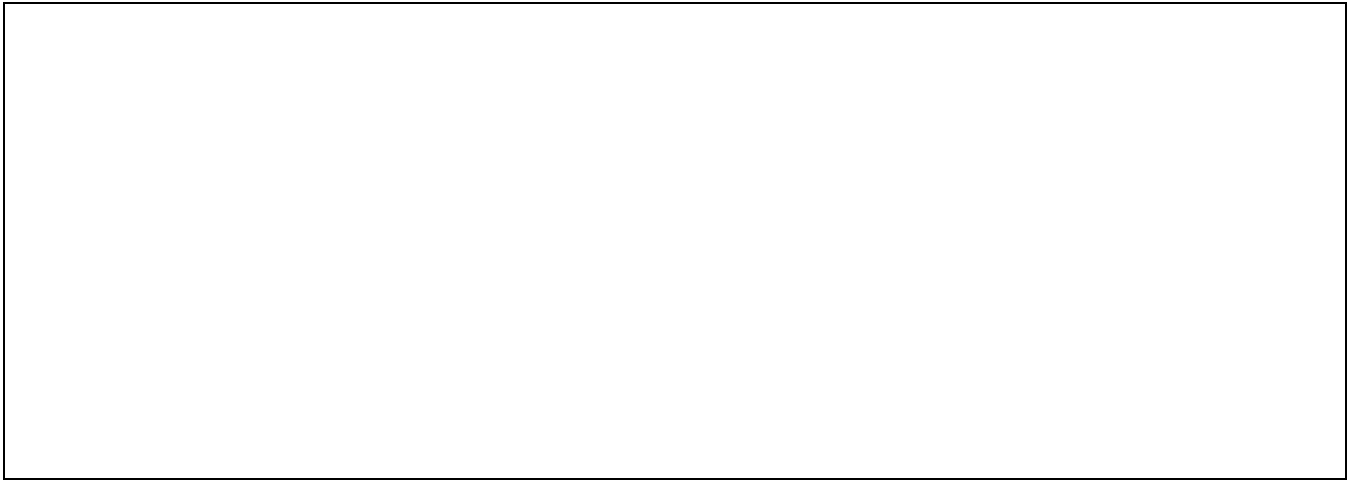
This standard was met.

The fostering service have an agreement with a voluntary agency to provide the majority of respite care placements for children with disabilities. The arrangements recognise that parents remain the main carers for the child.

### **Family and friend carers (Standard 32)**

This standard was met.

A kinship policy and procedures are in place. Adequate mechanisms are in place for assessing and approving family and friends as carers. It is recommended that foster carers who are friends and family receive the same support and training as in-house carers.



## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

### **(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

### **The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

A Notice to the Secretary of State under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial, will not be issued if a satisfactory action plan which addresses the requirements identified in this report is submitted to the Commission and is accepted.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			<p>Where the previous requirement was not met a new timescale has been set. In the 'Timescale for action' column the date in ordinary type relates to the new timescale given at the inspection, the date in <b>bold</b> type relates to the timescale given at the last inspection. Further information about unmet requirements can be found in the relevant standard.</p> <p>Unmet requirements impact on the welfare and safety of the child/young person looked after, therefore continued failure to meet repeated requirements will lead to the Commission considering enforcement action against the registered person.</p>	
1	33,34	FS8	<p>The fostering service manager to ensure that foster carers are only offered if they represent appropriate matches for a child.</p> <p>If this is not possible then the foster placement agreements clearly outline what additional training, support and information will be made available to the foster family to enable them to provide the best possible care.</p>	<p><b>Immediate &amp; ongoing</b></p> <p>31.07.04</p>
2	16	FS13	<p>The fostering service manager to ensure that foster carers are given sufficient support and assistance to ensure that any child/ young person placed with them gains a place at school promptly in order to ensure that their educational needs are met.</p>	<p><b>30.09.03</b></p> <p>31.07.04</p>

3	21	FS19	There must be a clear plan for the training and development of all staff through a relevant induction programme. The effectiveness of training programmes for staff, including administrative staff, and carers should be routinely evaluated and joint training should be held between fostering service staff and foster carers including the administrative staff where appropriate.	<b>30.09.03</b>  31.07.04
4	35	FS18 FS22	The fostering service manager to ensure that foster carers receive sufficient support and supervision from supervising social workers to enable them to carry out their role efficiently.	<b>30.09.03</b> 31.07.04
5	22	FS24	The fostering service manager to ensure that foster carers maintain up to date and comprehensive records for each child/young person placed with them and make these accessible as required by the Regulations.	<b>Immediate &amp; ongoing</b> 31.07.04

**Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)****(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Harina Morzeria	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Fiona Maslin	Signature	_____
Date	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2004		_____

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	43	FS4	The fostering service manager to ensure that if any events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 8 take place, the CSCI will be notified in writing.	31.05.04
2	15	FS12	The fostering service manager to ensure that it provides foster carers with full information about a child/ young person's health care needs so that they can be adequately and promptly met.	31.05.04
3	19	FS15	The fostering service manager to ensure that all the social work staff have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the relevant regulatory requirements under the Care Standards 2000.	31.05.04
1	19	FS16 FS17	The fostering service manager to ensure that a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced staff are employed in order to support foster carers ultimately to safeguard & promote the health & welfare of children placed with foster carers, including those placed with family and friends.	31.07.04

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	Foster carers to provide a mini guide for children in terms of what they offer in the placement. This mini guide could be of assistance to the placing social workers in trying to match a placement and also give a picture of the foster home to the young person prior to introductory visits or placement.
2	FS23	The fostering service manager to consult foster carers about the type of training they require.  Training to be provided on specific issues such as record keeping and how to record.
3	FS32	The inspector recommends that family and friend carers receive the same support and training as the approved foster carers.

\* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

## PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report



Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	03/02/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	55.00

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear statement of purpose available outlining the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the services and facilities they provide.

A Children's Guide to the fostering service is also provided in a format that can be easily understood by the children placed. The Children's Guide is distributed to the children when placed with foster carers via the children's social workers. The principal officer informed the inspector that copies of the guides have been made available to the children's social workers who are required to hand them to the children when placed in foster care. As well as containing basic information, the Guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate. The inspector was pleased to note that a number of children have benefited from support received from the Children's Rights Officer.

It is recommended that foster carers provide a mini guide for children, in terms of what they offer in the placement. For example, "this is us", "our family", the kind of accommodation which they can offer, language/s spoken, any pets, general rules of the house or unusual aspects etc, photographs may also be helpful. This mini guide could also be of assistance to the placing social worker in trying to match a placement and also give a picture of the foster home prior to introductory visits or placement.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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From the pre-inspection questionnaire, the manager's self assessment form, and discussions with her and the staff, the inspector was satisfied that the people involved in managing the fostering service possess the necessary knowledge and experience of child care and possess the skills and experience to operate the service efficiently and effectively.

Ruth Holmes is the principal officer/manager with responsibility for the fostering and adoption service. She is a qualified social worker and holds an equivalent management qualification to NVQ Level 4. Ms. Holmes has work experience in social work child care services since 1978 and has several years of management experience in Children's services. She is the professional advisor for the fostering and adoption panel.

From observation of her attendance at the panel it was evident that she has considerable knowledge of child care law and practice.

The Fostering and Adoption Service is managed directly by three team managers, Jackie Lord and Donna Brown manage the service for prospective adopters to approval as well as the fostering & Adoption Development Team, and Rose Roach De Cordova manages the service of placement support for approved foster carers.

All three team managers hold social work qualifications either Dip. SW or CQSW. The three team managers deputise for Ruth Holmes in her absence.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The service operates under the recruitment policies and procedures of the London Borough of Redbridge. From information provided by the principal officer giving details of all staff working for the fostering service, it was clear that they are suitable people to work within the service. Information provided by the principal manager indicated that CRB checks have been undertaken for all staff working directly with children. The inspector was satisfied that Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are complied with and CRB checks will be renewed every three years.

The London Borough of Redbridge Personnel Department keep records of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

From viewing records and discussion with the principal officer the inspector was satisfied that there are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance. A clear management structure is in place with lines of accountability and communication. The Principal Officer reports to the Head of Children's Services. Ultimate responsibility rests with the elected members of the local authority via the Director of Social Services. Foster carers are allocated to a supervising social worker based in the Placement Support Team.

All members of staff have job descriptions and are aware of their roles within the fostering service structure. Proper financial procedures are in place which are reviewed annually.

There are clear lines of delegation and all staff have clear job descriptions.

As listed below, four incidents are identified as Notifiable incidents which were not reported to the Commission.

The principal officer is required to ensure that, under Schedule 8, Regulation 43(1), the Commission is informed of all Notifiable Incidents in writing as listed in the Schedule.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

From viewing documentation and discussions with the principal officer and staff the inspector was satisfied that the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. The manager has a clear job description setting out duties and responsibilities and does not hold a similar position in another organisation. Management responsibilities are delegated to the team managers in order to ensure continued effective management when the principal officer is absent.

## Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

### Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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As part of the inspection of the fostering service, the inspector visited three foster carers at their homes. The inspector noted that all the foster homes were comfortable, warm, adequately furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Each foster child placed was provided with her/his own bed and foster carers interviewed were aware of the need for foster children to have privacy and space which was adequately provided.

The foster carers confirmed that health and safety issues are discussed during their initial training sessions and were aware of their responsibility to provide a "safe" environment free of avoidable hazards. Where foster carers are expected to provide transport for the child, they confirmed that sufficient safety measures are taken into account for example adequate insurance and MOT as well as the provision of seat belts and special seats for the very young children. The foster carers confirmed that they receive written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.

### Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The children and young people who are looked after by the local authority come from a range of racial, religious and cultural backgrounds, as do the foster carers. From information gathered, discussions with foster carers and observation of the fostering panel, the inspector was satisfied that the fostering service attempts to ensure that children and young people and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. Details of an individual's ethnicity and religion are requested at every stage. The importance of understanding a child's needs is emphasised on training provided to the foster carers and highlighted in the general foster carer agreement as well as during the assessment process.

A policy statement about the race, culture, religion and language of children looked after is distributed to all foster carers in the handbook.

The foster carers spoken to confirmed that this issue is covered during the induction training.

Special provisions are made for children with disabilities or special communication needs for instance, providing special "stair walking" and bathing equipment. The Borough also has an agreement with a voluntary agency (Indigo Project Barnardos) to provide the majority of respite care placements for children with disabilities.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

**Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

During case tracking and discussions with foster carers and staff, it was evident that the aim was to achieve a good match but the reality was often dictated by the need for an urgent placement, the lack of appropriate information from placing or link social workers and limited supply of foster carers. Examples of good practice were available with children being offered introductory visits to proposed foster carers in a planned and structured way. See standard 1 re- a mini guide of foster carers.

Comprehensive information was not always available prior to a placement. Some foster carers cited examples in emergency placements of not receiving even very basic information about a child. It is essential that the manager ensure that comprehensive information is received from the child/young person's social worker prior to the identification of a foster carer or placement. Good matches are only achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child/children and his/her family, potential carers and their families and other children in their placement. It is essential that written foster placement agreements contain specific reference to elements of matching which were taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and the foster carer. All other relevant information on health, education, family contact must also be made available to the foster carers.

As stated above the principal officer stated that it is not always possible to match children and foster parents as placements are often made in an emergency situation or there just aren't the number of foster carers available from specific backgrounds to match children with. However where such situations arise, it is paramount that the above issues are clarified immediately and the placement agreements identify how additional and appropriate support will be provided to enable the foster carer to provide care to the young in a culturally sensitive manner.

Where trans-racial or trans-community placements are made, the responsible authority must provide the foster family with additional training, support and information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of his/her heritage.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Through discussion with the foster carers and staff, the inspector was satisfied that training for foster carers is provided during the induction period to foster carers in caring for a child who has been abused, including safe caring skills, managing behaviour and recognising signs of abuse. Safe caring guidelines are provided which the foster carers and children are aware of.

Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information of the number and outcomes of all allegations or abuse of the child/young person in foster care. The service has a clear policy for use if a foster child is missing from home, together with information on bullying and the procedures in place to recognise, record and address any instances of



bullying.

However, the fostering service must ensure that each foster carer is provided with full information about the foster child and his/her family, to enable the foster carer to protect the foster child, their own children and other children for whom they have responsibility and of course themselves.

**Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:**

100

%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

**The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in the child's care plan and foster placement agreement. From the files inspected the inspector was satisfied that care plans and placement agreements are in place and are regularly updated which outline contact arrangements for each child in foster care.

Clear procedures setting out appropriate contact arrangements for each child are in place. During discussions with foster carers, they confirmed that the importance of foster carers helping a child to maintain appropriate contacts is emphasised during assessment and training sessions. It was evident from discussions with young people that they are encouraged and enabled to maintain contact with their friends and family.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Through discussion with foster carers and young people they confirmed that there are systems in place to seek children's opinions and those of their families and others significant to the child over issues which are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

The fostering service receives feedback from foster carers, the Redbridge Foster Care Association, the Children's Rights Officer and at child care reviews and through the children's social workers. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that they do listen to children and take into account their wishes and feelings regarding their care and treatment and often act on their behalf to ensure they receive fair and efficient treatment in all aspects of care.

The fostering service ensures that children in foster care know how to raise any concerns and complaints via the children's guide as well as making available the children's rights officer who has worked with children making representations on their behalf to various parties. An interactive website for children looked after has been commissioned and two consultation events in February were held to mark its launch.

A care leaver conference is also organised annually bringing the young people together to reflect on the service provided and how it can be improved.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

2

From discussions with foster carers the inspector noted that not all relevant information regarding a child's health is available to the foster carers at the time of placement. The inspector was informed that any information not available at the time of placement is obtained and passed to the foster carer soon after the placement is made. However a foster child may require medical attention within 24hrs of placement. This issue needs to be addressed jointly by the child's social worker and the fostering service social worker prior to any placements made.

Each carer is given basic training on health and hygiene issues and first aid with emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases. The fostering service make clear to the carer their role in terms of helping to promote a child's health, which includes registering a child with a doctor, a dentist when necessary, taking a child to any health appointments, helping a child to access services that they need, giving attention to health issues.

Information is also made available regarding every day care of the child including diet, personal hygiene, and health promotion issues.

In many instances, the inspector noted that foster carers act as an advocate on the child's behalf on many issues relating to a child's health and other immediate needs.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

2

A policy statement refers to giving a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care. There is a mechanism whereby attendance at school is monitored.

Through discussion with foster carers, and from case tracking, the inspector was satisfied with the foster carers desire to provide an environment in which education and learning are valued.

The foster placement agreement does identify where financial responsibility lies for all school costs.

However feedback received from one particular foster carer indicated that a foster child in placement with her was missing out on large areas of education due to not being able to gain a school place due to various reasons and due to the lack of co-operation between the Education and Social Services departments of the Local Authority. The foster carer spoken to at the time of the inspection expressed concern about the length of time the young person has been excluded from school and the lack of practical support from the fostering service regarding any structured occupation of the young person during school hours.

Suggestions for the role of the foster carer if any child is not at school should be included in the foster carers' handbook together with practical suggestions about structured activities that can be undertaken.

In addition the role of the placing social worker in ensuring how a young person's educational needs are met should be clearly set out in the placement agreement.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

From discussion with foster carers, staff and viewing policies and procedures the inspector was satisfied that the fostering service provides sufficient assistance to foster carers to help young people to develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Written requirements are provided to foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi independent living and this was seen to be implemented by a foster carer who was in the process of preparing a young person to move on to independent living. Evidence was seen of consultation taking place with a young person preparing to move to independent living, about his/her future and encouragement being provided for the young person to be involved in the decision making processes and implementation of the pathway plan.

## Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

At this inspection, the inspector did not get an opportunity to check the fostering service Human Resources files of the London Borough of Redbridge due to shortness of time. However, the principal officer has stated, in the pre-inspection questionnaire, that the London Borough of Redbridge HR Department operates a thorough recruitment and selection procedure.

Managers have a recruitment and selection guide which shows appropriate procedures, and members of staff can only participate in recruitment and interviewing of staff after they have completed adequate training relating to staff selection.

From discussions with the staff, and the principal officer, inspector was satisfied that the people who work in, or for, the fostering service, are suitable to work with children and young people.

The staff interviewed at the time of inspection, demonstrated a good understanding of foster care. All the fostering social work staff are qualified and have many years of experience in child care work. They demonstrate significant experience and understanding of Child Care legislation, child development, and assessment and communication skills.

All the social work staff are also required to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the relevant regulatory requirements under the Care Standards Act 2000.

In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the principal officer states that she sees all employment references, is chair of the interview panel and qualifications brought to interview. Any appointments to social work posts are now subject to a verbal reference to confirm the authenticity of the reference prior to starting work. She confirmed that the HR Department check other documentation including CRB checks and health records prior to confirming staff in posts. Those staff who have been in employment for several years are in the process of being CRB checked.

Total number of staff of the agency:

20

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

X

**Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**

**Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

From viewing files, policies and procedures and discussions with the principal officer and staff, the inspector was satisfied that there is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability. Staff interviewed confirmed that they receive regular supervision by people who have appropriate skills and qualifications. The London Borough of Redbridge provide staff with an annual training programme from which they can identify relevant courses. Adoption and fostering service staff are also able to access training from external organisations such as BAAF.

During the inspection, the inspector noted that not all foster carer reviews are up to date. However, the service have employed a full time project worker who has been appointed to solely carry out this task.

During discussion with the social work staff, as well as the administration staff, although they confirmed that administrative back up, office equipment and clerical support are available, they stated that there are not adequate numbers of administrative and clerical staff available to provide a fully efficient service for the social work staff, as well as the foster carers and young people. This issue to be addressed by the principal officer in order to ascertain the reality of this and its impact if any, on service users.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

**The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

From discussion with the foster carers, staff and the principal officer, the inspector noted that there has been a significant shortfall of social work staff employed in the fostering service. A number of vacancies existed during the early part of the year which the service had not been able to fill. From discussions with the foster carers, and feedback received in the foster carers questionnaires, they have stated that they have not received sufficient support from their supervising social workers and that they have been slow to receive a response from the fostering service at times, leaving the foster carers to deal with often difficult situations on their own. During discussions with the principal officer she stated that this situation is in the process of being resolved following recruitment to the vacant posts and an increase in the availability of staff in posts.

From viewing documentation and files, the inspector was satisfied that there is a clearly set out recruitment, assessment and training process for prospective foster carers, which is robust. The service uses the BAAF (British Adoption and Fostering form) competency framework to ensure all carers are assessed as having appropriate qualities and aptitude for caring.

The recruitment of staff and foster carers is an ongoing process and regular information evenings are held for people interested in becoming foster carers.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

**The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The fostering service uses the employment policies and procedures of the London Borough of Redbridge. Comments from staff interviewed indicate that they felt supported and valued by the managers and the Borough. There are a range of employee support services in place, counselling and access to occupational health services. There is a written Whistle Blowing policy in place included in the staff handbook.

However, from discussions with foster carers and feedback received from foster carers questionnaires, there was some dissatisfaction expressed as to the level of support being given to them by the fostering service. The fostering service policy states that foster carers will receive a visit from a supervising social worker every month, with weekly telephone contact. This was not confirmed from the feedback received from foster carers.

During the inspection feedback, the principal officer provided a format which will be used by the supervising social workers during their monthly visits to foster carers, recording their visits and topics of discussions taking place identifying any issues which require further discussion or follow up.

Out of hours support for foster carers was through the normal social services emergency duty team as well as by two foster carers who receive payment from the local authority.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**

**There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The London Borough of Redbridge Social Services Department provide a training and development programme annually for all staff which indicates that adequate training is available to keep staff updated on practice and legal development. The training programme is accessed by individuals nominated to attend training courses following identification of this during supervision in order to acquire skills and enhance their knowledge. Social work staff are also enabled to access external courses provided by specialist agencies.

The inspector noted from discussion with a new member of social work staff that there was not a clear induction and training programme for her to follow as a new member of the staff team which has been reflected in her work efficiency and performance. However the inspector did not test this with other staff induction training.

Discussions with administrative staff also indicated that they do not have access to appropriate and adequate training and development which is relevant to the service they are providing.

The principal officer is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme for all staff providing the fostering service, review this and up date it in order to reflect the policies of the fostering service. Training should be provided appropriately and pitched at a level for staff skill and experience.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

From discussions with staff and viewing policies and procedures, it was confirmed that staff receive regular supervision and adequate records are maintained in relation to this. Staff and team meetings are held on a regular basis which are minuted. File audits take place.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)****The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

From discussions with foster carers and staff, from viewing documentation such as training schedules, policies and procedures and from foster carers' files, it was evident that the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. This includes arrangements for training and development, encouragement for self help groups, supervision and support services, information and advice, assistance in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education, out of hours support, respite care, and arrangements for reviews.

Communication between fostering service social workers and child's social workers has improved as the service is located in the same office as the children's service.

Feedback from foster carers was generally positive but varied in terms of their personal experience of support. Communication with and support from the children's social workers was often an issue.

This has been discussed elsewhere in this report and will also be addressed in Standard 22 below.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)****The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

From discussions with foster carers and various members of the staff team, it was evident that the induction and ongoing training for foster carers is very comprehensive. Enhanced payment are made to foster carers who attend at least three training sessions during the course of a year, in order to encourage them to attend the training sessions provided. This has resulted in greater attendance of foster carers at these sessions. The foster carer handbook has been updated.

There is a foster carer support group run by an ex-foster carer ( Redbridge Foster Care Association). On the day the inspector visited the group it was poorly attended and feedback received indicated that it was not hugely popular with the more recently approved foster carers.

From discussions with two of the supervising social workers and foster carers it is clear that although each approved foster carer has a named, appropriately qualified social worker to

provide support and supervision, the frequency of visits undertaken to the foster carers falls short of the levels required. This has been due to a number of vacancies which existed for a lengthy period time at the fostering service. The Principal Officer stated that this situation should improve with the appointment of two new members of staff.

The principal officer is required to ensure that supervising social workers adhere to the fostering services policy on frequency of contact and visits to foster carers.

Foster care agreements have been updated in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. All foster carers spoken to at the time of inspection, confirmed that they have received an up to date handbook which covers policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details.

Supervising social workers are required to implement a new format to be used during their visits to foster carers, which should provide more focus to the nature of their visits. The principal officer confirmed that occasional unannounced visits will also be made by supervising social workers at times when the foster children are present.

Foster carers confirmed that they are aware of procedures for dealing with complaints. Reports about allegations of abuse are kept and monitored and there is a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carers' register.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

**The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

From discussions with foster carers and members of staff, and attendance at the fostering panel as well as receipt of the training programme, the inspector was satisfied that the fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills that are required to provide high quality care. Training is provided within a framework of equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice and sessions are arranged at times convenient to foster carers. Foster carers confirmed that pre-approval and induction training is comprehensive and beneficial to them.

An ongoing programme of training and self development for foster carers to develop their skills and tackle any weakness is provided. Appropriate training on safe caring is provided and each carer's annual review includes an appraisal of training and development needs which is documented in the review report. Foster carers who attend at least three training sessions per year are paid enhancements, in order to encourage them to attend the sessions.

The inspector recommends that feedback is sought from the carers about the type of training they require and further consideration be given to specific issues such as record keeping and guidance on how much to write, what to include, what to pass on to the child and what to retain, how long records should be kept by them etc. See standard 24 and its requirement.



## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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From viewing files kept by the children's social workers of children/young people, as part of a case tracking exercise, the inspector was satisfied that from the limited number of files checked, these were up to date and contained comprehensive case records for each child.

The principal officer stated that each foster carer is provided with a diary which they are required to keep for each foster child and record relevant information.

During case tracking, and visits to foster carers, although the foster carers were aware of the need to keep records for each child or young person in foster care, they were not all able to produce evidence of the records they keep. The inspector has suggested in Standard 23 how and where training might provide the impetus to foster carers about the importance of keeping relevant records for each child in care. Carers should be trained and provided with the necessary equipment to record significant life events for the child/young person and to encourage the young person to make such recordings, including photograph albums. Carers should have the facilities to store information in a secure manner and understand what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed on to the fostering service.

The principal officer stated that an electronic case recording tool (Care First) has been made available to foster carers in order to improve case recording for foster children. However this service is not yet available to all the foster carers.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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From case tracking and viewing case records for foster carers, it was evident, from those files examined, that the fostering service administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations. The implementation and increased use of the electronic case recording system (Care First) within the office, improved communication between foster carers and social workers via e-mails and implementing quality assurance matters i.e the requirement for team managers to view records during supervision sessions with staff, has led to an improvement in record keeping by the fostering service staff.

This needs to be continually monitored in order to ensure its continuity.

There is a system for keeping records about all allegations and complaints and for handling

these confidentially and securely, including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	99		
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	144		
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	159		
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	10		
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	8		
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	95.30	<b>Maximum £</b>	600

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

From observation, the inspector was satisfied that the premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose. There are efficient administrative systems, including IT and communication systems. Appropriate facilities are provided for secure retention of records and an appropriate security system ensures adequate safety.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The financial processes and systems are in accordance with the requirements of the London Borough of Redbridge. A new payment system has been introduced which is intended to ensure timely payments are made to foster carers, with the introduction of the (BACS) system. The staff and foster carers stated that although some initial difficulties with the system were experienced, it is now being operated sufficiently well to ensure regular payments are received by foster carers.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From discussions with the principal officer, the inspector was satisfied that the financial processes/systems operated by the London Borough of Redbridge Finance Department are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

From discussions with foster carers and from viewing relevant documentation, the inspector was satisfied that each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person.

Generally, foster carers confirmed that payments were made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

A written policy is available on fostering allowances.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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From observation of the fostering panel and discussions with the chair person, it was evident that the fostering panel operates in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations. The fostering panel has clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions. The fostering panel has access to medical expertise as required.

During attendance at the panel, the inspector noted that it provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process, in particular to monitor and review the work of the assessors with a view to ensure that there is consistency of approach of assessment across the service. Discussions with the panel chair and deputy chair revealed that although the panel monitors the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children, it is often difficult to reconcile the two issues due to far fewer numbers of foster carers applying to register from certain groups of ethnic minority backgrounds.

The independent members of the panel include expertise in education and in child health. At the time of writing this report, the inspector was informed that at least one independent member of the panel will be an approved foster carers.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The principal officer states that the borough have an agreement with a voluntary agency (Indigo Project, Barnardos) to provide the majority of respite care placements for children with disabilities and that good links have been formed with the Agency and co-ordinated rates of payment have been arranged to ensure the desired outcomes for children with disabilities and their families. The Indigo Project is also registered with the CSCI and subject to inspection.	
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The arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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A kinship care policy and procedures are in place. The policy states that the fostering service recognises the pre-existing relationships for foster children, when assessing and approving family and friends as foster carers.

Adequate mechanisms are in place for assessing and approving family and friend carers in order to encourage their consideration as carers.

The inspector recommends that family and friend carers receive the same support and training as the in-house carers.



**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

None

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 16<sup>th</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

An action plan and comments are available with this report at the Area Office.

**Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:**

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

**Note:**

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

**Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:**

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

**Public reports**

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

**Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.**

**D.3.1 I Ruth Holmes Principal Officer (Fostering & Adoption) of London Borough Of Redbridge confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**D.3.2 I Ruth Holmes Principal Officer (Fostering & Adoption) of London Borough Of Redbridge am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.