

<b>Item No</b> 9	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> March 26 2008	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Feedback on Fostering Inspection	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Assistant Strategic Director of Children's Specialist Services	

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. To note the strong performance of Southwark's fostering service following the recent inspection – overall rating as "Good".
2. To note that the fostering service has been subject to annual inspections for the last 3 years and have shown consistent improvement. It is now described as a very strong service driving for excellence.
3. To note the action plan and progress made in response to fostering inspection recommendations.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

4. Southwark's adoption and fostering service is located within the Children Looked After (CLA) business unit.
5. This is a local authority fostering service located in an inner city area with a wide range of racial and cultural diversity. It provides fostering placements for children and young people looked after by the council. The service also provides respite breaks for children with disabilities who live with their families.
6. A service manager provides overall management of the fostering service. The fostering service is staffed by a team manager, two practice managers, a senior practitioner with responsibility for the family link service and a team of social workers and administrators.
7. At the time of the inspection, Southwark council had 206 approved fostering households, which provided 452 placements; 291 children and young people were in placement.
8. Currently 83% of looked-after children aged 10 or under are in foster placements (73% overall for all children in care).
9. Southwark is one of the highest performing boroughs for the total number of foster placements available and for the percentage of looked-after children placed with families.
10. The fostering service has the CAMHS service carelink co-located with it to improve advice and support to foster carers and where necessary undertake direct work within the foster carers home with the child and carer. This service together with Southwark's specialist children looked after nurses and education

advisors has significantly improved performance around placement stability.

11. The inspection applies a number of ratings of the fostering service which is measured under the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes.
12. The ratings are as follows:
  - Outstanding – this aspect of provision is of exceptionally high quality
  - Good – this aspect of provision is strong
  - Satisfactory – this aspect of provision is sound
  - Inadequate – this aspect of provision is not good enough

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

13. The fostering inspection is broken down into a number of key areas each of which is given a rating.
14. These were as follows:
  - Helping children to be healthy – Outstanding
  - Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe – Good
  - Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do - Outstanding
  - Helping children make a positive contribution – Good
  - Achieving economic well-being – Good
  - Service organisation – Good
15. The inspectorate, have now indicated that Southwark's fostering services will only need to be inspected on a 3 year cycle.
16. This strong performance will support the services overall rating at the forthcoming joint area review inspection.
17. The fostering service has a key contribution to make to many of the children looked after key performance indicators.

### **Policy implications**

18. The revised kinship policy which will become effective from April 2008 will support those foster carers who wish to either adopt or seek a special guardianship order in respect of their children in placement:

### **Community Impact Statement**

19. The fostering service run a number of recruitment activities at local events and community venues.

### **Resource implications**

20. None

## SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

### Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services

21. No legal implications are arising from this report.

### Finance Director

22. No comments sought

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Fostering Inspection Report	Bradenham Close - 1	Chris Saunders 020 7525 1007

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Fostering Inspection Action Plan

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children Looked-After	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	March 18 2008	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	No
Director of Finance	No	No
<b>Executive Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team</b>	March 18 2008	

## APPENDIX 1

### FOSTERING ACTION PLAN FROM FOSTERING INSPECTION – NOVEMBER 2007

#### Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

<b>Std.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Work Undertaken</b>
6	Promote the health and development of young people placed with foster carers by ensuring that adequate safety standards are maintained in all foster homes. (Regulation 15(1)).	01/02/2008 Completed as above.	Health and Safety checklist updated.
6	Ensure that young people are only placed with foster carers where the terms of foster carers' approval are consistent with the proposed placement. (Regulation 34(1)).	01/02/2008 Completed as above.	Carefirst changed to emphasise approval terms.  Placement list changed to emphasise approval requirements for a proposed placement. This has been communicated to the OOH Team.

<b>Std.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Work Undertaken</b>
11	Arrange for complaints in relation to young people and their outcomes to be monitored by the responsible person, with particular reference to the need to resolve complaints within the timescales laid-down by the regulations. (Regulation 42(1)).	01/02/2008  Completed as above.	Complaints system in place. This will address timescales.
25	Ensure that a record is maintained of the placements made with each foster carer, which includes all the necessary information. (Regulation 30(30)).	08/02/2008  Completed as above.	Carefirst now includes accurate records of foster carer placements.
25	Ensure that the register of foster carers is accurate and includes all the necessary information. (Regulation 31)	08/02/2008  Completed as above.	Carefirst now updated with foster carer register and monthly data cleansing meetings now in place.
32	Review all friends and family foster carers to ensure that their assessment, approval, foster care agreement and annual review is in line with the regulations. (Regulations 27, 28, 34 & 29).	Review undertaken – February 2008	New system to be agreed at the end of March and system for annual reviewing to commence.

## Recommendations

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

- Arrange for foster carers' homes to be inspected annually. (NMS 6.2).

***System for annual inspections now in place and seen to be on Carefirst.***

- Arrange for foster carers to have updated medicals prior to placement decisions being made, where this is in the best interests of young people. (NMS 8.1).

***To be considered where this is to be the best interests of the young person prior to placement.***

- Ensure that all foster carers' current terms of approval are clear in their records in order to facilitate matching. (NMS 8.1).

***This has now been updated in line with Carefirst requirements.***

- Submit foster carers' annual reviews to the Fostering Panel following child protection allegations and investigations. (NMS 9.1).

***Now in progress***

- Amend the written procedure for the Fostering Panel to include decision-making when all members of the panel are not in agreement. (NMS 30.2).

***Procedure amended.***

- Ensure the service has an appropriate level of administrative support. Also, that roles and responsibilities are defined and the management of the administrative team promotes the development of the fostering service as a whole. (NMS 16.10).

***Work in this area is in progress.***

- Arrange for foster carers' annual reviews to include an appraisal of training and development needs which is documented in the review report. (NMS 23.8).

***This is being undertaken.***

- Ensure that foster carers' files include records of all supervisory meetings (NMS 22.6).

***This is now being inputted into Carefirst.***

