



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

London Borough of Greenwich Fostering

**147 Powis Street
London
SE18 6JL**

Lead Inspector
Elizabeth Brunton

Announced Inspection
17th January 2007 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	London Borough of Greenwich Fostering
Address	147 Powis Street London SE18 6JL
Telephone number	020 8854 8888
Fax number	
Email address	mary.moralee@greenwich.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Greenwich Council Mary Moralee
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	vacant post
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 16th January 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Greenwich Social Services fostering service provides fostering placements for children looked after by the council. It consists of three teams: the Recruitment, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) Team, which is responsible for the recruitment, assessment and reviewing of foster carers, the Family Placement Team, which is responsible for the support, supervision and training of foster carers and the Access to Resources (ART) Team, which is responsible for arranging placements for children and young people with in-house and independent fostering agency carers and in residential establishments. Each team is staffed by a manager and a number of social workers/placement officers and administrators. Overall management of the service is provided by the service manager for looked after children, who reports to the assistant director for the children's service.

At the time of the inspection, there were 568 children and young people looked after by Greenwich Council. 110 of these young people were placed with 91 Greenwich foster carers, including friends and family carers. 244 young people were placed with foster carers provided by independent agencies.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and undertaken by one inspector over five days. It was a proportionate inspection, so some areas where the service was performing well at the last inspection, were not looked at again this time. Three foster homes were visited and the young people placed there spoken to. The supervising social workers for these foster homes were interviewed and the placing social workers spoken to. The service manager and managers of the three fostering teams were interviewed, together with other staff working in these teams. Discussions were also held with the fostering panel chair, the children's safeguarding manager, representatives from the Greenwich Foster Care Association and the Fostering Support Task Group and the designated nurse for looked after children.

Records were looked at, including staff recruitment files, foster carers' and children's records. The office premises were also inspected. Questionnaires were sent out before the inspection and six completed questionnaires were received from foster carers, five from young people in placement and four from placing social workers.

What the service does well:

Greenwich Council had continued to provide a very good fostering service. The service was well managed and the staff were able, qualified and experienced. Foster carers were doing well at meeting the health care needs of young people and supporting them in their education and family contact. Young people's diversity needs were being met and they were being listened to by foster carers. The supervision, support and training provided for foster carers were of a high standard and the fostering support task group had gone from strength to strength. There had been few allegations and no complaints against foster carers during the past year and those which had been made, had been very thoroughly dealt with. Payments to foster carers were generous and efficient and the work of the fostering panel was once again of a high standard.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service had been successful in recruiting new foster carers, so that the number of foster carers had remained stable. A specialist worker had been recruited to assist and advise on the assessment of family and friends foster carers and the standard of these assessments had improved, as a result. Placement agreement meetings were being held at the outset of placements, unannounced visits had been made to foster homes and all foster carers were signing foster care agreements. The fostering panel had been quorate and had undertaken training and CRB checks were up-to-date for staff working in the fostering service.

What they could do better:

Staff recruitment records in the HR section needed to be more ordered so that checks and references for staff could be easily checked. The recruitment process for new panel members needed to be more in line with that for staff and the CRB's guidance on the portability of checks needed to be followed. Vacant posts within the service should be recruited to and more suitable and accessible office accommodation was needed. Feedback should be provided for foster carers' reviews by young people's social workers and the fostering service should be more involved in the long-term placement planning for young people

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

The fostering service was doing well in meeting the health care needs of young people, with support from other services.

EVIDENCE:

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

The fostering service was doing well in meeting the health care needs of young people, with support from other services.

There was one designated nurse for looked after children who was struggling to meet the demands on her post. She advocated strongly for an expansion in this service to enable her to work with reluctant young people on health assessments and to be more available to individual young people and foster carers for health care advice. A specialist post had recently been established to work with looked after young people on pregnancy and related issues.

(see recommendation 9)

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.

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

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

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

The fostering service was very well managed by able and experienced managers and foster carers were giving a high standard of care in safe homes. Matching was generally good, though some recommendations are made. Young people had been kept safe from abuse and neglect in foster homes and allegations had been very well dealt with. The assessment of family and friends foster cares had improved significantly and the statutory checks on all foster carers had been regularly updated. Staff were able and experienced but recruitment records were difficult to check. The work of the fostering panel continued to be of a high standard but some additional attention needed to be paid to the recruitment of panel members.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service was very well managed by able and experienced managers and staff spoke positively about the management of the service. Placements were arranged by the Access to Resources Team and the staffing

Recruitment references and checks for the managers were checked at previous inspections and not inspected again on this occasion.

Those foster carers seen were giving excellent care and this was confirmed by young people in placement and their social workers. All of the five young people who completed questionnaires said they always felt well cared for by their foster carers. One young person said of her foster carer "she looks after me nice" and another said "they do more than their fair share. They treat us like their own children and everyone's treated the same here". All homes seen provided safe, warm and comfortable accommodation and annual health and safety checks of carers' homes were seen on file.

The assessment of prospective foster carers was competency based and those 'stranger' assessments seen at the last inspection were very thorough and of a high standard. The panel chair confirmed that this continued to be the case and these assessments were not inspected again on this occasion. Those assessments and checks of potential friends and family foster carers assessments seen showed an improvement since last year, partly due to the assistance given by a worker recently appointed to a specialist post within the Recruitment and Assessment Team. Training for social workers in the children's teams who undertake this work had been delayed by their location move but was still planned to take place. There continued to be a very efficient system for ensuring that foster carers' CRB and medical checks were regularly updated.

The matching of young people with foster carers appeared to be generally sound and case-tracked young people felt they had been well matched with their foster carers. Staff said that the proportion of planned placements had increased and the manager confirmed that this trend needed to continue.

Young people seen wanted the opportunity to meet prospective foster carers before moving in. Records showed that placement agreement meetings were being held at the outset of many placements, to agree the purpose, roles, expectations and day-to-day issues and this should be done for all placements, as planned. **(see recommendations 2 & 3)**

All foster carers spoken to were aware of the importance of safe caring and those placing social workers who gave their views, considered that young people were safe in their foster homes. There had been two allegations made against foster carers during the previous year, both of which had been well managed and dealt with. One foster carer's future had been considered by the fostering panel and a very thorough practice investigation had been carried out in the second case, prior to returning to panel. Foster carers were said to be working on safer caring policies and risk assessments for their households, together with their supervising social workers. The possible risk posed by a relative of one foster carer had been very robustly addressed by staff. Foster carers had written information about child protection and safe caring and training was provided.

Those foster carers seen had worked at maintaining boundaries and consistency in their approach to young people's behaviour and with good results. Young people did not report unfair rules or inappropriate sanctions

being imposed. One young person said of her foster home ‘‘the rules are very fair here and everyone’s treated fairly. All you ever get is a bit of a telling off and then it’s over’’. No young people reported being bullied.

A meeting of the fostering panel was not observed as part of this inspection. This was a proportionate inspection and the panel was properly constituted and operating well at the last inspection. However, minutes of and papers submitted to two recent panel meetings were seen and the chair was interviewed. Panel membership was sufficiently diverse, in line with the regulations and covered a wide range of knowledge. The same experienced and qualified service manager was chairing the panel and with the same robust, independent and child focused approach. Minutes of two recent panels showed that these meetings had been quorate and that cases had been thoroughly dealt with and pertinent issues raised. Panel had received training on friends and family foster carer assessments during the past year and had received information about matchings and disruptions. The chair said that the fostering service was open and receptive to feedback from the panel about its work

Enhanced CRB checks were said to be in place for all panel members except the councillor and it is important that this is obtained as soon as possible. Not all panel members’ checks had been carried out by Greenwich Council and where this is not the case, the CRB’s advice about the portability of checks should be followed. A selection procedure for panel members had been put in place and the panel chair said that the most recently recruited member had been interviewed. However, those checks listed under schedule 1 to the regulations should be carried out for those panel members not already recruited to work for Greenwich Council. **(see requirement 3)**

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.

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

7, 13, 31

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

Young people's diversity needs had been well met by the fostering service and young people had been given good support in their education. Foster care was not currently provided as short-term breaks for young people living with their families.

EVIDENCE:

Both the staffing of the fostering service and the pool of in-house foster carers were from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, placements were generally in line with the department's same race placement policy though not all young people could be placed with foster carers of the same cultural and religious background. However, the service had done well in recruiting a diverse group of new foster carers during the previous year.

Additional support had been provided for some placements, where foster carers did not share the cultural and religious background of young people placed with them. One foster carer seen showed very good understanding of

the need for this and had built positive relationships with the young person's extended family who shared his cultural background and religious practice. All five young people who completed questionnaires said they always got the right help so that they could be successful in their education. One young person was very pleased with her exam results and the fact that she was now in college. She said that her foster carer had made her feel "she could do it". Another young person described how his foster carer had supported him in choosing the right secondary school. Young people seen had also been encouraged to take part in a range of activities and to develop their talents. However, there was some feedback from questionnaires that more information for foster carers about local events and activities for children and young people would be helpful. **(see recommendation 10)**

Another foster carer had found an independent visitor who could provide this input for the young person placed with her and foster carers were providing mentoring. However, some foster carers felt that more support was needed in these situations. There were a number of black African Caribbean foster carers caring for young people of African origin and it is suggested that a training/workshop event is provided for this group. Support groups for black and Asian foster carers were well attended and staff are to be commended for organising a popular annual social event for black looked after young children. Foster carers had been provided with recent training in valuing diversity and working with asylum seekers and generous grants were available for young people to visit their countries of origin. **(see recommendation 1)**

All five young people who completed questionnaires said they always got the right help so that they could be successful in their education. One young person was very pleased with her exam results and the fact that she was now in college. She said that her foster carer had made her feel "she could do it". Another young person described how his foster carer had supported him in choosing the right secondary school. Young people seen had also been encouraged to take part in a range of activities and to develop their talents. There was some feedback from questionnaires that more information for foster carers about local events and activities for children and young people would be helpful. However, it did seem that a good range of information had been provided.

Foster carers showed good understanding of the support needed by young people with their education. They had liaised with schools, attended PEP meetings and had advocated for young people where necessary. Older young people were provided with their own computers and foster carers were given computers for the use of younger children placed. Foster carers had appreciated the support and training given by the educational advocate and achievement officer for looked after children. A large number of young people had received education awards at the recent annual ceremony.

The fostering service did not provide short-term break care for young people who were living with their families, though some young people, already in foster care, were placed for occasional periods of respite care with other

carers. Efforts had been made in the recent past to establish a service providing short-term breaks for young people with disabilities but it had not proved possible to recruit carers.

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.

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

10, 11

Quality in this outcome area was excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

Foster carers were giving very good support to young people in maintaining contact with their families. Young people were being listened to by foster cares, who were advocating for them and young people's views were being sought in a number of ways. Views expressed by young people about whether social workers listened to them and about changes in social worker should be noted.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers seen and spoken to were giving very good support to young people in their contact with birth families. One older young person was pleased to have rebuilt her relationship with her mother, so that she could now stay with her and said that her foster carers had helped her to do this. Another young person had been encouraged to maintain contact through drawings and letters with a parent who was not currently able to see her. Those foster carers seen had built positive relationships with young people's birth families and friends and showed understanding of young people's often complex and painful feelings about their families. A number of foster carers were supervising contact at one of the local contact centres through the

fostering support task group. Foster carers had received additional training to do this, they met as a support group and were providing a valuable and professional service.

All young people seen or who completed questionnaires said their foster carers always listened to them, asked for their opinions and took notice of what they had to say. One young person said of his foster carer "she always listens and every now and then we all (in the household) have a little meeting where you can say what you want about anything". There were examples of where foster carers had advocated for young people and where this had made a difference to the outcome for them. Social workers confirmed that foster carers involved young people in decisions about their day-to-day lives. One social worker said of the foster carer "she always wants the young person's view to be taken into account".

The views of young people in placement had normally been sought as part of foster carers' annual reviews. There were also plans to seek their views through questionnaire at the end of placements. Young people's views about whether their social worker listened and took notice of their opinions varied and a number of young people commented on how often their social worker changed. **(see recommendation 8)**

There was currently no rights and participation worker in post but the manager said this post was shortly to be recruited to. Advocacy for young people was commissioned from an outside organisation, when needed. A link had also been established with the Voice Blueprint project, through which young people's views on what makes a good social worker and foster carer were to be developed. A survey of looked after young people's views had recently been undertaken and the report was about to be finalised. Training had again been provided for foster carers in listening skills.

Young people said they knew who to speak to if they felt unhappy and they had information about how to make a complaint. No complaints had been recorded since the last inspection.

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)

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

29

Quality in this outcome area was excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

A good level of payments was made to foster carers, who had been involved in a recent review. The payment process was working well.

EVIDENCE:

Payments to foster carers were linked to the rates recommended by the Fostering Network. Retainer payments, annual holiday allowances and reward payments for training and other achievements were made and these had recently been reviewed by a working party of staff and foster carers. Young people confirmed that they received pocket money and the clothing they needed. The manager said that young people were financially supported in placement up until the age of eighteen, if they wanted this.

Payments were publicised and reviewed annually. Foster carers reported no problems or delays with the payment of allowances and they praised the efficiency and helpfulness of the administrator responsible.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1,16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service was well managed and had able staff but the Recruitment and Assessment Team needed additional staff. New foster carers had been recruited, who had replaced the number lost. Very good support, supervision and training were provided for foster carers, though some additional focused work would be useful in some situations. Children's case records were comprehensive and accessible but the outcomes of young people's reviews needed to be communicated more promptly to the fostering service. Foster carers' files, other administrative records and records maintained by foster carers were all of a good standard but the office premises were unsuitable. Friends and families foster care had developed well.

There was a clear and up-to-date statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the service provided was in line with this.

As at the last inspection, the fostering service was very well managed by an able, experienced and stable management group. Foster carers and staff described managers as supportive and approachable and staff confirmed that they received regular supervision. Team managers had supported their staff well by direct involvement in the work where appropriate. Clear systems were in place to ensure that reviews, CRB and medical checks were carried out on time and that all necessary references and checks were in place for prospective foster carers. Records showed that files seen had been audited by the team manager each year. However, this was not in line with the department's expectations as stated. **(see recommendation 10)**

The fostering service was adequately staffed and additional posts had been filled by redeployees in the Access to Resources Team. Staff spoken to seemed competent, committed, experienced and knowledgeable, as evidenced by their work. The staff group was relatively stable and caseloads were said to be manageable. Staff morale appeared to be good though staff remained very dissatisfied with their building, as mentioned under a later standard. Good support was provided by very able administrative team.

Staff had worked hard at recruiting new foster carers during the past year and a number had been approved. However, some foster carers had inevitably retired from the service or resigned for other reasons, so the total number of approved foster carers had remained stable. Extensive use was still made of the independent sector as previously mentioned. Whilst providing greater choice for matching, this clearly had financial implications for the council. The fostering service was providing the services needed to retain foster carers, Staff had worked hard at recruiting new foster carers during the past year and a number had been approved. However, some foster carers had inevitably

retired from the service or resigned for other reasons, so the total number of approved foster carers had remained stable. Extensive use was still made of the independent sector as previously mentioned. Whilst providing greater choice for matching, this clearly had financial implications for the council. The fostering service was providing the services needed to retain foster carers, such as support, training and good payments. The recruitment of new foster carers is challenging everywhere and particularly with the demographic features of a locality such as Greenwich. If Greenwich's in-house service is to expand, it seems essential that the Recruitment and Assessment Team is fully staffed. The vacant post should be recruited to and an additional post established to replace the friends and family recruitment post. As at the previous inspection, staff felt that the specialist skills of a recruitment and marketing worker were needed and this vacant post should also be recruited to. **(see recommendation 11)**

All foster carers who gave their views said the support given by the fostering service was excellent/good. One foster carer said she received "excellent support from an experienced supervising social worker who visited regularly, phoned every week and was very helpful". Another said "my one's fantastic in every way. I can't fault her". Supervision agreements were in place and records showed that supervising social workers maintained regular contact with foster carers and generally visited at the agreed intervals of 4 – 6 weeks. However, there had been some longer gaps between visits and in some situations where this should have been avoided, such as when a child had been placed outside a foster carer's terms of approval and with an exemption. Unannounced visits to foster homes had been carried out regularly. **(see recommendation 12)**

Supervision visits were generally well recorded and showed that focused work had been undertaken with foster carers. Some very robust work had been undertaken with foster carers by supervising social workers on issues such as the impact of fostering on birth children, the lack of involvement by a second, male carer, risk posed by a grandson and a child's issues around food. The manager had been involved where necessary. However, one child's social worker commented that the supervising social worker should be undertaking more work with the foster carer on strategies for dealing with the child's behaviour. In another case, a very robust practice investigation undertaken with foster carers following an allegation, had identified a number of shortfalls in the foster carers' practice which had not previously been noted. It is also suggested that the frequency at which young people in placement should be seen by supervising social workers is clarified and that whether or not they have been seen is made clear in reports. The increasing complexity of the fostering role inevitably places more demands on the supervision role, which in turn has implications for workload and staffing levels. This should be kept under review. **(see recommendation 13)**

Out-of-hours support to foster carers was provided by the emergency duty team and via a mobile phone link with staff of the fostering service. A confidential counselling service was also provided. A good number and range of support groups was provided, including groups for black and Asian carers,

male carers and friends and family carers. Support groups were generally well attended, foster carers were expected to attend and were rewarded for doing so. Excellent practical support continued to be given to carers by other carers, through the fostering support task group. Foster carers and the manager and staff of the Family Placement Team are once again to be commended for this very successful and original scheme. There was some mentoring provided for foster carers by other foster carers, though this was a service which foster carers felt could usefully expand. Finally, foster carers appreciated the parties/celebrations provided for them by the council a number of times each year.

Annual reviews of foster carer's were competency based, thorough and mainly carried out on time. They were chaired by social workers from the Recruitment and Assessment Team, who normally spoke to young people in placement. Records showed that foster carers and supervising social workers provided extensive written information for reviews. Feedback questionnaires were sent to young people's social workers but few were returned. There should be a clear expectation within the children's teams that this important feedback is provided for foster carer reviews. The exit questionnaires for young people and their social workers recommended under a previous standard would provide additional information for reviews. Reviews had been considered by the fostering panel, where necessary and all others were seen by the panel chair. **(see recommendation 14)**

There was a comprehensive foster carer agreement, which all foster carers had signed on those files seen, including friends and family carers. Foster carers had copies of the comprehensive handbook, the updating of which was almost complete.

A very good range of training continued to be offered to foster carers and the staff responsible for organising and administering this are once again to be commended. The group of foster carers spoken to described the training as "absolutely superb". Foster carers had particularly valued the recent foster carers' conference on attachment. Records of attendance were maintained, feedback on training was positive and each carer had a training profile. Most training courses were reasonably well attended. Training plans were made at annual reviews and foster carers were rewarded for attendance. Nevertheless, there were still some foster carers who attended little training. One suggestion made by foster carers was for more training to be held on weekday evenings, as this might make it easier for working partners to attend. Additional foster carers were studying for NVQ qualifications.

Children's case records were held in the children's teams and were accessible to staff in the fostering service on the IT system. Those seen were comprehensive, though there were two/three month delays in LAC reviews being entered on the system. Hopefully foster carers receive copies of review decisions more promptly but supervising social workers also need this information without delay to inform their work. Those foster carers seen were maintaining separate records for each young person placed and storing these

safely. One foster carer stored reports, photos, mementos etc for each young person in separate folders, for young people to take with them when they moved on. The case records for foster carers were comprehensive, well maintained and stored securely. **(see recommendation 15)**

The fostering service's premises continued to be unsatisfactory and scarcely fit for purpose. As at previous inspections, staff and foster carers were frustrated by the building's inaccessibility, due to steep stairs and the lack of any suitable facilities for foster carers' meetings or training. The need to hire meeting rooms for all such events must have very significant budget implications. The inaccessibility of the building and lack of any 'shop-front' facility also added to the difficulties in attracting potential foster carers and to the cost of publicity and advertising. However, staff reported fewer problems with the IT system than at the last inspection. **(see recommendation 16)**

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	4
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	3

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

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

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

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

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.	FS15	20	Staff recruitment records in the HR section must be better organised, so that it is possible to check whether all necessary references and checks are in place for staff	01/06/07
2.	FS15	20	The CRB guidance on the portability of checks must be followed.	01/03/07
3.	FS30	20	CRB checks must be obtained for all members of the fostering panel. Those references and checks listed under schedule 1 must be obtained for any newly recruited panel members not already employed by the council	01/04/07
4.	FS21	29(6)	Foster carers must be notified of their continued approval following annual reviews.	01/03/07

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.	FS7	Additional support should be given to trans-cultural placements. It is suggested that a training/workshop event is provided for the group of black African Caribbean foster carers who are caring for young people of African origin.
2.	FS8	The proportion of planned placements should be increased, as planned, so that more young people can have the opportunity to meet prospective foster carers before they move in.
3.	FS8	Placement agreement meetings should be held for all placements, as planned.
4.	FS8	More evidence of satisfactory CRB checks on all fostering household members should be obtained before young people are placed in the independent sector.
5.	FS8	The recruitment of more black African foster carers should be targeted in order to reduce the number of young people placed with foster carers of different cultural and religious backgrounds.
6.	FS8	The approval of the fostering panel should be sought for placements of young people outside foster carers' terms of approval within the timescale specified in the department's policy.
7.	FS8	Social workers/managers in the fostering service should be more involved in identifying the long-term placement needs and best available placement for young people, in order to make the best use of their experience, expertise and knowledge of resources.
8.	FS11	Managers of the children's teams should be made aware of young people's mixed views about whether their social workers listen to them and take notice of their opinions and of their concern about the number of changes in social worker.
9.	FS12	The health promotion service for looked after young people should be expanded, so that more work can be undertaken with young people and foster carers.
10.	FS13	Foster carers should be provided with more resource information about local events and activities for children and young people.

11.	FS16	Case records for foster carers should be audited by managers in line with the department's expectations
12.	FS17	Vacant posts in the Recruitment and Assessment Team should be recruited to, including the recruitment and marketing worker. An increase in the establishment of this team (following the designation of one post as friends and family recruitment) should help to expand the in-house service.
13.	FS21	Staffing and workload levels in the family placement team should be kept under review, so that supervision visits can be made to all foster homes in line with the frequency set out in supervision agreement and all necessary issues taken up with foster carers.
14.	FS21	The frequency at which young people in placement should be seen by supervising social workers should be clarified
15.	FS21	There should be a clear expectation within the children's teams that feedback on placements must be provided by young people's social workers for foster carers' annual reviews.
16.	FS22	Some foster carer training should be provided during weekday evenings, to see whether this enables working partners and others to participate.
17.	FS24	Supervising social workers should be provided with information about decisions made at young people's reviews, without delay.
18.	FS26	The fostering service's premises should be more accessible and more suited to the service's aims and objectives.

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