



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Greater London Fostering

Interiors House

Lynton Road

London

N8 8SL

8th February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Greater London Fostering

Tel No

020 8347 8741

Address

Interiors House, Lynton Road, London, N8 8SL

Fax No

020 8347 8749

Email Address

info@greaterlondonfostering.org

Registered Number of IFA

G080000566

Name of Registered Provider

Greater London Fostering

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Linda Norwood

Date of first registration

24th February 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

5th March 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

09/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		8th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Peter Allcock	080126
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Linda Norwood (Registered manager)	

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Greater London Fostering is a private limited company owned by three directors and operating as a fostering agency from premises in Crouch End in North London. The agency was set up in August 1998, its first panel was held in January 1999 and the first child was placed in March 1999. The agency is registered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

At the time of this inspection, there were a total of 45 placements being supported by the agency. The majority of carers live in North London, with a number living in South London. The agency provides social work support to the foster carers, which is facilitated by the fact that social workers live close to carers and work primarily from home.

The agency has its own panel, which meets on a monthly basis, and holds two training days a month, with the training being offered on one mid-week session, and one Saturday session in an attempt to maximise the attendance of foster carers.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This is the third inspection of this fostering agency, and as such has focussed on an assessment of the core national minimum standards applicable to such agencies. The inspection was undertaken by Peter Allcock, and began on 2nd February 2005 and concluded on 8th March 2005. The inspector wishes to acknowledge the courteous and professional response from the directors and staff of the agency, and would like to thank the foster carers, children and young people who were visited or spoken to for their time and assistance in carrying out this inspection.

The inspector attended a staff meeting, foster panel and training day as part of this inspection, which also included the reading of documents and discussion with foster carers and staff in the agency's offices. The inspector visited three families who currently care for ten of the children and young people currently placed by the agency.

The inspector received written questionnaires from eight foster carers, seven foster children and ten placing social workers. These questionnaires demonstrated that children and young people felt that they were placed in good foster homes, were protected and were listened to. Foster carers questionnaires showed that in general they felt supported by the agency and that the support of individual supervising social workers and the accessibility of senior management were particularly valued. Questionnaires from the placing officers indicated that the agency generally works very well with placing authorities, and that the children and young people for whom they are responsible are in safe placements.

The one requirement made at the last inspection has been undertaken, and there are no requirements or good practice recommendations as a result of this inspection.

The inspector continues to be impressed by this organisation, in that it continues to demonstrate an ability to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and to develop practice accordingly. The directors and staff strive to operate with a public sector ethos, and with a focus on the needs of the children and young people that it places.

The fostering agency faces the challenges of maintaining the sense of community it strives to create as it grows in size, and the planning of an orderly change of panel membership over the next three years. The inspector is confident that the open and reflective approach of the management of the agency provides a sound basis from which to achieve this.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1) This standard is exceeded

There is a clear statement of purpose, which sets out the aims and objectives of the agency and describes the services that are provided. The newly designed children's guide has been drafted in consultation with children and young people and is a child-focussed document which can be completed in partnership between the supervising social worker and the child or young person. This to meet the needs of individual children. The preparation of this document provides a valuable opportunity to build the relationship between the child or young person, and the supervising social worker, and is commended by the inspector.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 and 3) 1 of these standards is met, 1 is exceeded

The three directors of the agency have considerable experience in excess of that required by national minimum standard 2, and the required skills to manage the agency in an efficient and effective manner. Records maintained by the agency demonstrate that the appropriate checks have been undertaken to ensure that all three directors are suitable people to work with children.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4 and 5)

These 2 standards were not assessed during this inspection

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 to 14) 8 of these 9 standards were assessed, 6 are met and 2 are exceeded

Greater London Fostering has policies and procedures in place to promote and safeguard the physical, mental and emotional welfare of foster children. The quality of health and safety input is in excess of that required under this standard, and the inspector is impressed by the training undertaken by the health and safety officer to maintain his professional expertise. The agency values diversity, and has clear policies and procedures for matching and child protection. Children are guided in the promotion of their development and health, and all the children spoken to felt that they were properly consulted. There was evidence of contact arrangements being put into place, although this can at times place considerable travel and time requirements on foster carers. The support for contact has been further developed by the provision of a contact centre within the agencies premises. All the foster children seen during this inspection were receiving an education, and older children have a plan to guide carers in their preparation for adulthood.

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

(Standards 15 to 23) 5 of these 9 standards were assessed, 2 are met and 3 are exceeded.

The agency has robust systems in place to ensure that staff and foster carers recruited are suitable to work with children. The agency has a clear training strategy, which for experienced carers links training needs to the review process so that training can be appropriately targeted. The agency provides regular training opportunities for foster carers and has worked hard to provide flexibility in respect of venues and timing of the courses.

Records (Standards 24 and 25) 1 of these 2 standards was assessed and is met

Greater London Fostering keeps all appropriate records in relation to the fostering service, foster carers and foster children. These records are accessible and available for inspection as required.

Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26) this standard is exceeded

The premises from which the agency operates are suitable for the purpose, and the occupation of additional office space on the ground floor has realised additional space for office accommodation and a large space, which acts as a venue for meetings, training and a development of the services provided by the agency as a contact centre. The ground floor location of this new accommodation has the benefit of enabling access for people with disabilities.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 to 29)

These 3 standards were not assessed during this inspection

Fostering Panels (Standard 30) this standard is exceeded

The fostering panel meets on a monthly basis, and its membership reflects the requirements of the regulations. Discussion with the panel chair, observation of a panel meeting and examination of the minutes of panel meetings over the last year demonstrated the seamless integration of the panel's quality assurance role with its functions in relation to the assessment and review of foster carers. The panel manages the attendance of potential or current foster carers at panel meetings with sensitivity. The focus of the panel is the promotion and safeguarding of the welfare of children and young people in foster care.

Short-Term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard is not applicable to this agency

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard is not applicable to this agency

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

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 visit fully actioned?

YES

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 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection 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	
There are no additional conditions of registration applicable to this independent fostering agency.		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Peter Allcock	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Frank Clarke	Signature	_____
Date	15 March 2005		_____

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 are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	

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

* 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	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	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	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	08/02/05
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI 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) |
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"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Greater London Fostering has a statement of purpose, which covers the matters as set out in national minimum standard 1.4, and provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering agency. This document was updated in January 2005 with amended staff details, but no changes were made to the substance of the document. The performance of the fostering service is assessed by the directors using monthly reports generated by the newly developed database, which records the activities undertaken by the agency's staff.

The children's guide has been updated following commendable work undertaken by a student on placement with the agency. The guide has been developed in consultation with a number of young people in a modular format. The guide is set out in such a way as to require a significant input from individual young people, and as such provides an individually tailored and personalised document for each child. The preparation of this document provides a valuable opportunity to build a relationship between the child or young person, and the supporting social worker.

During the team meeting attended by the inspector, the guide was discussed in relation to practice experience of its operation with a number of children and young people.

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?
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Greater London Fostering is a private company with three directors, who have experience in excess of that required under this standard

One is responsible for the financial, health and safety and general administration of the agency, and has a background in local authority housing in which he supervised a number of staff.

A second is responsible for training, quality assurance and is also advisor to the panel. This person has experience as an assistant director of Children Services and has responsibility for a number of childcare and education services. The person has an MBA qualification and is a qualified social worker.

The third is the registered manager of the agency, who has since 1970 worked in a number of local authorities as a childcare social worker and team manager. The manager also has experience of work in family placement and child protection social work teams. The manager has a childcare qualification, which is equivalent to the Certificate in Qualification in Social Work, and has completed a management qualification.

During the last year, the agency has developed a comprehensive database to monitor its activities, which gives the senior staff of the agency monthly information from which to assess the performance of the agency, for example the completion of visits to foster carers by supervising social workers. This commendable initiative enables a pro-active management approach both in terms of developing the service, and identifying any shortfalls in performance, which can now be more speedily rectified.

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

Examination of records held in the agency demonstrated that those required under Regulations 5 and 7 Schedule 1 were appropriately kept by the agency. The manager of the fostering agency has confirmed that all staff who have contact with children and young people have an appropriate enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

5

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?
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The foster carers who were visited as part of this inspection were aware of the inspection process and were welcoming and very helpful to the inspector. The foster carers confirmed that their homes were given a health and safety inspection as part of their assessment, and then inspected on an annual basis by the agency's health and safety officer as part of the review process. The inspector saw written reports of these inspections, and each report contained recommendations depending on the ages of the children to be placed in the home.

The inspector was told by the administration director that the agency will provide smoke detectors, a fire extinguisher, a fire blanket and first aid kit where required. Health and safety issues are included in the preparation and training of foster carers, and written health and safety advice is included in the foster carers handbook. The health and safety officer is an environmental health officer by profession and regularly attends training to update his health and safety knowledge.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Discussion with the registered manager, and foster carers supported the impression that issues of diversity and equal opportunities are treated with importance by the agency. The training for foster carers provided by the agency includes working with diversity and valuing children's self worth. Discussion with foster carers showed understanding of the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children and young people who are placed with them. Four of the eight children and young people questionnaires described how their religious needs were met in their placement.

The managers self assessment form describes plans to hold a Caribbean Day, which it is hoped will be the first of a number of days which will give the opportunity to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of the agency's foster carers and the children and young people they care for.

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?**

3

The foster placement agreements contain specific references to the elements of matching which were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement, and demonstrate that consideration has been given to any additional support that the foster carer may require to support the child or young person placed with them.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The agency has a written policy and systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse as set out in national minimum standard 9.5. Safe caring guidelines are included in both foster carer training and in the foster carers handbook. There is a clear written procedure in place to guide foster carers on the appropriate action to take if a child goes missing from the placement, and foster carers spoken to as part of this inspection were aware of what action they were required to take if this was to occur.

Foster children and young people spoken to as part of this inspection told the inspector that they were not being bullied, and six of the seven children and young people's questionnaires stated the same. All the returned questionnaires stated that foster carers give advice on staying safe.

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

87.5

%

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?

4

A number of foster children told the inspector that they had regular contact with members of their family, and foster carers spoken to, and who submitted questionnaires, understood the importance of contact, which they had supported in sometimes-difficult circumstances. Arrangements for contact are recorded in the foster placement agreement and examination of children's files showed appropriate recording of contact visits by foster carers. Arrangements for contact have been further enhanced by the provision of a contact centre in the agency's offices, a service which exceeds this national minimum standard.

All of the children and young people who responded to the questionnaire said that they could visit their friends, and all indicated that their friends could visit them at the foster carers. A number of children and young people indicated that their foster carers support their attendance at clubs, which offers the opportunity to make new friends.

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 general impression gained from children and young people spoken to during this inspection and from returned questionnaires was that children and young people felt listened to, and that foster carers actively sought their opinions on matters that they felt were important or affected their everyday lives. The majority of children and young people were aware of somebody they would speak to if they were unhappy. The complaints procedure is included in the children's guide. Children and young people spoken to during this inspection also stated that the agency's supervising social workers regularly make time to talk to them on their own.

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

Greater London Fostering provides information for carers on children's health care needs and the expectations placed on foster carers with respect to this, which includes the promotion of healthy living. Records examined during this inspection show that foster carers receive first aid training as part of the ongoing training provided by the agency.

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

All the foster children spoken to as part of this inspection were receiving education, and records of reviews demonstrated a contribution in this area from foster carers. All the children of school age seen by the inspector had a quiet place to do their homework, and records seen demonstrated that foster carers attended meetings at their foster children's school.

All the children and young people's questionnaires returned to the inspector were positive about the support for studying given by foster carers. As noted elsewhere in this report, the inspector attended a training day on education, at which it was clear that foster carers were actively supporting children and young people's educational achievements.

Information on the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that one young person is currently waiting for the local authority in which they are placed to identify an appropriate school place.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?

3

The agency has clearly set out policies and procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Staff files contain evidence of interview, two references (one from the previous employer), and a medical information form. The registered manager told the inspector that offers of employment are only made following receipt by the agency of satisfactory checks.

All social work staff employed by the agency are qualified. Discussion with social workers over the course of this inspection demonstrated practical experience and knowledge of professional social work with children and families.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

2

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?

4

Greater London Fostering has a clear management structure with all three directors having responsibility for particular areas of the agencies work. The management of the agency has been strengthened by the employment of a team manager for foster carers based in south London.

There are structures and systems in place to ensure the effective assessment and approval of foster carers. Records of monthly staff supervision were seen at this inspection, and observation of practice in the office showed an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support.

The agency has continued to follow comprehensive review procedures over the last year, and employs independent reviewing officers who are experienced practitioners. The review documentation provided to panel is comprehensive and detailed. The review format includes significant information on the family, a checklist of placements, assessments of individual placements by the placing social worker, supervising social worker, foster carer and where appropriate birth

family. There is a health and safety audit, a written record of appropriate checks, an appraisal of the last years fostering by the foster carer and supervising social worker, a detailed report from the reviewing officer and identified targets for the next. The reviews seen by the inspector, which followed this format, were of a quality that exceeds this national minimum standard.

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?	
<p>The agency has recruited successfully to vacant social worker positions that have in the past been difficult to fill. The training and development policy is used via supervision and annual appraisal to identify and address staff training needs. New carers are recruited by positive recommendation and a clearly written assessment process, which includes all the areas as set out in national minimum standard 17.7. There is a written policy and strategy for the assessment of carers by the completion of the British Association of Adoption and Fostering Form F.</p>		3

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?	
<p>This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.</p>		0

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?**

4

The majority of foster carers working for Greater London Fostering live in North London, with a number living in South London. The agency provides social work support to the carers, and this is facilitated by the fact that social workers live close to carers and work from home.

The written policies of the agency include all the matters as set out in national minimum standard 21.2, and the agency has developed three self-help groups, and encourages foster carers to seek the support of more experienced carers in particular matters. The agency holds two residential trips a year, day trips, parties and other social activities for staff, foster carers, birth children and foster children. Where appropriate, participation in these activities has been extended to birth families. This commendable range of activities support the agencies philosophy that values the whole network of relationships that support foster placements. All the returned questionnaires from foster carers were generally positive about the support given to them by the agency.

The agency does not provide paid respite care, but carers are supported in setting up support networks consisting of other foster carers, family and friends who are assessed by the agency, so that children have respite or support from carers with whom they are familiar.

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?**

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?**

4

The agency provides training for carers in the skills to provide high quality care for the children and young people that they look after. The pre-approval and induction training provided by the agency ensures that there are opportunities for new carers to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing foster carers. Examination of foster carers records showed that annual reviews include an appraisal of foster carers training needs. The registered manager and director responsible for training stated that the effectiveness of training offered to foster carers is evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis.

The inspector attended one training session during this inspection on the subject of education. The subject enabled foster carers to build on their own strengths and experiences, and presented useful information as to how foster carers can effectively support the education of the children and young people that they care for. A number of foster carers spoken to during this training day spoke positively about the training that they received from the agency, and the opportunity it gave for them to network with other foster carers.

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

The agency has a written policy on case recording, and the children's guide explains that children have a right to see their files, and how they can access this right. Examinations of records kept by the agency show information as set out in Regulation 22 Schedule 2(2) in respect of each person working in the agency, and as set out in Schedule 2(3) in respect of accidents are appropriately kept. The information recorded in the register as set out in Schedule 2(1)(e) with regard to the address that a placed child moves to on leaving the placement is recorded along with all the other information required under this regulation.

The registered manager told the inspector that case records are regularly audited and a list of missing Looked After Children documentation compiled. Records seen during this inspection demonstrated that written requests from the agency to placing authorities for missing Looked After Children documentation is retained in children and young people's files. There are procedures in place to monitor the quality of recording, and any shortfalls are addressed via the supervision process or team meetings.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		45
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		111
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		108
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		14
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		2
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	336	Maximum £ 336

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?

4

Greater London Fostering operates from identifiable office premises to which staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours. The agencies first floor offices include accommodation in individual offices and a meeting room. The agency has also taken on additional accommodation on the ground floor. This has realised additional space for office accommodation and a large space, which acts as a venue for meetings, training and in a development of the services provided by the agency as a contact centre. There is space for children to play during contact, and kitchen and toilet facilities. The ground floor location of this new accommodation also has the positive benefit of enabling access for people with disabilities.

At the last announced inspection, the director responsible for the management of the office told the inspector that computer systems were chosen for their reliability and the high level of security that they offered. The director also told the inspector that to protect sensitive information, the agency required that staff employed by a contractor to service and repair computers were in possession of a current clear enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Paper files with regard to children, foster carers and staff were appropriately stored in lockable metal cabinets. Evidence was seen of adequate insurance with regard to both the building, its contents and for damage to foster carer's homes that would not be covered by standard household insurance.

Social work staff work from home, and the director responsible for these matters told the inspector that they are supplied with a lockable filing cabinet, computer, fax, mobile phone, landline, and paper shredder. The director responsible for office management stated that all home workers are issued with a policy and procedure for safe working at home, and also informed the inspector that staff complete a self assessment audit of their home workplace, and can seek further advice from the agency's health and safety adviser. The agency has written guidance for staff with regard to the safe use of VDU's.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?

0

This national minimum standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?

4

The inspector read the minutes of three previous panel meetings, interviewed the chair of the panel and attended the meeting of the panel held on 02/02/05. The Greater London Fostering panel operates under clearly set out policies and procedures with respect to its function, and operation, which includes the minimum number and make up of the panel, and the procedure for decision making when all the members of the panel are not in agreement. There is a clear person specification for panel membership, which includes a statement that all panel members must undergo an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check, and cannot sit on the panel until it is received. A clear enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau was seen at the last announced inspection in respect of each current member of the panel. The current membership of the panel includes both employees of the agency, and independent members with expertise in education, child health and personal experience of foster caring and being placed with a foster carer. The registered manager does not sit on the panel, as she is the agency decision maker.

Examination of records showed appropriate recording of panel discussions and decisions, with a clear record of the exercise of the panel's quality assurance role, with records showing appropriate comment on the quality of assessment, the consultation process with children and the frequency of support worker visits and reviews. The inspector was impressed with the sensitive manner in which the panel addressed foster carers who attended, as part of their assessment or following their review.

The agency has appointed an existing panel member with considerable experience of social work with children, young people and families both as a practitioner and an academic as independent chair. The chair of the panel stated that the practice of the agency continues to develop, and highlighted the improvement in the quality of form F's being presented to the panel. The directors of the company are aware that as the panel is in its third year, changes to the composition of the panel will need to be carefully managed to ensure that members do not all leave at the same time as they are allowed under regulation 24(6) to serve no more than two consecutive three year terms.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This national minimum standard is not applicable, as Greater London Fostering does not provide a short-term break service.	
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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?
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This national minimum standard is not applicable, as Greater London Fostering does not have carers who are the family or friends of the child.	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection of Greater London Fostering conducted on 08th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

COMMENTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE PROVIDER AND ARE AVAILABLE AT THE CSCI AREA OFFICE.

WE ARE WORKING ON THE BEST WAY TO INCLUDE PROVIDER RESPONSES IN THE PUBLISHED REPORT. IN THE MEANTIME RESPONSES RECEIVED ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

Action taken by the CSCI 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

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 12 April 2005, 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI 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 Diana Phyllis Searle of Greater London Fostering confirm that the contents of this report is 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 Diana Phyllis Searle of Greater London Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report is a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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S0000035327.V202185.R01

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