



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## **FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **London Borough of Sutton Fostering Services**

**Civic Offices  
St Nicholas Way  
Sutton  
Surrey  
SM1 1EA**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Barry Khabbazi**

*Announced Inspection*  
**28th February 2006 9:30am**

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

**Name of service** London Borough of Sutton Fostering Services

**Address** Civic Offices  
St Nicholas Way  
Sutton  
Surrey  
SM1 1EA

**Telephone number** 020 8770 4307

**Fax number** 020 8770 4775

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**Provider Web address**

**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** London Borough of Sutton

**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**      7th March 2005

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

Two children's services provided by Sutton are currently subject to CSCI Fostering inspections:  
These are the general fostering service and the 'Family Link' children with disabilities support service.

### The Fostering service:

Sutton Fostering service provides a range of placements and services. The range of services on offer includes permanent and task centred fostering, which covers assessment, rehabilitation, and holiday placements for children at residential schools, short-term placements and preparation for adoption. Other services provided include an out of hours service, which means that foster carers can provide emergency placements and respite foster care for planned short term breaks.

A number of foster carers are also approved to look after the children of relatives within their extended family.

### The 'Family Link' children with disabilities service:

There is also a family link scheme for children with disabilities. This service provides assessment-based services, which include respite care including overnight care and day care, domiciliary care and individual support workers, and access to 'Mencap' play schemes.

# SUMMARY

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

All the key standards and those pertaining to previous requirements were assessed at this inspection. Those non key standards not assessed this year were all met last year. Please see that report for details.

This inspection occurred over two weeks. The inspection was carried out by one inspector and a second inspector supported by visiting a foster carer and attending staff interviews with the lead inspector.

Six half days were spent at the service's premises, interviewing staff/management and examining files. One morning was spent at the 'Family Link' support service for children with disabilities. {An update of last year's inspection was only required for the 'Family link' as no new 'Family link' foster carers had been approved since last year.} One morning was spent attending a panel meeting. Three days were spent inspecting 'off site', visiting foster carers and children placed, or reading questionnaires and other documentation taken away.

Due to the continual assessment pilot described below it was possible to reduce the actual inspection time. The overall time involved at the main inspection was therefore less than that of a traditional inspection.

In addition to the actual main inspection period listed above, this fostering service agreed to participate in a pilot of a continual assessment model that will now be introduced for all services inspected by the Commission next year. Contact during this year included attending: foster carer and children's barbeques/ fun days/ Easter egg hunts, and foster carer support groups. General benefits included better access between the inspector and all parties. Generally benefits also included providing a less formal environment, which promoted a better quality of communication.

Specific benefits included:

Being better known by the service providers and staff which promoted better and more ease of communication.

Being better known by the foster carers promoted more ease of communication, more trust and more relevant information being provided to the inspector.

Being better known to the children and showing some consistency created more ease of communication, more trust, and more willingness to be involved in the inspection process.

All the children and foster carers involved, and all the fostering service staff, are thanked for agreeing to pilot this new approach and help develop better practice in the inspection process.

This service has consistently demonstrated many areas of good practice, additional resources and standards exceeded. All previous requirements, recommendations and even suggestions have been implemented.

Although a few new minor shortfalls were identified the service was found to be generally good with no major shortfalls or areas of concern.

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

### **The following evidence of good practice has been previously presented and acknowledged and was upheld at this inspection:**

**Standard 15:** 5 references or 5 years' of references are collected to explain any gaps in employment and address when staff have left an organisation and worked for an agency to avoid references from the last employer.

**Standard 16+20:** Supporting social work staff supervision occurs every three weeks.

**Standard 26.** The children's services are on one site potentially promoting good communication and access to social work colleagues.

**Standard 30:** The fostering panel has foster panel member appraisals planned. The panel had also succeeded in recruiting a panel member that had been in the care system.

### **The following standards have been previously exceeded and were upheld as exceeded at this inspection:**{see identified standard for details}.

**Standard 11** - Children's opinions.

**Standard 12** - Health care.

**Standard 13** - Education.

**Standard 21** - Supporting carers.

### **Good practice and standards exceeded from last year's report that are not maintained in this report:**

NONE.

### **New areas of good practice identified at this year's inspection:**

**Standard 14:** The organisation has a 'preparing for independence' scheme where some of their money is paid directly into a bank account in the child's name to promote budgeting and financial management skills.

**Standard 17:** Management support to supervising social workers and team working and support from peers were identified as an area of good practice by supervising Social Workers.

**Standard 13:** The organisation supports higher education well by paying all university fees, giving the younger person their own computer and giving a weekly allowance, paying for accommodation and there is a book allowance.

**Standard 21:** There is one new supporting social worker post, and a new foster carer practitioner scheme which recognises the experience of foster carers who have been working as foster carers for 2 years and have done 75% of core training, by offering them a mentoring role and other opportunities to participate in the service for new foster carers.

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

Training has now been made more accessible with weekend and evening training sessions now provided and open learning being explored.

The quantity of training undertaken by foster carers, although still low, has risen.

There is a new policy giving guidance to staff regarding additional support for trans-cultural/ trans-racial placements.

The fostering service has confirmed in writing, to the Commission, that the remaining supervising social work CRB check has been received and of the outcome of this check. All supervising social workers now have an up to date CRB.

Systems for monitoring and effectively addressing shortfalls in annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits have now been implemented.

Support visits now meet the Borough's own guidelines for frequency.

The procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement has been made known to all the panel members.

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

Where trans-racial or trans-cultural placements occur, foster carers need to receive specific additional training, support and information to facilitate developing a positive understanding of the child's heritage and to develop the carers skills to enable them to better meet all the child's needs. In addition, supporting social workers need to be made aware of any associated policies.

The uptake of training by foster carers needs to be improved.

Foster carers training needs must be identified and recorded in training profiles. The outcomes for this training need to be monitored and relate to their approval categories.

The fostering service needs to ensure that its foster carers attend identified training in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

The fostering service must record, monitor and verify all training undertaken by foster carers effectively, including external training.

The panel's role in monitoring quality must be expanded to take into account training of foster carers

All foster carers must have an up to date Criminal Record Bureau Check.

Unannounced visits to foster carers should occur annually.



**Good practice suggestions:**

Based on figures provided, over one third of foster carers have had no training. This, does however not take into account those de-registered or currently inactive, but even if these figures were refined still represent an unacceptably low level of training uptake.

It is suggested only at this stage that those foster carers that do not take up the identified required training in their training profiles, {as opposed to identified recommended training} are referred back to panel for consideration as to their ability to effectively meet the needs of the type of placements they are approved for, with a view to reducing the approval range or removing approval completely.

It is also suggested only that, where the panel themselves identify training needed to better meet the needs of the approval categories, that a condition of approval is made. These conditions could be that this training occurs before the first placement where the training is identified as required, or within a certain period if the training is identified desired/ recommended, and that the panel monitor the implementation of these conditions.  
See also 23.4 – all foster carers trained in areas identified before first placement

**Areas to be monitored on an ongoing basis:**

{Via verbal request only this stage, for statistical information to be provided}

- 1, Length of time to panel from application.
- 2, Copies of any new policy documents with changes identified.

**Other areas to be monitored on an ongoing basis:**

{Through attendance of support groups/ events and remaining foster carers/ children's questionnaires}

Access to support, access to out of hours service, issues arising.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Making a Positive Contribution

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Scoring of Outcomes

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# 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:

12

Children's health needs are effectively identified, and the fostering service promotes the health and development of children well.

## EVIDENCE:

The systems that the service has in place for monitoring and responding to the health care needs of children remain as those reported at the previous annual inspections. These systems continue to be effectively applied.

Each child has a health monitoring form completed about them and any other significant information is drawn from the initial placement information and subsequent child care reviews. The foster carers have comprehensive guidance in respect of their responsibilities regarding the health of the children in their care. The Local Authority makes available to foster carers a Health Support Officer to promote good health. Similarly there is a Child Psychologist for Looked After Children to advise on child mental health issues. Foster carers are given financial support to encourage the children to engage in leisure activities. Responses from the children's questionnaires confirm that they are involved in regular activities. All foster carers continue to receive training in First Aid.

With regard to the children with a disability service, there is clear and well documented information available to carers about the individual needs of children. Healthcare responsibility remains with the birth parents although information on how to respond to any specific health issues that may arise is provided to carers.

In addition consultation with foster carers and children over the last year and during this inspection also confirm that health needs are being met.

**The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been previously presented and was re-confirmed at this inspection.**

**Standard 12. Health care–**

- The Local Authority makes available to foster carers a Health Support Officer to promote good health, provide support, health assessments and surgeries for 'Looked After Children'.
- A health book is produced which is kept by the child as an additional record to promote better monitoring
- There is are 2 full time Child Psychologists for Looked After Children to advise on child mental health issues. A positive outcome for this is that there is no waiting list.
- Foster carers are given financial support to encourage the children to engage in leisure activities and a leisure pass currently is provided.
- There is a joint funding approach developing into a joint funding panel involving Health, Education and Social Services.

# 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):**

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, and 30.

All people providing and managing the service are suitable and strive to meet standards well, and to continually improve services and exceed standards where possible.

The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.

The fostering service generally match children to carers well, but matching could be improved with more formal support for trans-cultural/ trans-racial placements.

The fostering service does protect each child from abuse or neglect.

The people working in the fostering service are suitable to work with children. However, for the fostering service to do all in its power to ensure suitable staff are employed, all foster carers must have an up to date Criminal Record Bureau check.

Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively but could take a greater monitoring and enforcement role with foster carer training.

## **EVIDENCE:**

All people providing and managing the service are suitably qualified and have the required experience. The manager and providers are suitably qualified and experienced and strive to meet standards well.

The foster homes visited were indeed healthy and nurturing environments and could comfortably accommodate all who lived there. They were adequately furnished and maintained to high standards of cleanliness and hygiene. There is a health and safety policy in the handbook giving foster carers guidance of their responsibilities in this area.

The foster homes that were visited were free of hazards and foster carers confirmed that they had been provided with Health and Safety training. Foster carers had been informed that they might be interviewed as a part of the inspection process. It is noted that those foster carers who were interviewed positively received the inspectors and expressed confidence in the way in which the service both supports and trains them. This is a consistent theme that has emerged both at previous inspections and at this inspection.

The last Inspection highlighted a suspicion that more work to support trans-cultural/ trans-racial placements may be required and that this area would be looked at in more detail at the next inspection.

Since the last inspection a new policy giving guidance to staff regarding additional support for trans-cultural/ trans-racial placements and procedures for recording these has been produced. This is a clear and well thought out policy which addresses the issues relating to trans-cultural/ trans-racial placements well. However, some supporting social workers were not aware of the guidance in this policy, and in addition a number of support mechanisms that the guidance has led to include training. About one third of foster carers have not attended training, which has an impact on the effectiveness of the guidance and implementation of these mechanisms. In addition files, foster carers and some social workers recorded no additional cultural or faith needs as the child is not interested. This may be the case but there was no evidence {except from one social worker}, of exploring whether statements like this from the child were due to discrimination received, or a desire to assimilate, or due to experiences in the past that need to be addressed.

The following requirement is made to address this under Standard 8.6: Where trans-racial or trans-cultural placements occur, and where required, foster carers must receive specific additional training, support and information to facilitate developing a positive understanding of their heritage and facilitate developing the carer's skills to enable them to better meet all the child's needs. This process must be recorded and supporting social workers must be made aware of any associated policies.

The fostering service monitors the unauthorised absence of children in fostering placements to identify any trends that may emerge.

This information is now collated and evaluated and a list sent to the Commission.

The children continue to have access to an independent advocacy service. The foster carers who were visited by the Inspection team are aware of permissible sanctions they can apply to children. There is a specific bullying policy and guidance to foster carers. There is a policy to follow in the event that children go missing. Foster carers reported that they are usually provided with all the relevant information to enable them to care for children safely.

The last inspection report contained a requirement for the fostering service to confirm in writing to the Commission that the remaining supervising social work CRB checks have been received and of the outcome of these checks. This has now occurred and this requirement is now met.

Although staff CRBs are now all in place and effective monitoring systems have been put in place, one foster carer's CRB had not been renewed within the 3 year recommended period. Although the inspector believes this not to affect the outcome of the Standard, for consistency and good practice, the following recommendation is now set:

All foster carers must have an up to date Criminal Record Bureau Check

**The following evidence of good practice has been previously presented and acknowledged and was upheld at this inspection:**

**Standard 15:** 5 references or 5 years of references are collected to explain any gaps in employment and address when staff have left an organisation and worked for an agency to avoid references from the last employer.

The last inspection report contained the following recommendation under standard 30: A written procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement should be made known to the panel members. This has now occurred and this recommendation is now met.

A panel meeting was attended and are organised efficiently and effectively, but could take a greater monitoring and enforcement role with foster carer training.

The following recommendation is set to address this:

The panel's role in monitoring quality must be expanded to take into account training of foster carers.

*It is suggested only at this stage that those foster carers that do not take up the identified required training in their training profiles, {as opposed to identified recommended training} are referred back to panel for consideration as to their ability to effectively meet the needs of the type of placements they are approved for, with a view to reducing the range or removing approval completely.*

**The following evidence of good practice has been previously presented and acknowledged and was upheld at this inspection:**

**Standard 30:** The fostering panel has foster panel member appraisals planned. The panel had also succeeded in recruiting a panel member that had been in the care system.



# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

**The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

7,13, and 31.

The fostering service does value diversity.

The fostering service promotes educational achievement very well.

There is a clear recognition that children receiving care from the 'Family Link' children with disabilities support service, remain, where appropriate cases, the responsibility of their birth parents.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Placements are made with carers who meet the foster child's religious and linguistic background wherever possible. The fostering service is continuing with the recruitment campaign that was referred to at the previous annual inspection in order to attract more carers from a variety of backgrounds. {See Standard 8 regarding trans-racial/cultural placements.} The fostering service also recruits from the gay community and has carers who are registered as people with a disability. The service continues to have a comprehensive and continually developing marketing strategy in place to improve its list of carers from diverse backgrounds and to improve upon the level of retention of existing foster carers.

The fostering service has a promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity policy in the Foster Carer's Handbook. The foster carers address these issues during their preparation training through regular supervision sessions with the supporting social worker.

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inspection in order to attract more carers from a variety of backgrounds. {See Standard 8 regarding trans-racial/cultural placements} The fostering service also recruits from the gay community and has carers who are registered as people with a disability. The service continues to have a comprehensive marketing strategy in place to improve its list of carers from diverse backgrounds and to improve upon the level of retention of existing foster carers.

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There are foster carers on the register who provide specialist services e.g. to children who have disabilities. These carers receive extra financial support and are linked into additional community support services to ensure that these children's needs are met.

Evidence from the children's questionnaires indicated that the children felt they were supported in their education and were given opportunities and encouraged to take part in activities and interests.

**The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been previously presented and was re-confirmed at this inspection.**

**Standard 13 - Education.**

- The Local Authority has an Educational Support Officer to work with children and foster carers to improve on educational attainment.
- Financial support is provided to children if they require extra tuition.
- There is a system in place to monitor school attendance. A call centre calls schools twice a day and reports absences.
- The fostering service has introduced increased monitoring of educational attainment which will also result in an annual awards scheme to celebrate children's achievements.

There is a joint funding approach developing into a joint funding panel involving Health, Education and Social Services.

**New areas of good practice identified at this year's inspection:**

**Standard 13:** The organisation supports higher education well by paying all university fees, giving the younger person their own computer and giving a weekly allowance, paying for accommodation and there is a book allowance.

There is recognition that children receiving home based care from the children with disabilities team remain, in all of the current cases, the responsibility of their birth parents. This is reflected in the policies and procedures of the children with disabilities service, which were most recently reviewed in February of this year.

Short-term breaks are offered to carers and children in the general fostering service, a fact that was positively commented upon during the feedback that was received at the last inspection and through the continual assessment process.

## **Making a Positive Contribution**

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

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

### **The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

10 and 11.

The fostering service promotes and supports contact arrangements so that appropriate links can be maintained with birth parents.

The fostering service promotes consultation well so that foster carers and children placed feel involved and listened to.

### **EVIDENCE:**

As reported at the previous annual inspections, there is guidance in the Foster Carers Handbook about how to work with birth parents, in the case of both the general and children with a disability service. This was observed to be followed up at foster carer training sessions previously attended by the inspectors. Agreements regarding contact are arranged in conjunction with the placing social worker and form part of the placement agreement. The fostering service continues to provide financial support to ensure that contact arrangements take place.

Evidence from foster carers indicates that children are supported to maintain regular contact with their birth families and that this is actively encouraged where it is appropriate and safe to do so. Foster carers are expected to record and maintain records of the outcomes of birth parent visits.

The London Borough of Sutton provides consultation questionnaires for foster carers, the children and younger people being fostered and the parents of children and younger people fostered. A survey has also recently been conducted.

**The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been previously presented and was re-confirmed at this inspection.**

**Standard 11. Children's opinions: – in addition to questionnaires and events-**

- All children using services that are provided by the London Borough of Sutton have access an independent Advocacy Service.
- The children also are able to make their views known via a magazine they edit called 'My Shout'.
- On a monthly basis the Advocacy Service hosts a meeting between Looked After Children and the Executive Head of Children's Services and the lead councillor for Looked After Children.
- The 'Jigsaw' advocacy project is also developing the involvement of children with disabilities in the running of the 'Children's Trust' that provides the 'Family Link' service.
- The birth children of foster carers also have events and there is a newsletter for this group.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

**The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

14 and 29.

The fostering service promotes independence skills and health training to prepare younger people for adulthood.

The fostering service pays foster carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified to ensure that sufficient money is available to meet the financial needs of the children placed.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The supervising social worker addresses issues pertaining to independence throughout the fostering period, with increasing emphasis as preparation for independence becomes more imminent. When preparing for independent living, pathway plans are used with young people who are encouraged to be actively involved in decision-making processes.

Specific training courses are now run in age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills, and these are being further developed. There is also specific guidance for financial arrangements for younger people aged 16 and over in foster care.

## **New areas of good practice identified at this year's inspection:**

**Standard 14:** The organisation has a preparing for independence scheme where some of their money is paid directly into a bank account in the child's name to promote budgeting and financial management skills.

There is a written policy on fostering allowances and this is available in the Foster Carer's Handbook in the case of each of the respective services. There were no concerns expressed from the foster carers who were visited by the inspection team about regular and prompt payments of fees. Allowances paid to friend and/or family carers are at the same rate as other foster carers. Carers for the children with a disability service are provided with an allowance based on the numbers of hours that care is provided. Comments made by foster carers indicate that extra financial support and equipment is provided when the assessed needs of children in placement deem this to be necessary.

Additional funding has been provided to specific foster carers for extensions / adaptations to properties in order to facilitate maintaining long-term placements of children and or placements of children with a disability.

# 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):**

17, 20 21, 22, 23, and 24.

The fostering service has had an adequate number of staff and foster carers to meet responsibilities outlined in its the Statement of Purpose.

All staff are properly accountable and well supported.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supports foster carers well.



Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.

Foster carers are not all appropriately trained.

Case records for children are generally comprehensive so that most of the information needed to ensure a safe placement and good match is available.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The last inspection report contained the following recommendation under Standard 4: Systems for monitoring and effectively addressing shortfalls in annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits should be implemented. This has now occurred and this recommendation and the Standard are therefore met. See previous report for details of how other elements of this Standard is met.

As with the previous year, the fostering service has again had a significant change in staffing in the last year and have had vacant posts, all of which have now been filled. Staff that were interviewed were positive about the support and training they received and the way the service is developing. Indeed, management support was highlighted as an area of good practice.

### **The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged at this inspection under standard 16:**

Management support to supervising social workers and team working and support from peers were identified as an area of good practice by supervising Social Workers.

Evidence from the foster carer's tracking interviews illustrates that foster carers continue to be fully aware of the role of the supervising social workers. Foster carers again commented very favourably about the level of support that they received. Foster carers are expected to be visited monthly (in the case of task centred placements) and no less than three monthly (in the case of permanent placements) basis. Regular telephone contact also occurs. The Foster Carer's Handbook continues to provide guidance in respect of all the areas identified in Standard 21.2. {See Standard 18 for more details about the new Foster Carer's Handbook}.

Evidence from the foster carer's tracking interviews illustrates that foster carers continue to be fully aware of the role of the supervising social workers. Foster carers again commented very favourably about the level of support that they received. Foster carers are expected to be visited monthly (in the case of task centred placements) and no less than three monthly (in the case of permanent placements) basis. Regular telephone contact also occurs. The

Foster Carer's Handbook continues to provide guidance in respect of all the areas identified in Standard 21.2. {See Standard 18 for more details about the new Foster Carer's Handbook}.

Evidence from the foster carers' tracking interviews illustrates that foster carers continue to be fully aware of the role of the supervising social workers. Foster carers again commented very favourably about the level of support that they received. Foster carers are expected to be visited monthly (in the case of task centred placements) and no less than three monthly (in the case of permanent placements). Regular telephone contact also occurs. The Foster Carer's Handbook continues to provide guidance in respect of all the areas identified in Standard 21.2.

Carers who spoke with the Inspectors, and supporting social worker interviews, confirmed that both groups had a clear understanding of their own and others' roles and responsibilities.

**The following evidence of currently exceeding standard 21 has been previously presented and was re-confirmed at this inspection.**

**Standard 21 - Supporting carers.**

- Support has been an area of good practice consistently raised by foster carers.
- Extra funding has been made available to support foster carers to maintain positive placements.
- Support visits are as needed and where required weekly visits occur.
- There is a fostering development worker post for the general fostering service, and a new carer support post in the 'Family Link' scheme.
- The organisation has developed a new and additional post of assistant team manager for the general fostering service. This post has a specific brief to monitor and support recruitment and retention of new foster carers.
- The 'Family Link' scheme also has a new assistant team manager post.

**New areas of good practice identified at this year's inspection:**

**Standard 21:** There is one new supporting social worker post, and a new foster carer practitioner scheme which recognizes the experience of foster carers who have been working as foster carers for 2 years and have done 75% of core training, by offering them a mentoring role and other opportunities to participate in the service for new foster carers.

The last inspection report contained the following recommendation under Standard 22: Support visits should meet the Borough's own guidelines for frequency and unannounced visits should also occur as per Standard 22.6.

This has now occurred as far as announced visits are concerned and unannounced visits are now clearly recorded. This recommendation will be considered met and the following recommendation will be set for the remaining minor shortfall:

Unannounced visits should occur annually

**The following evidence of good practice has been previously presented and acknowledged and was upheld at this inspection:**

**Standard 16+20:** Supporting social work staff supervision occurs every three weeks.

**Standard 26.** The children's services are on one site potentially promoting good communication and access to social work colleges.

**Standard 23 Foster carer training:**

The quantity of training undertaken by foster carers, although still low, has risen.

The last inspection report contained a suggestion only, that access to training be improved through exploration of other methods of training.

Since that time training has been made more accessible with weekend and evening training sessions now provided and open learning being explored.

The fostering service provides a comprehensive training programme which has been now made more accessible with weekend and evening training sessions now provided and open learning also being explored.

There are now baseline expectations for training of 30 hours per year. This is also clarified in the Foster Carers' Handbook. Childcare support, bonuses Payments for Foster Carer Practitioners, and access to a foster carer practitioner mentoring scheme are all also available as incentives to take up training.

There is currently no recording of identified training needs or a system to compel foster carers to take on training.

Some external training was not recorded in training profiles and no identified training needs were recorded in training profiles.

Records provided showed that over a third of foster carers had had no training. The low uptake was suspected at the last inspection where suggestions to improve this were made, and therefore highlighted for closer attention at his inspection.

The following 1 requirement, 3 recommendations, and two suggestions are now therefore made to help the service address this shortfall:

Requirement – {Standard 23} The fostering service must ensure that its foster carers attend identified training in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

Recommendation- {Standard 23} The fostering service must record, monitor and verify all training undertaken by foster carers effectively, including external training.

Recommendation- {Standard 19.3} Foster carers training needs must be identified and recorded in training profiles. The outcomes for this need to be monitored and relate to their approval categories.

Recommendation- {Standard 30} The panel's role in monitoring quality must be expanded to take into account training of foster carers and the outcomes of this training.  
{also recorded under Standard 30.}

The following are suggestions only, regarding some strategies which may assist the service to meet the desired outcome of the above foster carer training requirements and recommendations.

*It is suggested only at this stage that those foster carers that do not take up the identified required training in their training profiles, {as opposed to identified recommended training} are referred back to panel for consideration as to their ability to effectively meet the needs of the type of placements they are approved for with a view to reducing the range or removing approval completely.*

*Due to the low take up of training, it is suggested only that, where the panel themselves identify training needed to better meet the needs of the approval categories, that a condition of approval is made. These conditions could be that this training occurs before the first placement where the training is identified as required, or within a certain period if the training is identified desired/recommended, and that the panel monitor the implementation of these conditions and whether the desired outcomes have been achieved through the training provided.*

*{See also 23.4 – all foster carers trained in areas identified before first placement}*



# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion  
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

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

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

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	3

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

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	8.2	17[1] +11[b]2	Where trans-racial or trans-cultural placements occur, and where required, foster carers must receive specific additional training, support and information to facilitate developing a positive understanding of their heritage and facilitate developing the carers skills to enable them to better meet all the child's needs. This process must be recorded and supporting social workers must be made aware of any associated policies.	01/06/06
2	23	17	The fostering service must ensure that it's foster carers attend identified training in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child placed in their care.	01/06/06

## 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	15.4	All foster carers must have an up to date Criminal record Bureau Check.
2	19.3	Foster carers' training needs must be identified and recorded in training profiles. The outcomes for this need to be monitored and relate to their approval categories.
3	22.6	Unannounced visits should occur annually
4	23	The fostering service must record, monitor and verify all training undertaken by foster carers effectively, including external training.
5	30	The panel's role in monitoring quality must be expanded to take into account training of foster carers and the outcomes of this training.



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