

<b>Item No.</b> 8.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 21 February 2012	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service in December 2011	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note that Ofsted carried out an announced inspection of the Fostering Service on 12 – 14 December 2011.
2. To note that the report on the inspection was received on 17 January 2012, confirming that Ofsted had given the Fostering Service an overall quality rating of GOOD, noting many areas of the service that the inspectors considered to be of outstanding quality (Ofsted letter – Appendix 1).
3. To note the action plan (set out in paragraph 13 below) to address the three recommendations made by Ofsted for securing future improvement of the service.

## KEY MESSAGES

4. The fostering service was inspected by two Ofsted inspectors over the three day period 12 – 14 December 2011. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000. The Department provided Ofsted with a detailed self assessment and other background documentation in advance of the inspection. The inspectors said that they considered the self assessment to have been extremely helpful, with relevant data, plenty of evidence in relation to the National Minimum Standards and strong on analysis of strengths and areas for development.
5. The department sent out questionnaires, as requested, on behalf of Ofsted to all looked after children and young people, their parents or guardians, all foster carers, the children's social workers and partner organisations. The inspectors reported a good response and noted that the feedback was "overwhelmingly positive".
6. During the three days the inspectors spent in the department they visited four foster placements, met with a wide range of staff, visited the Aftercare service and Sunshine House, interviewed all relevant managers and examined case records and personnel records. They also met with Speakerbox members and found this so helpful that they added a further meeting with Speakerbox to their inspection schedule.
7. The Inspectors provided verbal feedback to senior managers on 14 December 2011 in which they stated their provisional judgment that Southwark's fostering service is "Good with many outstanding features". This was confirmed in the full

inspection report that the department received on 17 January 2012. The full report is to be found in Appendix 1.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

8. Southwark's Fostering Service is one of the largest in London. Southwark has around 180 fostering households currently providing placements at any one time to around 410 children and young people. The Fostering Service provides a vital service to a very diverse group of children and young people, including short break provision to children with disabilities (through the Family Link service).
9. The fostering service plays a key role in meeting the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities in respect of looked after children and young people. The overall mission, aims, objectives, philosophy of care, and the range of services available to meet the needs of children are set out in the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose was approved by the Corporate Parenting Committee in November 2011. An annual review of the Statement of Purpose is required under the Fostering Regulations and Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. The Statement of Purpose will be refreshed, in consultation with Speakerbox, and the revised version will be presented to the committee for approval in October 2012.
10. Significant changes to the management and structure of the fostering service were implemented from April 2011. The Adoption and Fostering Service Manager retired in Autumn 2010. The Service was reorganised with the Fostering and Adoption Teams coming under the management of two Service Managers. A new Service Manager post was created with responsibility for Fostering, Children with Disabilities, CAMHS and Out of Hours. These changes have been effective in strengthening leadership and management of these key service areas.
11. In April 2011 the Department put in place new arrangements for commissioning assessments of new foster carers from specialist agencies. This change in approach is enabling the department to achieve much more ambitious targets in recruiting new foster carers in order to meet the "sufficiency planning" requirements as set out in the Fostering Regulations and The Children Act 2004. This is the statutory requirement upon the local authority to ensure the maintenance of a local pool of foster carers sufficient to meet the needs of the authority's looked after children.
12. In November 2011 Southwark's Fostering Service presented a performance report to the Corporate Parenting Committee. A further performance report will be presented to the committee in November 2012

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Summary of Ofsted inspection report**

13. Ofsted uses the following four descriptors when judging the quality of services

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

14. Ofsted gave the fostering service an **overall rating of Good**.
15. Ofsted also gave an individual rating to each of the six key areas inspected. The first five of these correspond to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The fifth area (“Organisation”) relates to the quality of management and the organisation’s ability to ensure strategic planning and a robust and effective approach to constant improvement.

**Ofsted judgment and key points in relation to each area inspected**

Area Inspected	Ofsted Judgment	Key points from inspection report
<b>Helping Children to be healthy</b>	<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Excellent health care arrangements</li> <li>-Successful partnerships</li> <li>-Excellent Care Link (CAMHS) service</li> <li>-Exceptional foresight</li> <li>-Outstanding support to foster carers</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Actively promotes children’s safety and welfare</li> <li>-Children learn the importance of personal safety</li> <li>-Clear procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns</li> <li>-Fostering households are safe</li> </ul>
<b>Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do</b>	<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Excellent range of support</li> <li>-Organisational ethos celebrates diversity</li> <li>-Children receive excellent educational support</li> <li>-Virtual school system is highly effective</li> <li>-Children receive substantial encouragement to achieve</li> </ul>

Area Inspected	Ofsted Judgment	Key points from inspection report
<b>Helping children make a positive contribution</b>	<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children are enabled to be highly influential within the organization</li> <li>-Speakerbox make an outstanding contribution</li> <li>-Children’s participation is fully integrated into service policy and planning</li> <li>-Children are always asked for their views and their views make a difference</li> <li>-The service works in partnership with parents</li> </ul>
<b>Achieving economic wellbeing</b>	<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Excellent support to ease transition into adulthood</li> <li>-Organisation invests heavily in young people’s personal development</li> <li>-Innovative promotion of young people’s economic well-being</li> <li>-Young people are well prepared for independence</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children are at the heart of the service</li> <li>-Clear Statement of Purpose</li> <li>-Strong, consistent, well-qualified and experienced management</li> <li>-Service builds on strengths and undertakes joint initiatives</li> <li>-Robust human resources support</li> <li>-Extremely effective fostering panel</li> <li>-Outstanding promotion of equality and diversity</li> <li>-Service is aware of strengths and areas for development</li> </ul>

**Action Plan arising from the inspection.**

16. Ofsted has made three recommendations in the inspection report under the title, "What must be done to secure future improvement?". The following action plan is now in place to deal quickly with the three recommendations.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
(1)Ensure foster carers attain the necessary Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training	Service Manager (Fostering) and Organisational Development Business Partner to agree an action plan and progress monitoring system	By end of March 2012
(2)Provide foster carers with clear information about allowances and expenses payable, and how to access them	Letter to be sent to all foster carers Foster Carers' Handbook to be amended to clarify allowances and expenses payable	By end of February 2012 By end of July 2012
(3)Update the Children's Guide to include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted	Children's Guide to be amended and reprinted with required changes	By end of April 2012

**Policy implications**

17. Reports to the corporate parenting committee enable Southwark to be compliant with relevant regulations and procedures.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care 020 7525 1039

**APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Ofsted - London Borough of Southwark Council Fostering Service Inspection Report for local authority fostering service Inspection date 14/12/2011

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson Deputy Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	7 February 2012	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	7 February 2012	