

London Borough of Haringey Fostering Service

Inspection report for LA Fostering Agency

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Inspector	Karen Malcolm
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The London Borough of Haringey Fostering service provides planned and emergency foster care for children and young people aged between birth to under 18 years. Children receive individualised placements which are short term or long term. A specialist short break respite service supports children who have a disability. Children also benefit from placement with their family or friends within kinship arrangements. The culturally diverse staff team includes a Registered Manager known as the Head of Service, senior team manager, three team managers for the different services provided by fostering service and qualified social workers who supervise the foster carers.

The Head of Service (Registered Manager) has the overall responsibility of the fostering service. At the time of this inspection 211 children were placed within the service. Children benefited from 315 approved fostering households.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this announced inspection is to assess The London Borough Haringey's of Fostering Service against all the key standards and to gauge improvement made to the service since the last inspection that was conducted approximately 11 months ago. A second inspector assisted on the first day of the inspection.

Overall, The London Borough of Haringey Fostering Services is judged to be a 'good' service. The service continues to provide good support to carers and is well managed. Health, education and consultation is valued highly by the service and children and young people benefit greatly from the support, advice and encouragement that is in place.

One action from the last inspection was not met at this inspection. This relates to children's case records not being consistently completed by foster carers daily.

Improvements since the last inspection

Eight actions and two recommendations were made at the last inspection of which seven actions have been met. These are addressed under 'Staying Safe' in that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are now been undertaken three yearly. Under 'Positive Contribution' consultation of carers and young people have undertaken through various channels of consultation, this is now deemed outstanding. Under 'Organisation' foster carers now obtain relevant information prior to child being

placed and the training programme for foster carers has improved greatly with the introduction of the 'Individual Training and Development plan' (ITAD) and the 'Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers'.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The fostering service provides foster carers with the correct tools and skills to support the children and young people in their care, to receive the appropriate healthcare that meets their overall needs. The service ensures that foster carers are given a clear, easily understandable health care plan for each child and young person prior to the placement beginning, or within 24 hours of an emergency placement. Case records detail how the child or young person's specific and general health needs are to be addressed. The Foster Carers Handbook in partnership with Fostering Network have clear guidance on safe caring, health, medical matters, HIV, Aids and recording.

The fostering service has partnerships with other professional agencies to further develop health care planning for children and young people placed. There is a strong and creative partnership with the Looked After Health Team in the Training Primary Care Trust. The Looked After Children's (LAC) nurses work with social care professionals (supervising social workers and children's social workers), foster carers and health providers in and outside of the borough. To facilitate access to universal health provision and to fast track referrals to specific and specialised resources if necessary. Haringey Tavistock CAMHS team have the contract for Children, Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for Looked After Children. The number of children and young people receiving direct therapeutic help through the Haringey Tavistock CAMHS team have increased over the years. Carers are provided with comprehensive health information which outlines their roles and responsibilities and additional support is given when needed. Haringey Tavistock CAMHS provides fortnightly consultation meetings to the fostering management teams and this has recently been extended to the supervising social workers.

Foster carers have good links with health agencies. Foster carers receive comprehensive induction and on-going training to support children and young people in their care. Foster carers have undertaken first aid training and this is updated according. A part of the three day induction training includes a section on health needs and those foster carers managing children and young people over the age of 11; their training includes developmental trauma and mental ill health, speak easy, supporting young people through puberty and sexual matters such as pregnancy and sexual orientation.

Children and young people confirm that they understand their health care plan and that they are supported well by their carer. Children and young people are regular consulted on issues on staying healthy. A selective few children and young people have been asked to participate in conferences where their views will be listened to on a grand scale.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Some of the panel members have been a member of the panel for more than two consecutive terms. The fostering panel provides a quality assurance function. However, this is not consistently undertaken as it was identified that one foster carer approval agreement was not updated at their annual review, although the foster carer was supporting children outside of their approval agreement. Panel membership includes expertise in education, health, fostering and the voluntary sector. The fostering panel reflects diverse cultures, but is predominately female and there is no openly gay or lesbian representation on the panel. The fostering staff and panel members receive regular training and the chair occasionally attends team meetings.

Children and young people are carefully matched with carers that meet their short term and long term needs. Where a suitable in-borough placement is unavailable the service considers their approved independent fostering agencies to manage this resource. If a trans-racial placement is made additional support is readily available. Majority of Haringey's approved foster carers are from Black/African and Caribbean background. The current demand for children and young people needing placements are from UK whites and large sibling groups. However, there were no clear strategic plans in place as to how the fostering service targets carers from these groups.

The Head of Service and the Senior Team Manager are both suitable people to run the fostering service as they promote the welfare of the children and young people and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place.

Children and young people are placed with foster carers who have been thoroughly assessed as being able to keep the children and young people safe for the duration of the placement. Foster carers' preparation and training covers safe caring and health and safety. Carers are provided with written guidance on their health and safety responsibilities and annual checks are undertaken by the supervisory social worker. Carers are supported in acquiring specific equipment or adaptation needed to ensure children and young people are kept safe.

Haringey's motto is that 'safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone'. The fostering service protects children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect. The safety of children and young people have high priority amongst the staff group. The assessment process of prospective carers keenly explores issues related to the safeguarding of children. There are robust child protection procedures, which are well known to staff and carers. The fostering service has a link Child Protection Adviser, who is available for advice, consultation, delivers training to foster carers and attends the carers' support groups. There has been a significant improvement on the numbers of reported allegations since the last inspection. The fostering service has written policies and procedures that address bullying and children and young people who abscond from placement. Foster families are provided with secure

internet connections which prevent children and young people accessing potentially dangerous/harmful material on line or because of their vulnerability becoming victim to those who use the internet as a route to perpetrate abuse against children.

Recruitment policy and procedures protect the employment of unsuitable people. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are undertaken three yearly as a matter of course. The efficient use of deregistration procedures enable the fostering service to discharge unsuitable foster carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children and young people benefit from the fostering service's clear understanding and valuing of equality and diversity issues. Relevant policies and procedures feature in practice documents such as the safe caring policy and the Foster Care Agreement. Issues of diversity and equality are well explored via the assessment process, training and information that is provided by the service to support the carers. Comprehensive information is maintained of the cultural, religious, disability, gender needs and experiences of both children and young people seeking placements and carers. The fostering service ensure that if the culture needs of the child or young person can not be fully met within the household, additional support is sought.

The fostering service has established a programme of training that targets carers with children and young people in education. This is combined with individual courses catering for carers of young children which is focused on play and stimulation. This programme is developed and delivered in conjunction with educationalists working within the borough. There remains a continual focus on raising education attainment and improving. The service has a flexible approach to out of school learning which allows a child or young person to follow their hobbies and interests. An annual award ceremony to celebrate the success and achievement of children and young people in care is held at Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club and is very much directed by the wishes of children and young people who play a key role in the event. Each foster carer is provided with a computer to support children and young people with their homework and any other recreational activities. Foster carers and staff maintained good links with the child or young person's school. Foster carers value education and understand the importance of their roles to enable children and young people to achieve highly.

The fostering service provides short term care for children and young people with disabilities within the borough. Approximately 15 children and young people benefit from this specialist service.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Maintaining and developing family contact is integral part of the service provided. Foster carer understand their roles and responsibilities with regards to support and contact arrangements. Children and young peoples' views are sought to ensure their views and feelings are being appropriately supported. Records of contact arrangements are maintained and reviewed regularly.

The fostering service promotes good consultation with children and young people on a number of levels. The fostering service vision statement states 'we want our children and young people to engage in decision making and to support their community'. Each team within the fostering service annually sets out how they involve children and young people to air their views. This information gathering is combined with the annual assessment. Haringey's Foster Carers Association (HFCA) meets quarterly. Foster carers spoken to stated it is a useful tool for information sharing and developing their knowledge. Some foster carers participate in delivering training to new and prospective carers, they also found this rewarding and feel a valued member of the fostering service. Children, young people and care leavers have on-going dialogue with Council Members and Senior Officers through the 'children's and young peoples consultative committee'. Haringey has an 'Independent Living Mentoring Scheme' and 'Total Respect' programme, some of the past care leavers have become mentors. Both schemes were set up through the response from children and young people who use the service. Children and young people spoken to stated that they feel listened to and that the service meets their needs.

The service organises monthly support groups that have been successful. The support groups are divided by age range to mirror the work of the teams. A group of fostering service staff have been trained as 'Action Learning Set' facilitators to support the children and young people who attend.

The views of foster carers, children and young people were received via questionnaires. These were very positive about all levels of support received via the fostering service. One carer stated that 'I have been a foster carer for over a year now. It is very rewarding - but also a lot of harder work than I thought it would be. The support from the social workers have been fantastic.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Clear written policy and procedures are in place regarding fostering allowance. A 'Payments for Skills' scheme is in place that provides carers with a generous personal fee in addition to their weekly allowance to cover the needs of the children in their care. Further financial benefits are linked to training attendance and positive contributions to those carers who mentor. Trained carers also play a significant role in the recruitment of prospective or new foster carers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Supervisory social workers monitored foster carers monthly, to ensure that they are adhering to the agreement to record relevant details about the foster child daily, in the diary. However, diaries and other records held by foster carers were inconsistently maintained.

Administration records such as complaints and records of allegations are monitored and reviewed appropriately. Case records for children, young people and carers are kept electronically on Framework I.

The fostering service's vision and values are clearly demonstrated in the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide. Both documents can be produced in different languages, meeting the various cultural needs of the children and young people who use the service.

The management team is stable, well qualified and experienced to support the staff and the wider community. The management team are visible and available to children, young people, carers and the staff supporting. They actively take steps to ensure that they obtain direct feedback from children, young people, their families and foster carers. The management team demonstrates a proactive approach to working in partnership with other professionals to ensure continuous improvement of the service.

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.

There are clear structures and systems in place to ensure assessments, approval and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively. Professional supervision and consultation are provided by the social worker.

The fostering service ensures that staff and foster carers have the skills and knowledge to undertake their roles and responsibilities through a comprehensive on-going training programme and supervision. Training provided is developed to meet the various needs of the children and young people being supported. There is a structured induction programme which staff and some carers do get involved with. Foster carers' find that the 'Individual Training and Development plan' (ITAD) assists them to identification their needs and provide a structure for accessing appropriate learning opportunities is useful.

The fostering service organises monthly support groups these have been successfully divided by age range to mirror the work of the teams.

There is a well developed and robust policy and strategies for the development and

support of kinship carers and this has been extended into other specialist fostering caring services.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

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.

Std.	Action	Due date
30	ensure fostering panel members shall hold office of a term not exceeding three years, and may not hold office of the panel of the same fostering service provider for more than two consecutive terms. (Regulation 26(6)).	13/03/2008
30	ensure that approved foster carer/s terms of their approval continues to be appropriate. (Regulation 29(4)(b))	13/03/2008
24	ensure that supervisory social workers monitoring foster carers practice to ensure they are adhering to the agreement to record relevant details about the foster child daily in the daily logs (Regulation 28(5))	13/03/2008

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- have clear strategies to recruit foster carers to meet the cultural and diverse needs of all children and young people needing placements. (NMS 8)