



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Greater London Fostering**

Interiors House

Lynton Road

London

N8 8SL

9 February 2004

## **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**

24 Feb 2004

**Date of latest registration certificate**

24 Feb 2004

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

26/03/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		09 February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Peter Allcock	080126
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		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 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 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC 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 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 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 Hornsey 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 has just been registered by the National Care Standards Commission.

At the time of this inspection, there were a total of 42 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 carers, and this is facilitated by the fact that social workers live close to carers and work 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 sessions 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 inspection was undertaken by Peter Allcock, and throughout the process the inspector received a courteous and professional response from the directors and staff of the agency. The inspector would also like to thank the foster carers and children who were visited, for their time and assistance in carrying out this inspection.

In undertaking this inspection, the inspector spent two days in the agency office, attended one foster panel meeting and visited three families who currently care for ten of the forty two children currently placed by the agency. The inspector received written questionnaires from six foster carers, eleven foster children and one placing social worker.

The inspector continues to be impressed by this organisation, in that it has demonstrated an ability to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and to develop practice accordingly. The directors and staff continue to be open about areas they have identified for development, and are able to draw lessons from matters, which had not gone as they would have wished. The inspector is confident of compliance with the requirement that has been made following this inspection.

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1) This standard was met**

There is a clear statement of purpose, which sets out the aims and objectives of the agency and describes the services that are provided. A recommendation is made that the agency revise the children's guide by the inclusion of appropriate illustrations.

#### **Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 and 3) 1 of these 2 standards were met, 1 was 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) 2 of these 2 standards were met**

The policies and procedures of the agency set out clear roles and responsibilities, and there is regular discussion of policy and practice between the directors and senior staff. The management of the agency has been strengthened by the promotion of a social worker to the post of team manager.



**Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 to 14) 8 of these 9 standards were met, 1 was 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 was 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. 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 met, 3 were 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. A recommendation is made that both formal and informal training sessions are recorded to better inform the review process. The agency is also required to ensure that all reviews and occur as set out in regulation 29. The agency is particularly commended in the support it offers to all members of the foster carers support networks.

**Records (Standards 24 and 25) 2 of these 2 standards were met**

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

**Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26) this standard was met**

The premises from which the agency operates are suitable for the purpose, although unfortunately they are not accessible to wheelchair users or people unable to climb stairs. The agency are currently exploring the possibility of renting additional office space on a ground floor level which would resolve these access issues.

**Financial Requirements (Standards 27 to 29) 2 of these 3 standards were met, 1 was exceeded**

Greater London Fostering is well-administered and financially viable agency, which is demonstrated by well-ordered and clear recording of the implementation of its policies and procedures.

**Fostering Panels (Standard 30) this standard was 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 exercise of the panel's quality assurance role focussing on the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children 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?

NA

**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
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 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	YES
There are no conditions of registration		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Peter Allcock</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	<u>Frank Clarke</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>16 March 2004</u>		

## 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 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	
1	29(2)	FS16	The responsible persons must ensure that all reviews take place annually as set out in regulation 29(2).	14/04/04

### 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	FS1	It is recommended that the agency revise the children's guide by the inclusion of appropriate illustrations.
2	FS23	It is recommended that all training opportunities both formal and informal are recorded to better inform the review process.

\* 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.

<b>PART B</b>	<b>INSPECTION METHODS &amp; FINDINGS</b>
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The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	3
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	NO
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	09/02/04
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	28

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.

"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?	3
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Greater London Fostering has a statement of purpose which covers the matters as set out in national minimum standard 1.4

The children's guide provides a summary of what children should expect from their foster carers, the supervising social worker and information on how to make a complaint, which includes a contact for advocacy services. The registered manager told the inspector that she was aware that this document could be more child friendly, and it is recommended that the agency revise this document by the inclusion of appropriate illustrations. This work is currently being undertaken.

## 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?	4
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Greater London Fostering is a private company with three directors:

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 the chair of the panel, and has experience as an assistant director of social services with responsibility for a number of childcare services.

The third is the registered manager of the agency, and 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 child care qualification which is equivalent to the Certificate in Qualification in Social Work, and has recently successfully completed a management qualification

### 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
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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 inspector saw records of clear enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks in respect of the three directors of the agency.

## 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

Examination of policies and procedures showed clear monitoring systems in place to control the activities of the agency and to ensure quality. There are monthly directors meetings, weekly discussion between directors, and all communications from supervising social workers are seen by the registered manager and team manager, and issues arising are dealt with via the supervision process, training or the monthly directors meeting. There are financial policies and procedures in place, and with regard to the declaration of possible conflicts of interest. Information is provided to purchasers of the charges to be levied and the amount that is paid to foster carers.

**Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC 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.**

4

**Number of complaints made to NCSC 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?****3**

The manager, who has a job description setting out her duties and responsibilities, told the inspector that she does not hold a similar position in another organisation. There are clear arrangements in place to identify the person in charge in the absence of the manager, and clear lines of accountability within the agency. Management in the agency has been strengthened by the promotion of a social worker to the position of Team Manager, with the specific responsibility of supervising the social work support to placements in North London. The manager continues as operational manager and supervises the social work support to placements in South London. The inspector was impressed by the provision of mentoring support to the new team manager to support her development into her new role.

## 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?	4
<p>The five 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 regular attends training to update his health and safety knowledge.</p>		

### 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
<p>Discussion with the registered manager , and five foster carers supported the impression that issues of diversity and equal opportunities are treated with importance by the agency. The training for foster carers 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 who were placed with them.</p>		

**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.

**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 spoken to as part of this inspection told the inspector that they were not being bullied.

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

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

A number of foster children told the inspector that they had regular contact with members of their family, and foster carers spoken to 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.

**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 young people spoken to and returned questionnaires was that children and young people felt listened to, and that foster carers actively sought their opinions on matters that were important or affected their everyday lives. Two children told the inspector who they would tell if they were unhappy about something, and there is a complaints procedure included in the children's guide.

**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 promotion of healthy living. A significant number of children wrote in their questionnaires that their foster carer had given them advice on healthy eating. Two foster children confirmed that they have a doctor, and go to the dentist on a regular basis. 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 eight 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.

**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

The agency has very few older children currently placed with its carers. The foster carers handbook has a general statement that independence starts at an early age, and foster carers have received recent training in supporting children's development. Visits to one foster carer and discussion with one young person demonstrated that there is planning for independence on an individual basis, and the foster carers handbook includes clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living.



## 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 a clear recruitment and selection procedure. Evidence on four staff files showed evidence of interview, two references (one from the previous employer), and Criminal Records Bureau checks 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 with the exception of one unqualified foster care support worker, whose work along with that of social work students who are on placement in the agency is supervised by a qualified worker who retains professional accountability for the work. Discussion with social workers over the course of this inspection demonstrated experience in and knowledge of the practice areas as set out in national minimum standard 15.5.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

9

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

3

**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?**

2

Greater London Fostering has a clear management structure with all three directors having responsibility for particular areas of the agencies work. 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. Records seen during this inspection show that staff shortages have led to delays in the holding of two reviews, and a reduction in the frequency of support visits to some carers, which has been decided following a risk assessment of carers support needs. The registered manager told the inspector that policy of the agency is to conduct a review six months after the first placement, and then on an annual basis, which is more frequent than required under regulation 29. The registered manager told the inspector that two reviews had been delayed to allow new support workers to get to know the carers. The inspector understands that this was done in order to achieve quality in the review process, but the standards clearly require reviews on an annual basis, and a requirement is made that the registered manager must ensure that all reviews occur as set out in regulation 29(1)

**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

The agency has found it difficult to replace the two social workers that have left in the last year, despite demonstrable efforts to do so. This has had a consequence on the capacity of the agency to support all its carers and hold reviews as described under national minimum standard 16. 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 recruitment of carers as set out in national minimum standard 17.5

**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?**

4

Greater London Fostering has a clear disciplinary, grievance and equal opportunities policies and procedures. More unusually the agency has an environmental policy, which sets out how the agency will function in an environmentally friendly way. The agency has comprehensive data protection and health and safety policies and procedures. There are clearly written procedures to ensure that foster carers have twenty-four hour seven days a week support by phone, and the five foster carers interviewed all told the inspector that they had never had a problem contacting their support worker or a senior member of staff at any time of the day or night. The agency has written requirements of supervising social workers with respect to the supervision, support and appraisal of foster carers. Examination of four foster carer files showed that these were undertaken as required and appropriately recorded, though difficulties through staff vacancies are described under national minimum standard 16. The whistle blowing policy was known to staff and foster carers interviewed during this inspection.

**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?**

4

The agency provides a monthly training topic which is presented twice a month, once during the week and once at the weekend. All foster carers and staff are expected to attend one of these sessions. The five foster carers spoke positively about the training provided by the agency. Training is provided at various venues, to facilitate access for foster carers. There is a training and development strategy in place, which targets training to carers at preparation, induction, foundation and advanced levels.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

3

The expectations of social workers are clearly outlined in the policies and procedures of the agency, both in terms of their duties and responsibilities, and in the manner in which they carry them out as outlined in the agency code of conduct. The agency holds regular staff meetings, of which written records are kept, and were seen at this inspection. All social work staff receive monthly supervision, which is recorded, and a written record was seen at this inspection to be held on staff files. Staff records also contained copies of an annual appraisal.

**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 following a recommendation made at the last announced inspection, 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. This commendable range of activities support the agencies philosophy that values the whole network of relationships that support foster placements.

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 they are familiar with. Examination of children's files and discussion with supervising social workers suggested that the relationship with the child's social worker was patchy, and it appeared that working relationships were frequently forged and maintained by pro-active interventions from the agency's supervising social workers.

**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 agency has a system of practical support for foster carers, which includes all the elements as set out in national minimum standard 22.7. The five foster carers spoken to had copies of the agencies handbook, which set out the policies and procedures under which they work. The agency provides information to foster carers, staff and children with regard to dealing with allegations, and has recently held further training for foster carers on the subject. The registered manager stated that she was aware of all allegations of abuse, and that they were recorded on children's and carer's files. The agency are to be commended on the provision of support given to the child of a foster carer.

**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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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As already described in this report, the agency provides training for carers in the skills to provide high quality care for children. 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. Records seen during this inspection showed that some carers attended very few of the formal training sessions available to them, but informal training via the supervision process was not reflected in training records. It is recommended that all training opportunities both formal and informal are recorded to better inform the review process.

## 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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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 not always recorded, but all other information required under this regulation was appropriately recorded. The registered manager told the inspector that this information is not always given to the agency by the placing authority.

The registered manager also 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 for missing Looked After Children records were retained in children's files.

**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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Administrative records seen during this inspection show that separate records are kept for staff, carers, children and complaints. There are appropriate policies and procedures to guide and inform staff and foster carers on how records should be kept, and the period of time during which they must be kept. Records are securely stored and are congruent with the Looked After Children record keeping system. The agency has clear policies and procedures on access to records, and discussion with five foster carers demonstrated knowledge of how to access their records.</p>		
<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	42	
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	80	
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	76	
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	13	
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	6	
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	322	<b>Maximum £</b> 322

## 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
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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 is currently negotiating the possibility of renting additional office space on a ground floor level, which would significantly increase the office space available and enable access for people with disabilities.

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 just updated the written guidance for staff with regard to the safe use of VDU's. The director also informed the inspector that the agency is currently exploring the possibility of linking staff computers via a network with those in the office.



## 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
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The director responsible confirmed that the agency is financially viable, and documents examined during this inspection suggested that this was the case. The agency has developed without the need for additional working capital other than an initial start up loan, and in each of the five years of trading has shown a surplus of income over expenditure. The agency provides foster carers with clear and detailed information on financial matters related to fostering in the foster carers handbook.

### 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
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Documents seen at this inspection showed that a registered accountant maintains Greater London Fostering accounts, and that the directors of the company receive a monthly report from the finance director on the financial position of the company. The agency has a flat fee for placements, and the manager told the inspector that fees required to pay for additional services, or to meet the particular needs of an individual child are negotiated with placing authorities as part of the placement agreement.

**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?**

4

Greater London Fostering pays foster carers a flat fee for each child placed, and the foster carers handbook outlines the expectations of the agency in respect of the areas of expenditure, which the fee should cover. A more detailed breakdown of sums to be spent on individual children is included in the initial placement agreement, and is the result of negotiation between the child, their social worker, the supervising social worker and the foster carer. All five foster carers interviewed confirmed that they received their allowances on time, and described the administration of Greater London Fostering as very efficient. The agency has provided advice to carers on benefits issues, and run a training session on the taxation issues with regard to fostering.

## 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

As part of this inspection, the inspector attended the meeting of the panel held on 04/02/04, interviewed the chair of the panel and examined the minutes of panel meetings held over the last twelve months.

The Greater London Fostering panel operates under clear 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 this 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 manager does not sit on the panel, as she is also the decision maker with regard to the panel's recommendations to the agency.

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 also observed proper discussion and resolution of conflict of interest issues.

The minute taker, who has been known to the agency for a number of years, and holds a current police check, does not have a current disclosure from the CRB. The inspector was shown a photocopy of the application for disclosure that has been made by the agency. The minute taker does not have access to children in her role, but does hear sensitive information with regard to foster carers and children. The inspector did not consider that this in any way posed a risk to children, but in this case the responsible persons have acted a little hastily in appointing the minute taker to her role prior to receipt of an acceptable enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Whilst the inspector does not feel that a requirement is necessary, given the generally robust procedures and careful way in which the agency appoints staff, the responsible persons are reminded of the requirement of regulation 20 schedule 1(7) that there must be a record of any criminal offences with regard to all staff employed by the agency.

## 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?	9
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This national minimum standard is not applicable, as Greater London Fostering does not provide a short-term break service.

## 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?	9
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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.

**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 on 9 February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

NO COMMENTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE PROVIDER.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox" value="NO"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 2004, 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	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 Diane Searle of Greater London Fostering 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**                    DIANA SEARLE

**Signature**                    \_\_\_\_\_

**Designation**                DIRECTOR/RESPONSILBE  
PERSON

**Date**                            6/4/04

**Or**

**D.3.2 I Diane Searle of Greater London Fostering 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**                            \_\_\_\_\_

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.