

INSPECTION REPORT

Fostering Services

**Tower Hamlets Fostering and
Adoption Team**

Family Placement Office
62 Roman Road
London
E2 0QJ

3rd February 2003



FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Tower Hamlets Fostering and Adoption Team

Address

Family Placement Office, 62 Roman Road, London, E2
0QJ

Local Authority Manager

Mr Jake Morgan

Tel No:

020 7364 2288

Address

Family Placement Office, 62 Roman Road, London, E2
0QJ

Fax No:

020 7364 2161

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

N/A

Date of last inspection

N/A

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		3 rd February 2003 10.15 am	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Mrs Kristen Judd	073292
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Sharon Lewis	073298
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)		Not applicable	
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)		Not applicable	

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2001 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

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

The Fostering Services Regulations 2001 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2001. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is based in a culturally diverse London Borough, which encompasses the Bangladeshi, African-Caribbean and Somalian communities. The service has undergone a period of great change in the last year. This has included new appointments to management posts, the formation of new specialist teams and the recruitment of a significant number of new foster carers. The Fostering Service mainly comprises the Recruitment and Assessment Team and Fostering Development Team. Other teams and the Training Officer have supplementary functions. The Recruitment and Assessment Team recruits, assesses and prepares prospective foster carers for approval. Specialist posts include, Marketing and Publicity Officer and a Bangladeshi Resource Officer. Publicity and recruitment materials explicitly welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds; translation and interpreting services are widely available. The Fostering Development Team aims to support foster carers through supervision. Support is provided through monthly visits, weekly telephone calls, regular training sessions, loan of equipment and professional advice and guidance. Fostering carers offer a range of placements which include short-term fostering/task centred, respite care, emergency, long term and kinship care (family and friends as carers). Services for children with disabilities are contracted out to a voluntary organisation. The Access to Resources Team has a range of functions, which includes processing foster carers payments and liaising with the Fostering Development Team to match placements. The Permanent Placement Team undertakes permanent family finding for children.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

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

This service has been inspected for the first time against National Minimum Standards introduced from 1st April 2002. As a result, this report may contain a substantial number of recommendations and requirements. If so, the number of these should fall significantly at the next inspection when the provider will have had time to take account of the new legislation and standards and to take action to meet them. The service is commended for developing fostering within the Bangladeshi communities and its culturally specific approach to child protection. The service must develop their policies and procedures to ensure staff are properly accountable and supported. Systems must be additionally developed to support trans-cultural placements. This inspection evidenced that the departmental changes has laid the foundation for a more proactive service and plans are developed to address shortfalls. The Inspectors have made eight requirements and twelve recommendations. The Inspectors would like to thank all the young people, carers and staff for their assistance and co-operation in this Inspection.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection fully actioned?

N/A

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2001.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2001, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	19(b)	FS6	The service must ensure foster carer's homes are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm. In addition homes must contain appropriate safety barriers and equipment. Social work staff must have the necessary health and safety training or access to trained personnel to undertake this task.	03.12.03
2	20.3(b)	FS15	The service must ensure all social work staff have a good understanding of foster care and the appropriate knowledge and skills.	From this time forward
3	20.3(b)	FS15	Staff must have the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for their role. Any staff involved in assessment and approval of foster carers must have experience of foster care and family placement work and trained in assessment. Workers who do not meet these requirements should carry out assessments and approvals under the supervision of someone with the necessary experience, who takes responsibility for the assessments and approvals.	From this time forward.
4	21.4(a)	FS16	All staff that supervise others must be appropriately trained and all supervision notes must be signed and dated.	From this time forward
5	21.1(b)	FS16	Where required job descriptions must be updated, to reflect current work practices for Social Work staff.	03.02.04

6	21.4	FS20	The agency should ensure all new staff are given induction training within 7 days of starting and completed within 10 weeks.	03.07.03
7	19	FS20	The service must produce an updated policies and procedures relevant to the service.	03.02.04
8	21.4(a)	FS20	The service must ensure all staff receive regular planned appraisals from their line manager.	03.02.04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS7	The service should develop more systems to support trans-cultural placements. Long term action planning should be developed and monitored to respect and preserve children's cultural heritage and enhance their self-esteem. The service should consult with foster carers to identify types of support needed. Specific peer support should be considered.
2	FS8	The location of placements should additionally be considered to ensure placements are in the child's best interests.
3	FS8	Where matching is particularly problematic the agency should consider more focused campaigning.
4	FS16	More efforts must be made to work in partnership with the child's social worker. All work with foster carers and outcomes should be in the best interests of the child.
5	FS18	The further development of the out of hours support system to be developed as currently planned.
6	FS22	Foster carers should be provided with independent support during investigations into allegations.
7	FS21	The service should review their childcare support service to meet foster carers needs, especially in relation to sole foster carers.
8	FS22	Foster Carers are provided with independent support during investigations into allegations.
9	FS23	It is recommended that the agency develop creative ways to address the training needs of the foster carers who do not attend programmed training.
10	FS23	It is recommended that the service identify a main training venue with crèche facilities.
11	FS24	Fostering Service should ensure that foster carers receive relevant information when a child is placed.
12	FS26	The service should undertake risk assessments in relation to accessing the files that are stored on the upper floor of the agency.
13	FS2	The Service Manager by 2005 should hold a NVQ Level 4 in Management or another qualification, which matches the competencies required by the NVQ Level 4.

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

PART B

INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	7
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	03/02/03
Time of Inspection	10.15
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	73

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspectors were satisfied that the Statement of Purpose clearly stated the aims and objectives of the service. The Statement of Purpose was developed in Autumn 2002. The Statement covers all aspects as stated in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for fostering services. This includes its management structure, services provided, aims and objectives, principles and standards, relevant numbers of carers, staff, young people and complaints. In addition to procedures for recruiting, approving, training supporting and reviewing carers. The children's guide has been produced in two age appropriate filofaxes. The agency is commended for producing the children's guide in brightly coloured, trendy youth oriented formats. When updated the guide should include the National Care Standards Commission contact details, in addition to culturally reflective information. The Inspectors were informed that the Statement of Purpose would be reviewed six months from the issue date.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service evidenced that it is provided and managed by appropriately skilled management, to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the role. The Service Manager has a professional social work qualification, substantial childcare experience in two other local authorities. In addition to approximately seven years senior management experience. The Service Manager by 2005 should hold a NVQ Level 4 in Management or another qualification, which matches the competencies required by the NVQ Level 4. The inspection concluded that the Service Manager exercises effective leadership of staff. In addition the operation endeavours to deliver the best possible childcare. Areas for improvement for the fostering service were highlighted in the self-assessment process. Future plans have been developed to address shortfalls.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspectors were satisfied through interviewing the Service Manager and examination of personnel files their suitability to manage the service. Necessary documentation was in place in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

During the interview the Inspectors were satisfied that the Service Manager was aware of his role. This role included setting procedures for monitoring and controlling the fostering service. Tower Hamlets Access to Resources Team action pack details fostering allowances, other payments to foster carers, additional payments to children in placements, and also identifies trends. There are clear roles for both managers and staff with established lines of communication; this was evidenced through the Service Manager's interview, and documentation seen during the inspection. The placing agreement 4.2.2 places the responsibility on the foster carer to inform the London Borough of Tower Hamlets of any changes in circumstances that may affect the suitability as a carer. Staff are bound by procedure to declare any possible conflict of interests.

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

4

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

1

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

3

Serious complaint about a foster parent. (*Allegations classed as complaints. Figure corresponds to number below. No formal stage 2 complaints recorded*)

7

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

7

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated (*Above complaint currently being investigated*)

0

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

Tower Hamlets Social Services have produced an Internal Communication Strategy; it details the communication arrangements within the Directorate. The Inspectors were satisfied through interview that the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. There are clear arrangements in place to identify the person in charge when the Managers are absent. The Managers have clear job descriptions that set out duties and responsibilities.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Foster carers homes were found to be clean, comfortable, warm, adequately furnished and decorated. Homes were maintained to a good standard of hygiene. Each child - where possible - had their own rooms which reflected their individual personalities. Health and safety was addressed in foster carers training and in the foster carers handbook. The service must ensure foster carer's homes are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm. In addition homes must contain appropriate safety barriers and equipment. Social work staff must have the necessary health and safety training or access to trained personnel to undertake this task. The placing agreement, part 8.2 details foster carer's involvement in the NCSC's inspection process and requirement to be interviewed if requested. Foster carers contributed positively to the inspection process.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The service has made efforts to promote equality and value diversity. The foster carers handbook addresses equal opportunities, valuing diversity and the needs of children with a disability. Training courses are available to address helping children & young people to develop positive identity and helping children to value their identity & developing self esteem in addition to caring for a child with a disability. The service is commended for developing the role of a specific resource officer to address the needs of Bangladeshi foster carers and having a resource library available for workers. Files demonstrated that foster carers and social workers were working co-operatively to address each child's specific needs. The service should develop more systems to support trans-cultural placements. Long term action planning should be developed and monitored to respect and preserve children's cultural heritage and enhance their self-esteem.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7) Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The matching of children with foster carers is addressed in the foster carers handbook. Matching families and children training courses have been convened for social work staff. The service endeavours to match placements appropriately and there was evidence of placements enhancing the children's self esteem. The Access to Resources Team have a checklist to assist social workers with making appropriate placements, taking into account ethnicity, religion, and cultural needs. Further support and training should be developed to equip staff and foster carers with the skills to manage trans-cultural placements, particularly in relation to the long term needs of the child. The service should consult with foster carers to identify types of support needed. Specific peer support should be considered. The geographical location of placements should additionally be considered to ensure placements are in the child's best interests. Where matching is particularly problematic the agency should consider more focused campaigning.</p>		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8) The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The placement agreement point 6.1-6.1.4 makes reference to child protection. The agency is commended for their culturally specific child protection training in relation to the needs of the Somalian and Bangladeshi communities. Foster care agreements and the foster carers handbook clearly highlights that corporal punishment is not acceptable. Basic and advanced child protection training is available along with safe practice. The foster carer handbook section 1 sub section 7 focused specifically on safe caring covering all aspects of abuse. This includes child protection procedures. The handbook Section 1 subsection 6 refers to Bullying. The missing child policy and procedure is incorporated in the foster carers handbook. Tower Hamlets policy & procedure was seen in regards to protecting children. This has been superseded by the London Child Protection Procedures (January 2003). Team meetings demonstrated that child protection was discussed and evaluated in social work practice. A record of allegations was seen. Management systems should be developed to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. This information must be scrutinised regularly.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied (Figure unavailable)	100	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

Contact arrangement procedures are clearly detailed in the fosters carers agreement and foster carers handbook. The handbook highlights the underlying principles, difficulties and arrangements. File recording evidenced that generally the views of the child are given weight in determining contact arrangements. It was evident that contact arrangements were being pursued. Files evidenced that carers reported to the child's social worker outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child. Transport costs are included in the foster carers allowance. Additional payments may occasionally be made for exceptional circumstances where taxis are used for contact rather than public transport. On these occasions prior approval must be agreed.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

The service have produced two children's guides/ handbooks, aimed at different age groups. These cover the complaints procedure, children's rights, advocacy and how to ask for help. They are presented in a filofax style and are in a suitable language for children. The service funds a Children's Rights officer, which is independent of Social Services. A user led service is provided and there was evidence of the service being accessed by children in foster care. Tower Hamlets Children & Young People Right Service have produced an annual report as part of a joint project between themselves and the NSPCC. A consultation annual event 'Waass Uuupp!!' was organised that combined issues based and fun based activities and workshops. This additionally included foster carers and advocacy groups. User involvement group is in operation. In addition to a quarterly newsletter. Children's files evidenced their opinion and views being ascertained on a regular and frequent basis. The Inspectors were informed that 'RAP' consultation meetings for young people are held monthly. Childrens Services are commended for developing computer software to enable young peoples comments to be contributed to their review process.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The foster carers handbook specifically addresses health care and development. This clearly outlines the carer's role in terms of helping to promote the health of any child in their care. Training is available for first aid and child development. Files included the health needs of children in foster care and there was evidence of discussion in the reviewing process. Evidence was seen at foster carers homes of records being kept of health appointments.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The agency has an educational support pack for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers with responsibility for children and young people in public care. The pack endorses the appropriate educational provision for all looked after children. The service gives high priority to helping foster carers meet a child's education needs. Foster carers visits and files evidenced the carers role in school contact, creating an environment where learning is valued; establishing an expectation of school attendance and supporting the child's full participation in school life. The service is commended for their aim to provide computers for all young people in their care, at present they are focusing on in-house placements.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Section 12 of the foster carers handbook addresses preparation for Adult life. This details clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing young people for independent and semi-independent living training. Further, carers are required to provide appropriate opportunities for all children in their care to learn age and developmentally appropriate independence skills. The service must ensure each young person preparing to move to independent living is actively involved in the decision making and implementation of their Pathway Plan.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The agency has a corporate recruitment procedure in place. The Inspectors were satisfied that the procedure was clearly written and followed good practice in safeguarding children. Recruitment procedures were consistently adhered to for permanent staff. Shortfalls were identified in the employment of agency staff. The service has developed a checklist to enable team managers to check personnel details of agency staff. Team Managers must ensure agency staff files contain photo identification, qualifications and two satisfactory references. The service must ensure social work staff have a good understanding of foster care and the appropriate knowledge and skills. Staff must have the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for their role. Any staff involved in assessment and approval of foster carers must have experience of foster care and family placement work and trained in assessment. Workers who do not meet these requirements should carry out assessments and approvals under the supervision of someone with the necessary experience, who takes responsibility for the assessments and approvals.

Total number of staff of the agency (Approximate)

27

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

5

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The management structure attached to the Statement of Purpose has clear lines of accountability. The Inspectors were satisfied during the inspection that staff were aware of the management structure. Social workers based in the fostering teams now attend children's reviews. During the Inspection it was noted that the social workers were very focused on supporting foster carers. More efforts must be made to work in partnership with the child's social worker. Social workers should ensure throughout their work the best interests of the child are paramount. All work with foster carers and outcomes should be in the best interests of the child. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets currently contracts out fostering for children with disabilities. Contact and monitoring arrangements for these placements have been developed to review quality of care and contract compliance. The Inspectors were informed that Team Managers are enrolling on management courses and

peer support; this was highlighted as being very beneficial. This was provided through Action Development Learning sets. The Quality Protects Improvement Plan budget has been used to fund additional posts within the Fostering Service. Supervision notes inspected were not signed and dated, and staff informed the Inspector that they had not received supervision training. During the inspection staff stated that the current job descriptions did not reflect accurately the tasks that they undertook. All staff that supervise others must be appropriately trained. In addition all supervision notes must be dated and signed by both parties.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Section 13 of the Handbook is devoted to the assessment of carers. The agency is commended as it has developed a marketing post, the primary aim is to focus on recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of the children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service. The Bangladeshi resource officer additionally liaises primarily with the Bangladeshi community. The service does not have a staff retention policy, however the Service Manager stated that they are committed to salaries being maintained in the top 25-30% and offer good training opportunities. During the inspection staff felt that although training was available often work loads prevented the training being undertaken. The Service Manager outlined that systems were in place to assist staff including study leave and reduced workloads.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Evidence was seen that the whistle blowing policy is currently undergoing consultation. There was a booklet produced for staff 'Speak up in Safety' Managers of Choice Scheme. It is an informal avenue for Black and Asian staff to seek support and advice about the work place, concerns in regards to their career and work discrimination. Evidence was seen of the codes of conduct, disciplinary, grievance and harassment procedure, anti discrimination and capability procedure, health and safety issues are in the Handbook, which is issued to all foster carers. Evidence was seen of the Insurance liability cover for 2003/2004.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Social work staff commended the range and quality of training. Training was additionally available for agency staff. The service evidenced that the effectiveness of training programmes is routinely evaluated and updated. Training programmes reflected the policies of the fostering service. Although at times staff felt overwhelmed they were kept informed of relevant changes in legislation and guidance that impacted on their work. An Induction Pack has been produced for all newly appointed employees dated 2002. This contains information on the Council, Social Services, Policies and procedures, the work place and the work role, which is individually adapted. Staff spoken to during the inspection stated that they had not received an induction programme. The agency must ensure all new employees are given induction training within seven days. The induction programme should be completed within ten weeks.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The inspection concluded that additional accountability and support is needed for staff. Staff must have clear written details of duties and responsibilities expected of them together with the policies and procedures of the organisation. A range of policies and procedures are currently being updated. The Inspectors were informed that the procedure writer post was vacant at the time of inspection. The service must produce updated policies and procedures relevant to the service. There was evidence of consultation in relation to the development of the kinship care service. Staff consultation was not evident in the level below Team Management. The service should enable staff to contribute to the development of the service and changes in work practices. Team Meetings were held regularly and were observed as addressing relevant issues in relation to practise and workload management. Staff felt they worked well as a team and received regular supervision. The service must ensure all staff receive regular planned appraisals from their line manager.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>A clear strategy for working with carers has been developed. The service is commended for creating additional social work assistant posts to assist with practical issues. All carers highlighted good relationships with their supervising social worker. The organisation is commended for having a housing officer post to assist foster carers with housing issues related to their capacity to provide care. A peer telephone support is in place for foster carers and regular consultation meetings are held with management. In addition to regular foster carers support groups. The service should review their childcare support service to meet foster carers needs, especially in relation to sole foster carers. Foster carers wanted to see more working in partnership. Foster children and children in the household requested more social outings to be provided.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

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

The Inspectors were satisfied that the carers spoken to during the Inspection had a full understanding of what was expected of a Foster Carer. The Foster Carers handbook is very comprehensive, easy to reference and has been written in a jargon free way. The Handbook refers to and corresponds with the National Minimum Standards. The Handbook and placing agreement details the supervision arrangements, foster carers should receive. The placing agreement states that 'permanent and short breaks foster carers will normally be visited at not less than three-monthly intervals. At other times the supervising social worker will be available for advice and consultation'. There had been some concerns raised in regards to this support, this was due to staff vacancies. Point 3.1.8 of the placing agreement state's that LBTH will enrol the carers in the National Foster Care Association. The Foster Carers Handbook has a chapter referring to complaints and the corporate complaints and representation procedure. The procedures were seen at the time of Inspection, they were comprehensive, state timescales and highlighted good practice. The Foster Carers Handbook details the procedures in relation to allegations of abuse against the carers or members of their family. This does not cover independent support for the foster carers. Independent support should be provided for foster carers during an investigation.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

There is in place a post approval/pre placement course, which has to be completed by all newly approved carers. There are additional courses available such as recording and communicating information, child protection, basic and advanced first aid and drug abuse. Safe caring practice is covered in the programme for both new and experienced carers. It is good practice for this training to be made available for all members of the foster carers household. The agency is commended for the training offered to new applications to foster care where English is not the first language. NVQ training was also available. The Inspectors were informed that foster carers are currently undertaking NVQL3 in care. It was noted that not all foster carers either have the time for training or do not feel that it is necessary. It is recommended that the agency develop creative ways to address the training needs of the foster carers who do not attend programmed training. For example video resources, training in foster carers home, staggered training, flexible times or purchasing training in the borough where the foster carer lives. It is also recommended that the service identify a main training venue with crèche facilities.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Documentation evidenced that all appropriate records are kept and accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children. A training course for foster carers is available that addresses recording and communication information. Section 8 of the Foster Carers Handbook details recording and accessing information. The Fostering Service should ensure that foster carers receive relevant information when a child is placed to enable them to understand the need for a placement, its intended duration, purpose and details of the child's legal status.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service keeps and updates separate records for staff, carers, young people, complaints and allegations. Confidential records are stored securely at all times and there is a clear policy on access. Written entries in records were found to be legible, clearly expressed, non stigmatising and distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information. Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcome. Foster carers files contain the following: key information, Form F assessment, approvals/reviews, contact sheets, correspondence, training, finance, checks, allegations/complaints and children. In addition copies of relevant information pertaining to the foster child in placement were located on the foster carers files. This included Form E, reports and review information. Children's files were examined for tracking purposes however the National Care Standards Commission are unable to comment on these files as they are currently under the jurisdiction of the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI).

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			105
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			102
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			103
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months			21
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			5
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	103.46	Maximum £	£236.54

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used as offices by the fostering provider are generally suitable for the purpose. The offices are located in Poplar, behind Poplar High Street off the A13. The office is in close proximity to the Docklands Light Railway station and several bus routes. Restricted parking and metered parking is in operation. The building is wheelchair accessible. At the time of inspection the fostering service had recently moved premises. The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records and an appropriate security system. Staff have access to personal computers and communication systems. Foster carers files are being stored on an upper landing that is accessed via a small circular staircase. The service should undertake risk assessments in relation to accessing the files that are stored on the upper floor of the agency. Evidence was seen of the Social Services Directorate Health and Safety Policy. It outlines Health and Safety responsibilities, performance measuring and review.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is a financially viable Local Authority service. Procedures exist to manage situations of financial crisis. Regulations and guidelines imposed upon Local Authorities are complied with.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service has financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and powers. Budgets were available for inspection and are regularly monitored and reviewed. The Access to Resources Team collates management information in relation to placement costs, trends and profiles of children in foster care and foster carers.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Foster Carers Handbook outlines payments to carers in Section 17. A written policy of fostering allowances is additionally available. Carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses available. The foster carers payment system was examined. A computerised and structured administration system ensures payments are made promptly at the agreed time. Currently the service is reviewing the fostering allowance rates.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering panel has clear written procedures in relation to the purpose, membership and decision-making. Interim guidance documents dated October 2002 was seen by the Inspectors. The Inspectors were satisfied that the foster panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of young people in foster care. The fostering panel has access to medical, educational, legal and child care expertise. The panel includes independent members in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The panel has an Independent Chair who has over twenty years experience in adoption and experience of chairing fostering and adoption panels in other organisations. Prospective carers have recently started attending panel. It was observed that the Panel Chair endeavoured to make applicants feel welcome and the process was encouraging. Interpreting services are offered to applicants. Training for panel members and development of the panel's quality assurance function is currently in progress.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Tower Hamlets provide short break foster placements, which used to be known as respite care. These carers are managed within the Fostering Development Team. Short-term breaks are provided for children in need who do not have significant disabilities and whose families require additional social work involvement from locality based teams. No single placement exceeds four continuous weeks and the total duration of placements in the twelve-month period does not exceed one hundred and twenty days. Policies and procedures are in place in relation to the provision of short breaks services. The Inspectors saw an example of this care being provided. It was felt to be flexible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to individual needs and an overall positive experience for the child. The arrangements specifically recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Statement of Purpose states that "In Tower Hamlets, social workers work hard to keep families together. Often the relatives of struggling parents, and sometimes family friends, offer to help out by temporarily caring for the children. The local authority can meet some additional costs to help relatives and friends financially, if it will avoid the need for a child to be placed with a foster carer not known to them". The kinship care service is currently being developed. This includes consultation with staff and carers to develop practice and a policy framework in this area. Two specialist social work posts have been allocated. The service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family friends as foster carers.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector Kristen Judd **Signature** _____

Date 29th May 2003

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 3rd February 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

YES

Note:

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

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

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

-

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____