



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

## Fostering Services

### **Foster Care Associates (North East)**

19 Portland Terrace

Jesmond

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne & Wear

NE2 1QQ

5th January 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.

<b>FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION</b>
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**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO
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**Name of Authority**

**Address**

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES
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**Name of Agency**

Foster Care Associates (North East)

**Tel No**

0191 212 6900

**Address**

19 Portland Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne,  
Tyne & Wear, NE2 1QQ

**Fax No**

0191 212 6904

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

Foster Care Associates Limited

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

Mrs Carolyn Mona McKelvie

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO
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**Date of last inspection**

10/3/03
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<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		5th January 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Dennis Bradley	074426
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Glynis Gaffney	958224
<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>			

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## 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 Foster Care Associates (North East). 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.**

Foster Care Associates (North East) is part of the national organisation Foster Care Associates. FCA (NE) provides family placements to children and young people in the North East of England. The main office is situated in Newcastle upon Tyne and there are sub-branches in Alnwick and Darlington. FCA (NE) has grown significantly since the last inspection and plans were underway to establish a sub-office in Seaton Burn on the outskirts of Newcastle. At the time of the inspection, FCA (NE) was offering a family placement service to 123 children/young people and had 100 foster carers on its register. FCA (NE) offers a range of services to meet the needs of placing authorities, for example emergency, parent and child, short-term, bridging, assessment and long-term placements. FCA (NE) also specialises in offering placements to children who may challenge the service.

FCA (NE) provides a multi-disciplinary approach to working with children and young people, which amongst other things, offers opportunities for foster carers and social work staff to access therapy and educational support services. FCA (NE) also provides children and young people with access to group work and activities provided by a team of resource workers.

## 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 report of an announced inspection.

The purpose of the inspections is

- a) to assess progress made towards meeting requirements and recommendations (where applicable) from the previous inspection.
- b) To assess the service against the National Minimum Standards.

### Statement of Purpose

#### **This Standard was met**

The Fostering Service has a written Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide. The Children's Guide 'File of Facts' is in a form that will appeal to young people and it is now in a format for younger children.

### Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.

#### **Both of these standards were met.**

The Director has appropriate skills and experience and exercises effective leadership. The Agency's draft recruitment and selection procedures have been revised.

### Management of the Fostering Service

#### **Both of these standards were met.**

Arrangements were in place to monitor the operation of the Service. Staff interviewed were clear about their roles and lines of accountability. The Deputy Director provides cover in the Manager's absence.

### Securing and Promoting Welfare

#### **7 of these 9 standards were met and 2 were almost met.**

The assessment process for new foster carers is comprehensive. There was evidence that the specific needs of children and young people are given consideration when foster placements are arranged. There was ample evidence that children and young peoples' opinions were sought about issues that were likely to affect them. The Agency provides children and young people with regular newsletters. FCA(NE) provides staff, foster carers and children with access to specialist educational and therapy staff. Training is available for foster carers regarding their role and responsibilities in preparing young people for independent living. There were delays in some placing authority social workers providing relevant information regarding children and young people placed with foster carers.

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

#### **8 of these 9 standards were met and 1 was nearly met.**

Professional staff working for the Agency were appropriately qualified and experienced. Staff had regular team meetings and a formal system of supervision was in place for all social work staff. A system was in place to provide regular supervision to foster carers. Training programmes were in place for staff and foster carers and these are reviewed



annually. Procedures were in place covering the assessment, approval and review of foster carers and these were implemented effectively. All foster carers are required to attend a course of training prior to their approval and post-approval training includes a core curriculum that all carers are expected to attend. FCA(NE) obtained the 'Investors in People' award in 2002. Staff interviewed demonstrated a positive commitment to the work undertaken by the Agency.

### **Records**

**One of these standards was met and the other was nearly met.**

There were written policies regarding case recording and what information should be held on children's and foster carer files. Appropriate records were maintained in respect of children although there were delays in foster carers receiving appropriate documentation. Post-approval training for carers includes the course 'Helping Children Make Sense Of Their Past'.

### **Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service**

**This standard was met.**

The premises used by the Agency were adequate for the operation of the Service and were well equipped. A new office has been opened in Seaton Burn.

### **Financial Requirements**

**1 of these standards was not inspected and the other 2 were met.**

Arrangements were in place to ensure that the financial processes/systems of the Agency are properly operated and maintained. There is a written policy on fostering allowances and details of the current allowances are provided to carers annually. FCA has its own Quality Assurance Division.

### **Fostering Panels**

**This standard was met in full.**

The Agency's Fostering Panel was observed to work thoroughly and effectively. The Panel provides a rigorous quality assurance function in relation to the assessment and review of foster carers. Criminal Record Bureau checks had been carried out in respect of all panel members.

### **Short Term Breaks**

**This standard was not applicable..**

### **Family and Friends as Carers**

**This standard was applicable.**

## **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?

NO

**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	
1	34	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements must contain all the information specified in Regulation 34, Schedule 6, of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	

**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.

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<b>Dennis Bradley</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<b>Glynis Gaffney</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Locality Manager</b>	<b>Fiona Millns</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<b>06 January 2004</b>		

## 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	34	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements must contain all the information specified in Regulation 34, Schedule 6, of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	30 July 2004

### 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	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should clearly refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and the action required to compensate for identified gaps.
2	FS9FS8	When placements are being considered on the basis of limited information FCA(NE), in collaboration with the placing authority's social worker, should carry out a recorded risk assessment and review the foster carer's safe caring policy. This should help ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to enable the carer to provide appropriate care to the child and to protect the foster child, their own children and any other children for whom they have responsibility.
3	FS8	When resource workers are 'lone working' a recorded risk assessment should be carried out in relation to the numbers and mix of children and young people that can be safely cared for at any one time.

4	FS10	The Fostering Service Provider should take action to ensure that the role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements is clearly specified in the Foster Placement Agreement.
5	FS19	Prepare and implement induction training programmes for newly appointed social workers and resource workers.
6	FS25	Ensure that the Central Record of Complaints includes information in relation to all complaints received by the Agency and that this information includes details of the action taken in response to the complaint and its outcome.

\* 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 12

Survey of placing authorities YES

Foster carer survey YES

Foster children survey YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals YES

- Directors of Social services NO

- Child protection officer YES

- 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 YES

Observation of foster panel YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents YES

Inspection of records YES

Interview with individual child NO

Date of Inspection 5/1/04

Time of Inspection 9.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 93

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

The Statement of Purpose for Foster Care Associates is informative, easy to understand and well written. A supplement to this Statement includes information about Foster Care Associates North East (FCA (NE)). The supplement does not include details of the relevant qualifications of all staff but states that such information will be provided on request.

The children's guide to the Agency, the 'File of Facts', is clearly designed to appeal to young people, whilst also being both 'user friendly' and informative. A version of this has been prepared for younger children. The Director advised that arrangements were in place to make the 'File of Facts' available in different formats as and when required. This will be followed up during the next inspection.

## **Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service**

**The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:**

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

### **Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

**3**

The Director of FCA (NE) has a relevant social work qualification and has completed the 'Modern Managers' Course. The Director advised that plans for her to commence a course leading to a Masters of Business Administration were being reviewed.

The Director has appropriate experience of working with children over the past five years and significant experience of working in children's services at a senior level.

It was evident that the Director exercised effective leadership in the course of her duties and promoted an ethos where staff are encouraged to be adaptable and resourceful.

### **Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

**3**

The most recent police check in respect of the Director of the Service was carried out in December 2002. Staff personnel records are held centrally at the national headquarters of FCA and were not checked during this inspection. The Agency's draft policies and procedures concerning the recruitment and selection of staff state that telephone enquiries must be made to follow up written references.

## 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

There was evidence that:

- The Director had a clear understanding of the operation of the Agency and gave a priority to monitoring and controlling its activities and the quality of its performance;
- A member of the social work staff has a specific remit to investigate any complaints and bring any shortfalls in service delivery to the attention of the Director;
- The FCA Quality Assurance Department also monitors the activities of the Agency;
- The Agency's policies and procedures include a scheme of the delegated roles and responsibilities of the management team and members of the staff group. Job descriptions were in place for each post – although some were being reviewed at the time of the inspection;
- There were established lines of communication and accountability between management, staff and carers that included Foster: Carer Support Meetings attended by managers and staff; fortnightly home visits to foster carers by their supervising social worker; individual staff supervisory sessions and regular staff meetings. The clearer lines of accountability, roles and responsibilities of staff had become more necessary as the Agency and its staff team has grown;
- Financial procedures were in place.

FCA has a Corporate Prospectus which includes the details required under Standard 4.4 of the NMS with the following exceptions: - statements of the amounts to be paid to foster carers and of itemised amounts paid for wider services such as therapeutic assessment and input and educational liaison. The Director advised that this information would be made available to purchasers of the Service on request. The Prospectus does contain information showing the percentage breakdown of payments to carers and other services delivered by FCA.

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

36

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

1

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

2

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

<b>Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	1
<b>Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:</b>	X

<b>Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)</b> <b>The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Director of FCA(NE) is committed to managing, monitoring and developing the quality and effectiveness of services provided by the Agency;</li> <li>• The Director has a clearly defined job description and does not hold a similar position within any other organisation;</li> <li>• Staff interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities;</li> <li>• The Deputy Director manages the Fostering Service in the Director's absence.</li> </ul>		

## 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?

3

It was noted that:

- The standard of accommodation in the foster carer homes visited was satisfactory;
- FCA(NE) expects that each foster child will be allocated their own bedroom accommodation unless there are agreed reasons for not doing so;
- The homes of foster carers are inspected as part of their initial assessment and at each annual review. A health and safety checklist is completed;
- There is a clear expectation that foster carers' vehicles must be safe and equipped appropriately for the needs of the children placed with them. The annual health and safety check includes an insurance and MOT check;
- The Foster Carers' Handbook contains reference to FCA's Health and Safety Policy;
- It is FCA (NE) policy to ensure that all foster carers receive training that includes a health and safety component. The training programme for approved foster carers includes a two-day health and safety course.

Each of the foster carers interviewed confirmed that they understood that they might be visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.

### Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It was noted that

- The Agency has a 'Valuing Diversity' Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy;
- The Foster Carers Handbook includes a commitment to ensuring that children and young people, and their families, are provided with services that promote equality and meet their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs;
- In the sample of children's records examined, there was evidence in one case file that specific consideration had been given as to how the carers could be supported to meet the cultural and ethnic needs of one young person placed with them;
- Prospective foster carers' attitudes to issues of diversity and whether they are able to parent a child with, for example, cultural needs that differed from their own, are covered as part of their assessment;
- There was a good example of one foster carer researching the cultural background of a young person placed with them and of the carer advocating on behalf of the young person with their school;
- FCA Placement Policy includes a commitment to reviewing emergency placements within six weeks and identifying a more appropriate placement where this is in the best

interests of the child. The Director advised that the services of an interpreter had been employed to facilitate the involvement of one young person in such a review;

- One of the targets included in the Agency's Marketing Development Plan for 2004 is to recruit ethnic minority carers;
- The preparation and training of prospective foster carers covers Standard 7.5 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS);
- Core post approval training includes a course on Valuing Diversity, although only 3 carers had attended this training in 2003;
- The Alnwick Carers Support Group held a successful workshop on Multiculturalism and Foster Care and arrangements had been made to provide this training to other carers in FCA(NE);
- Information provided to foster carers includes reference to their role in encouraging foster children to access opportunities to develop and pursue their interests and hobbies.

#### **Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

**Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.**

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

**2**

There was evidence that:

- Matching considerations form an integral part of the Fostering Service's assessment of prospective foster carers;
- Supervising social workers, foster carers and their families, including other children in placement, are usually consulted and provided with relevant information throughout the matching process. It is recommended that a record be maintained of the consultation held with the social worker of any child already placed with a foster carer;
- The placing authority social worker is responsible for consulting with the child to be placed and their family;
- Where practicable, planned introductions are arranged between the child to be placed and the prospective foster carer;
- Limited information about a child or young person may be obtained prior to the placement commencing, particularly in relation to emergency placements. 13 of the 39 carers who responded to a questionnaire indicated that they felt they did not get sufficient information about a young person prior to placement;
- Arrangements for placing children to provide respite to foster carers had not always followed the FCA protocol concerning consultation with the supervising social worker and this had led to inappropriate matching in a few instances – this matter had been addressed by the Agency prior to the inspection;
- Foster Placement Agreements did not always adequately refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and of any actions required to compensate for identified gaps. However there was evidence that carers are provided with appropriate training and support;
- Where a Looked After Child (LAC) Placement Agreement had not been completed in some instances the relevant sections of the FCA(NE) Agreement were not completed to ensure compliance with Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002. There was also evidence that placement agreement meetings were delayed until placing authority social workers could attend.

**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**

There was evidence available that:

- All of the placing authority social workers who responded to a questionnaire confirmed that they considered the children placed with FCA foster carers to be safe;
- Prospective foster carers receive training in child protection issues and safe caring as part of their assessment and preparation;
- Post approval training includes 'Understanding the Child Protection System', 'Caring for the Sexually Abused Child', 'Child Protection Law' and 'Child Protection Conferences';
- Child Protection training is now included in the core post-approval training provided to all foster carers;
- The Foster Carer Agreement clearly states that foster carers are required to comply with the Agency's policies on child protection, managing behaviour, unauthorised absences and allegations of abuse and complaints;
- The Foster Carers' Handbook contains guidance on bullying and how it should be addressed and a session on 'Bullying Issues' is included in the training programme for carers;
- The Service's policy on the use of restraint, and the training provided to carers, has been reviewed as recommended following the previous inspection;
- A Missing Child Procedure was available for staff and carers;
- The Foster Carers Handbook clearly states that the use of corporal punishment is not acceptable;
- Each prospective foster carer is given a copy of the NFCA 'Safe Caring' guidance document and FCA (NE) has a clear expectation that foster carers' own safe caring policies will be updated on a yearly basis

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

X

%

**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**

It was noted that:

- The Foster Carers Handbook contains clear guidance regarding how staff and carers should support foster children to maintain and develop their family contacts;
- FCA is considering introducing the use of a specific risk assessment format to be used when contact arrangements are being planned and agreed;
- The Agency provides venues for contact to take place and staff to provide supervised contact where necessary;
- The importance of foster carers helping children to maintain appropriate contacts is a key feature of their assessment and training.
- Foster carers record the outcome of contact arrangements on the Fostering Service's Contact Record Sheets;
- Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they were clear about the arrangements that

had been agreed;

- The placement agreement in respect of one child had not been fully completed and did not include details of the contact arrangements for the child.

**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?**

4

There was evidence that:

- Foster carers are provided with clear guidance regarding what the Agency expects of carers in respect of listening and responding to children;
- The assessment and preparation of prospective foster carers covers training related to listening and responding to children and families;
- The FCA Welcome Letter forwarded to newly placed foster children informs them that they can talk to their foster carer, social worker or any FCA staff and, also gives the 'free phone' number for the Regional Director;
- Children and young people are given information on how to raise concerns or make a complaint;
- Foster children aged over seven are asked about their views of the placement when foster carers' annual reviews are carried out;
- Statutory reviews provide an opportunity for children and their families to be consulted;
- FCA (North East) staff organise a range of activities for children that provide a more informal opportunity for them to raise any issues or concerns with Fostering Service's resource workers and social workers;
- FCA (North East) also has an 'Investors In Children' Group that provides another forum in which children and young people's views can be sought and the Agency is working towards being IIC accredited;
- In June 2003, the Agency organised an event involving a group of young people in foster care, staff and Fostering Panel members, in a review of the how foster carers are recruited. It was evident that the views of the young people were acted upon – for instance in relation to the questions the Panel asked prospective foster carers);
- There is a national Children and Young Peoples Forum and in September 2003 FCA held a national Young People's Conference

It was not clear how children and young people are consulted regarding placements that are arranged to provide foster carers with respite. It is recommended that a record be maintained of such consultations.



**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?****2**

There was evidence that:

- The Agency had established links with the local health services and in particular good links with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health services;
- FCA (NE) makes clear in the Foster Carers handbook its expectations of foster carers in respect of their role in helping to promote the health of children in their care. The sections of the Handbook 'Standards of Practice for Foster Carers' and 'Health and Personal Development' cover the areas specified in Standard 12.6;
- Foster carers maintain records of the health care needs and treatment of the children placed with them and those interviewed were clear regarding their responsibilities in respect of meeting the health care needs of children;
- Training in health and hygiene issues, as well as first aid, is available to foster carers;
- The 'core curriculum' for approved carers includes a two-day course 'Promoting and Safeguarding the Health and Development of Children and Young People';
- There were delays in the Agency obtaining the appropriate Looked After Children documentation from placing authorities in respect of some children. In the sample of foster carers case tracked, the carers for one sibling group placed with them for over 2 years, had not received a written health record for each child and did not know which immunisations the children had received. Another foster carer did not have this information 3 months after a child had been placed with them.

The therapy service provided by the Agency and FCA nationally has been reviewed since the last inspection. The focus of the Service is to support the placement of children and young people. There has been a move away from providing individual therapy for individual children to putting the carers at the centre of the therapeutic work with the child.

**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**

The Agency has an Education Team that consists of 2 Educational Liaison Officers (ELO's) and 2 recently appointed Education Support Workers. These staff, in collaboration with foster carers, have the role of supporting children to meet their educational needs. Additional support is available from the Resource Team when needed. The Senior ELO advised that the focus of the specialist Education Support workers is on preventative work, providing support in school if there are difficulties and, also providing outreach support with an educational component to young people who are not at school. In addition, the Agency is placing more emphasis on encouraging and enabling foster carers to take more responsibility for the education of the young people in their care by, for instance, being the first point of contact with a school if there are difficulties. A one-day course for carers on Education is included in the core curriculum for carers.

Where placements are planned the Senior ELO is consulted regarding the suitability of a proposed placement in order to ensure that the child's needs can be met, particularly if they

have special educational needs.

There was evidence that:

- Foster carers interviewed were satisfied with the educational support they received, this was also confirmed by carers who attended the support groups;
- An education census carried out by the Agency in September 2003 indicated that of the 112 children and young people who were of school age (4 – 16 yrs) 105 had an appropriate school placement and 97% of these were attending school on the day of the census;
- The Agency was working with an scheme to provide young people not at school with the opportunity of gaining qualifications which gave more focus to the home based work undertaken by these young people. The Agency also has its own educational award scheme for young people who have either done well, or put in lot of effort at school;
- Information systems had been put in place to demonstrate the educational achievement of children and young people although this relied, in part, on the cooperation of the relevant schools. Information regarding the numbers of young people excluded from school was also being collated and included on the data base. It is recommended that this should also include details of young people informally excluded;
- The Carers Handbook specifies the foster carers role in relation to meeting the educational needs of the children placed with them. This should be developed to clearly specify the expectation of the Agency regarding the arrangements that will be put in place by foster carers if any child in their care is not in school;
- Some of the Placement Agreements examined did not include the details specified in Standards 13.4 and 13.8. of the NMS and Personal Education Plans (PEP) were not in place for each young person. However, the Placement Agreement format was under review and action was being taken by the Senior ELO regarding the PEPs.

#### **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**

It was noted that:

- The Foster Carers Handbook includes a section on preparing young people for adulthood and this specifies the role and responsibility of a foster carer;
- The training programme for carers includes a module on preparing young people for adulthood and the Director advised that the programme for 2004 places greater emphasis on the needs of care leavers and preparation for independence;
- FCA has a national Leaving Care Working Party that is preparing a policy for care leavers;
- Agency social workers and the Resource Team are preparing a programme for care leavers that involves the provision of an 'after care' service;
- Although the Agency has to date only had a small number of care leavers, there was evidence that young people are consulted about their future and encouraged to become actively involved in the decision making process.

## 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

There was evidence that:

- The Agency's procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff had been revised to comply with the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002;
- Staff are interviewed prior to being appointed and the revised procedures stipulate that written references must be followed up by telephone enquiries. Written references in respect of prospective foster carers are followed up by the assessing social worker;
- Police checks are carried out in respect of new staff and prospective foster carers and arrangements were in place to have these renewed every 3 years. In the sample of records examined there was evidence that this was being carried out. Staff personnel records are held at the national headquarters of the Agency and were not checked as part of this inspection;
- The social workers and other professional staff employed by the fostering service were appropriately qualified and experienced;
- Staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of foster care.

Total number of staff of the agency:

49

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

4

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence that:

- A management structure was in place with clear lines of accountability although this is kept under review as the Service develops. For example a new post of Assistant Director had been established;
- Staff were managed and monitored by people with appropriate skills and qualifications. It was confirmed that the Principal Therapist received external clinical supervision;
- Workloads of staff were monitored and reviewed – the Agency aims to recruit a additional supervising social worker and resource worker for every 10 new foster carers;
- Systems were in place for the assessment, approval and review of carers. The Fostering Panel/Recruitment Manager oversees these processes from a management and quality assurance perspective;

- Social work staff and full time resource workers received regular supervision;
- Staff and carers have the opportunity to undertake on going training and appropriate professional development – for example, 25 carers and 3 staff were enrolled on NVQ Level 3 training;
- The level of clerical and administrative support had been increased and suitable administrative procedures appeared to be in place;
- The Agency has access to access to 'in-house' educational advice as well as medical and legal advice.

#### **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?**

**4**

There was evidence that:

- Since the last inspection the Agency has grown significantly. There were 100 foster families and 123 children and young people placed with foster carers at the time of the inspection;
- Additional staff had been recruited as the Agency grew and workloads increased. Suitable arrangements appeared to be in place to monitor staffing levels and workloads. For example, the Business Plan for 2004 identifies the need to recruit an additional member of staff for the Placements Team when the target of 150 placements has been reached. However, foster carers interviewed indicated that, at times, the Resource Team was overstretched and this was confirmed by some of the staff interviewed. The recruitment of 2 Educational Support Workers may help address this matter and consideration was being given to establishing a pool of sessional workers in the Darlington area;
- At the Darlington Office, where a number of key staff left within a short period of time, contingency arrangements were put in place to resolve the situation in relation to social work staff including the employment of a social worker on a temporary contract;
- Arrangements were in place to encourage the retention of salaried staff and foster carers;
- The Service has a Foster Carer Recruitment Policy that includes a commitment to recruiting a range of carers to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people requiring placements;
- The Agency's Marketing and Development Plan for 2004 includes a commitment to target the recruitment of foster carers who care for teenagers and ethnic minority foster carers;
- A policy and related procedures were in place in respect of the assessment of carers and the assessment format used focuses on the areas specified in Standard 17.7.

**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**

There was evidence that:

- Newly appointed staff receive an employment contract, a statement of terms and conditions and a job description as well as copies of FCA's disciplinary and grievance policies;
- Carers are required to complete a Foster Carer Agreement and are provided with copies of the Agency's Whistle Blowing and Complaints and Representations Procedures. Staff confirmed that they were aware of these policies;
- FCA (NE) provide an out of office hours 'on call' service. A social worker and resource worker provide cover and a member of the management team provides back up. Discussion with foster carers indicated a preference for a more localised 'on call' service because growth within the Agency meant that social workers might not know the foster carer or children. The 'on call' service was being reviewed at the time of the inspection;
- Systems were in place for the regular supervision and support of carers. It is the Agency's policy that carers receive fortnightly support visits although these may be monthly if the carers have established, long term placements. Carers interviewed confirmed that support visits could be more often when needed.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**

**There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

It was noted that:

- An appraisal system was in place for staff. Supervision sessions and annual appraisals identified staff training and development needs;
- Training programmes for carers were kept under review. A member of staff indicated that the preparation training for prospective foster carers was being reviewed because more applicants with no previous fostering experience were being recruited;
- Joint training between fostering staff and foster carers took place;
- The annual reviews of carers includes consideration of their training and development needs. A foster carer advised that they were meeting with the member of staff responsible for organising carers training to discuss the preparation of a training programme for more experienced carers who have completed the post approval training programme;
- Foster carers had been provided with training to meet their specific needs – for example filial therapy;
- Induction training for staff includes one day's training at the national headquarters. A formal induction programme was in place for social work staff although there was evidence that not all staff had undergone this training. In addition one member of the Resource Team had not received any training in 'Safe Caring' or Child Protection after having been in post for 3 months;
- The Agency Business Plan for 2004 contains objectives in relation to staff training that include access to PQ1 training for all social workers and NVQ 3 training for all new resource workers
- FCA(NE) obtained the 'Investors In People' award in 2002.

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b> <b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are provided with a copy of the job description for their post which details their duties and responsibilities;</li> <li>• Staff have access to the policies and procedures for the Service. Copies were available in the office;</li> <li>• In addition to regular team meetings, weekly placement meetings are held;</li> <li>• All staff, including administrative staff and resource workers, receive formal supervision. However, there were differences in the frequency and regularity of supervision sessions, particularly for senior staff.</li> <li>• Records are maintained of the content of the supervision and there is a set agenda for supervision sessions;</li> <li>• A system of annual appraisals was in place although records indicated that this had not been adhered to in respect of one member of staff.</li> </ul>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b> <b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Agency has a clear strategy in place for working with and supporting carers and that this was understood by both staff and carers;</li> <li>• Supervising social workers and carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker;</li> <li>• Annual reviews of carers were being carried out and that the review reports are available to members of the Fostering Panel. Only the first annual review report is presented automatically to the Panel, subsequent reports are presented to the Panel only if there is an identified need to do so. Reviews are usually held at one of the Agency's offices;</li> <li>• The foster carer, supervising social worker, placing authority social worker and young person being fostered are asked to complete a form requesting their views about the placement. Where a young person requires assistance in completing the form consideration should be given to this being provided by the supervising social worker rather than the foster carer.</li> </ul>		

<b>Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)</b> <b>The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The FCA (NE) Foster Care Agreement is well written and contained detailed information for carers regarding what the Agency expects of them and what they can expect from the Agency. The Foster Care Agreement includes a commitment to provide each carer with supervision and support from a qualified and experienced social worker.</p> <p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carers received appropriate support from social workers and had access to other professional support – including the Agency's Therapy and Education Teams;</li> <li>• Foster Carers are provided with a detailed and comprehensive Carers Handbook that is kept under review;</li> </ul>		

- Supervising social workers met regularly with foster carers and foster carers' files contained records of these visits;
- There was a package of practical support available for carers that covered the areas specified in Standard 22.7 – this includes membership of Fostering Network, 21 days paid respite per year and public liability insurance cover;
- The Carers Handbook includes sections on 'Complaints and Representations' and 'Allegations and Complaints Against Foster Carers' and the Foster Care Agreement includes reference to the provision of independent support to the foster carer.
- Records of Complaints and Allegations were being maintained;
- Although arrangements were in place to carry out unannounced visits some carers had not received such a visit. However, action was being taken to address this matter and improve the monitoring of such visits.

Those individual carers who were interviewed were satisfied with the support they received from the Agency. This was also reflected in the feedback received at the Carers Support Group meetings that were attended by the inspectors.

### **Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

**3**

There was evidence that:

- FCA (NE) provides new carers with pre-approval and induction training and this includes training in 'Safe Caring';
- Prospective foster carers with no previous experience also receive Impact Training. This starts after the initial training and involves a prospective carer being mentored by an experienced carer and they work with this carer for approximately three months;
- The Agency's 'Equal Opportunities Policy' includes a commitment to provide all training within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice;
- Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are encouraged to attend training and that the timing of training and the venues were satisfactory. Child-care and expenses are provided where required;
- Two carers interviewed were approved as joint carers and there was evidence that both had completed the 'Choosing to Foster' training as well as additional training;
- A programme of post approval training and development for carers was in place. This includes a core curriculum that all carers are expected to complete. FCA also encourages carers to undertake NVQ Level 3 training – 19 carers had been awarded this qualification in 2003. The Business Plan for 2004 refers to the aim of the Agency to work towards 80% of carers achieving NVQ Level 3;
- The annual reviews of fosters carers includes consideration of their training needs;
- The training programme is evaluated and reviewed annually – consideration was being given to providing a training package for more experienced carers who have completed the post-approval training programme.

## 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

It was noted that:

- Case records were in place for each child and these were stored securely;
- A written policy was in place in respect of the maintenance of these files and this was being followed;
- Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they understood the basis of the placement of each child placed with them;
- Arrangements were in place for the transference of relevant information regarding a child to the responsible authority as and when required;
- Foster carer preparation training includes a session on recording and post approval training includes the course 'Helping the Child Make Sense of their Past'. The FCA Standards of Practice for carers includes an expectation that carers will undertake this type of work with children placed in their care;
- These Standards also include reference to a clear expectation that carers keep information on children placed with them confidential and secure. There was evidence that this expectation was being complied with;
- The relevant LAC documentation was not in place in all of the files examined. Although there was recorded evidence that this had been requested from the relevant placing authorities the Director acknowledged that the Agency had to be more pro-active in trying to ensure that the relevant documentation is in place.

### 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?

2

There was evidence that:

- Separate records were in place in respect of staff, carers and children;
- Senior social workers undertake spot checks of social work files and the Office Manager routinely checks administrative records;
- Confidential records were securely stored in lockable cupboards. Arrangements were also in place to ensure that information held on computers was also secure;
- Those records examined were maintained in a suitable form that would facilitate the passing on of information;
- The Carers Handbook includes guidance on how carers can access their files;
- A Children's Register and a Register of Foster Carers were in place;



- Central records were kept of complaints and allegations. However, details of how the complaints had been handled and the outcome were not always recorded. The record did not include details of one complaint made by a foster carer. These records were to be re-organised to ensure that they contain the relevant information.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			125
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			112
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			68
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			33
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			4
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	343.00	<b>Maximum £</b>	X

## **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**

At the time of the inspection the premises used by the Service consisted of sub-offices in Alnwick and Darlington and the head office in Newcastle upon Tyne. These were easily identifiable as office premises and the Inspectors confirmed that access arrangements were appropriate with the exception that disabled access was not available in the Darlington and Newcastle offices. Arrangements were underway to move many of the staff accommodated at the head office to larger premises at Seaton Burn, on the outskirts of Newcastle. The new office will provide a larger meeting room for the local carers' support group. Each of the offices had space for therapeutic and educational work. Security measures were in place in respect of the safe storage of confidential information and the information retained on the computer system. Lockable and secure storage facilities were available for confidential information kept by the Service. The Agency appeared to be suitably equipped with office equipment and IT systems.

## 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 standard was assessed as part of the registration of the responsible individual for the organisation by the relevant Area Office of the Commission.

### 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

All financial records are kept centrally at the FCA national head office. The Director of the Agency advised that the Finance Section based at the head office is staffed by an appropriately qualified and experienced team. The Director also confirmed that the Agency was financially viable and that monthly accounts are produced. The Agency's budgets are monitored on a monthly basis in conjunction with the Board of Directors of FCA and an accountant. The corporate FCA Brochure contains a statement of its charges for each type of placement as well as a breakdown of charges for additional services such as supervised contact.

**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

The Foster Carers Handbook contains clear guidance on the Agency's fostering allowances, payments and expenses and this includes details of the frequency and method of payment. Foster carers receive an annual summary of fees and allowances. Each of the foster carers interviewed confirmed that payments are made promptly this was also confirmed by those carers who were at the support group meetings attended by an Inspector.

## 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

It was noted that:

- The Agency's 'Fostering Panel Operational Procedures' cover those matters referred to in Standard 30. For example, a variety of checks, including CRB checks, are carried out on panel members;
- The Panel Manager's role includes ensuring that assessments of prospective carers are carried out satisfactorily and are fed through to the panel in an efficient manner. The Panel Manager also monitors the annual reviews of carers;
- The Panel addresses its quality assurance function and undertakes a thorough consideration of the assessments/annual reviews presented to it. However, the reports presented at panel were not always made available to panel members within the timescales specified in the Panel Procedures;
- At the Panel observed by an inspector, Panel members were well prepared and a structured decision making process was evident;
- A workshop had been held with young people who were in foster care to get their views about what the Panel should be focussing on when considering the approval of prospective foster carers. It was evident that the views of the young people concerned had been acted upon;
- The Agency was seeking to recruit a new legal advisor and an education advisor for the Panel;
- Because the Director of the Service is the 'Agency Decision Maker' the Deputy Director serves as a panel member instead of the Director.

## 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?
This Standard was not applicable.	

## 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?
This standard was not applicable.	

**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 conducted on 05 January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

YES

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 11 June 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: &lt;enter details here&gt;

NO

**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 Mr M J S Cockburn of Foster Care Associates (North East) Limited 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.**

<b>Print Name</b>	_____
<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Designation</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	_____

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.