



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Poole Fostering Services

Borough of Poole

14a Commercial Road

Parkstone

Poole

Dorset

BH14 0JW

23rd February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Poole Fostering Services

Address

Borough of Poole, 14a Commercial Road, Parkstone,
Poole, Dorset, BH14 0JW

Local Authority Manager

Mr Luis Pujol

Tel No:

01202 261501

Address

Borough of Poole, 14a Commercial Road, Parkstone,
Poole, Dorset, BH14 0JW

Fax No:

01202 714410

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		23rd February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jacqueline Sullivan	
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Luis Pujol	

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
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- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Borough of Poole's fostering service is managed within the Borough's Children and Families Services structure and falls within one of its five service divisions, Children's Services Adoption, Fostering & Residential. As noted at the last inspection, due to the on going vacancy of the Children's Services Manager the responsibility for line management of the service has passed temporarily to the Principal Officer. Day-to-day management of the Fostering, Adoption & Residential Team, is undertaken by the Team Manager.

The fostering element of the team consists of the Team Manager, one full time senior practitioner, two full time and three part time family placement workers, two social work Assistants and a social work student. Since the last inspection two staff members have joined the team. A spirituality and children looked after project worker works alongside the team.

The Shared Care Scheme is located within the Children's Health and Disability Team, line managed by a different Children Services Manager.

This team consists of the Team Manager (responsible for the Children's Health & Disability Social Work Team), one part time senior practitioner and one part time shared care worker. Another post has been ring fenced for the team.

The two teams have responsibility for the recruitment, assessment, training and support to all of the borough's foster carers and shared care families.

The service has a Statement of Purpose which states:

The fostering Service aims to meet a diverse range of need by providing:

- *Regular short break care to support families and prevent family breakdown e.g. when a child or parents has a disability or long term illness*
- *Short term foster care to support families through crisis or in an emergency to protect children from harm*
- *Permanent substitute family care by way of adoption or long term foster care, for children who cannot return to their birth family*

At the time of this inspection the fostering service had seventy two approved foster carers. The shared carer service has twenty-six carers who provide short-term break placements for children with disabilities.

Social workers from the fostering team supervise and support placements made with carers approved by Borough of Poole. A rolling programme of training was available for foster carers and support groups for both carers and their children were available. Respite was available for carers.

There were specialist fostering schemes, including Standard, Key and Project. Carers were identified who had specialist skills for dealing with certain types of placements and received enhanced payment and support.

The fostering service had access to a clinical psychologist who had time allocated for use in a consultation role with carers and workers. The Education Department employed a teacher and an Educational Psychologist an Education Welfare Officer with special responsibility for 'Looked After' Children who linked closely with the fostering service. The Borough also employed one specialist nurse and a Health Visitor to oversee the health needs of 'Looked After' Children.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This is the third inspection by the Commission for social care inspection giving consideration to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Inspector found that there was significant work in place to meet the requirements and recommendations of the second inspection. Many of the requirements and recommendations are the same as those in the last report but the Inspector noted that in the case of each requirement and recommendation there has been significant work completed. In the instance where a policy or procedure has either been recommended or required the inspector saw that these were mostly either completed or in draft form awaiting completion. The introduction of the spirituality worker has assisted the service meet the needs of black and ethnic minority (BEM) children. Although there have not been significant increases in numbers of BEM carers strategies have been put in place, which over time should be beneficial.

Fostering services are managed within the Adoption, Fostering and Residential Service (AFR). Shared care is placed within the Children's Health & Disability (CHAD) team and work independently of each other, although there is some cross over for example in the use of the fostering panel and for the collation of significant events. Both are placed within the Borough's Children & Families division. Each team is line managed on a day-to-day basis by different Children's Services Manager (CSM) although overall responsibility for fostering services is placed with the CSM for AFR.

The Principal officer and the Team Manager have worked extremely hard to meet the demands of their own post and cover the vacant CMS post. They told the Inspector that a quality assurance / independent reviewing officer should shortly be in post who will ensure that foster carers reviews are on time and ensure their training needs are fully met. The CMS post has been vacant for well over a year, therefore line management responsibility has been placed temporarily with the Principal Officer. Throughout the inspection it was clear that the length of time this post has been vacant has impacted on the service. It is a credit to both the Principal Officer and the Team Manager that they have been able to provide an improving service.

The staff team , apart from the CMS post is now fully staffed . The shared care team has also been developed. Morale within the team is good and they have good, working relationships with other professionals and teams.

The educational needs of the children in the care of the service are well met. As are their health needs. For young people who will be leaving the care system there is a sound process in place to ensure pathway planning is in place.

The most striking feature of the inspection was the cramped space in which the service is working in. The team managers have to vacate their rooms for staff supervision and through out the inspection the Inspector was in a variety of rooms away from the service. Whilst the

Inspector was aware that rooms were made available when needed this situation can not go on for much longer. Additional staff have put more pressure upon the space and staff members talked of sharing desks and computers when on duty. The Principal officer has started exploring new venues for the service. The Inspector requires this is completed quickly.

The Inspector saw good relationships between staff members who were both experienced and thoughtful about their roles. A great deal of work has already taken place in the reorganising of the carers' files. The Inspector acknowledges this work and notes further reorganisation is necessary.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard is met.

The service has a suitable Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide which meets the expectations of this standard.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)

One of the 2 standards were met.

The post of Children's Services Manager (CMS) for the service remains vacant despite many attempts to fill the post. The post is currently advertised. Staff members told the Inspector that the length of time that this post as been vacant has impacted upon the service. Increased pressure has been placed on the Principal Officer and Team manager while the post has been vacant and has had repercussions on the service as a whole. Given these pressures the Inspector was pleased to note that effective leadership was evident and teams were seen to be operating well under suitable guidance. The scoring in relation to standard two reflects the length of time the CMS has been vacant.

The Inspector read the recruitment procedures and noted that they are thorough and comprehensive. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are renewed every three years. Staff recruitment records in relation to the managers, were seen to contain the required information.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

One standard was met.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that the management monitoring systems should include the monitoring of unauthorised absence from a foster home by a child accommodated and the use of measures of control, restraint and discipline. The Inspector saw the new monitoring forms relating to the above incidents. The Inspector recommends that this information be evaluated more formally to further inform practice.

The Inspector saw the job descriptions for the managers and noted that they contained clear lines of accountability.

A protocol is in place in relation to the links between the shared care scheme and the mainstream fostering service.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Four of these standards were met.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that there should be documentary

evidence of the consideration of the need for a risk assessment when children share bedrooms. At this inspection the Inspector noted this had been completed.

At the last inspection the Inspectors required that policy and procedures should be written which establish the fostering services protocol and expectations of safe care and the development of safe care guidelines. At this inspection the Inspector saw the policy and procedure had been completed. Foster carers who spoke with the Inspector confirmed they had received the draft format.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster carers (Standards 15-23)

Four of these nine standards were met.

A recommendation of the last report was that the service extends the take up of CRB checks to all administrative staff in recognition of their access to sensitive information. This was seen to be completed.

Discussions with other carers and feedback for questionnaires completed by carers indicated they felt supported by the service and by an out-of-hours duty team.

Scrutiny of the staff files and discussions with the staff team confirmed that staff receive, in the main, the required management support and supervision from an identified line manager. Team meetings are held weekly with all staff having an opportunity to attend. The Inspector read the minutes of the meetings and noted that they covered all aspects pertinent to the efficient running of the service.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Two standard were met.

A sample of four carer files (one shared care, three main stream fostering) were reviewed, some for the purpose of welfare tracking and three more randomly chosen. The files seen held the required information in accordance with Regulation 30. A recommendation was made at the last inspection attention is given to more systematic file management. Since that inspection the Team Administrator has reviewed and reorganised the files. Files that were seen were up to date in respect of case recording.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

The premises seen by the Inspector are not sufficient for an expanding service and the Inspector requires that more suitable premises be sought as quickly as possible.

Financial Requirements (Standard 27- 29)

Two of these three standards do not apply the other was met.

Allowance and fees are subject to written policy and are reviewed annually and are well known to carers. Financial procedures were presented to inspectors. The payment review will link payment to skills. Carers in the shared care scheme have had their allowances and fees reviewed so that they are in line with mainstream carers.

The Inspector looked at the content, maintenance and storage of the fostering services administrative records and noted that they met the required standard.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was not fully assessed.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection in relation to the foster panel receiving management information about information about foster carer reviews and the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. The Principal Officer stated that the management information that is given to the panel is reviewed by the management Information Officer. A format has been devised to provide monthly reports to panel.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection in relation to the policy and procedures for the fostering panel should be written and gathered into a comprehensive document to support the work of the panel. This was seen to be available in draft form. The recommendation will stand until this document is a fully implemented.

Due to time constraints the Inspectors did not meet with panel. This standard cannot be fully assessed and should be a focus of the next inspection.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

The shared care service was considered to be well managed and effective. A recommendation from the last report in relation to policies and procedures was met.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was met.

The shared care service was seen to meet the required standard.

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	12	FS9	Policy and procedures which establish the fostering services protocol and expectations of safe care and the development of safe care guidelines are finalised.	01.09.04
2	29	FS21	Reviews of approvals must take place at intervals of not more than a year. (Standard 21.3)	01.07.04
3	27	FS22	All carers must complete an appropriate agreement which meets with the expectations of this standard, regulation 28(5)(b) and schedule 5 and a copy be available on each carers file.	01.07.04

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Jacqueline Sullivan **Signature** *Jacqueline Sullivan*
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	12	FS9	Policy and procedures which establish the fostering services protocol and expectations of safe care and the development of safe care guidelines are finalised.	01.12.05
3	29	FS21	Reviews of approvals must take place at intervals of not more than a year. (Standard 21.3)	01.12.05
5	27	FS22	All carers must complete an appropriate agreement which meets with the expectations of this standard, regulation 28(5)(b) and schedule 5 and a copy be available on each carers file.	01.12.05
4	23	FS26	More suitable premises are provided for the Service.	01.12.05

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
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1	FS2	A Children's Services Manager is recruited for the Fostering Service.
2	FS4FS9	There is evidence that information gained from management monitoring on for example matters relating to bullying is evaluated.
3	FS6	All the foster carers have a copy of the safe care plan on their files.
4	FS7	The resource base of information, toys and equipment be further developed to support carers of children from differing ethnic backgrounds.
5	FS8	That work continues to ensure that family profiles are available on each foster carer's file. Consideration be given to the compatibility of I.T systems that are currently used by the Child Care Social workers and the Fostering Service.
6	FS9	The monitoring and evaluation systems and evaluation information about the frequency and use of restraint by foster carers be further developed.
7	FS14	The guidance about what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living be specifically addressed in written agreements with foster carers.
8	FS15	All Criminal Records Bureau checks until a Commission inspector has reviewed them.
9	FS16	Foster carers be supported and encouraged to maintain a training portfolio. (Standard 16.9)
10	FS17	The financial assessments in relation to the payments of the foster carers are reviewed.
11	FS18	The health and safety policy, currently in draft form be finalised and made available to carers.)
12	FS20	The fostering service manual that includes all policy and procedures pertinent to the fostering service should be further reviewed and updated to ensure that staff have a clear reference resource.
13	FS22	The fostering service should review, update and make inclusions to the foster carer handbook. (Standard 22.5)
14	FS22	Training be available for carers about the arrangements for the support of carers who are the subject of allegations.
15	FS23	There is evidence that all carers consistently attend appropriate training.

16	FS30	The draft policy and procedures for the fostering panel should be written and gathered into a comprehensive document to support the work of the panel is finalised. (Standard 30)
17	FS30	The service should continue to seek representation on the foster panel from someone who has either been in foster care of has had a child in foster care and a social worker with expertise in the provision of the Fostering Service.. (Standard 30.9)
19	FS30	The foster panel should receive management information about information about foster carer reviews and the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. (Standard 30.6 & 30.7)

* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	23/02/05
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

4 - Standard Exceeded	(Commendable)
3 - Standard Met	(No Shortfalls)
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 fostering service has a suitable statement of purpose, which is sent to foster carers. The authorities elected members have formally approved the statement which will be reviewed in May 2005.

A new children's guide has been developed since the last inspection. It was produced with the assistance of the young people and has been sent to the resource managers. The guide has a short summary of what the service intends to do for children. Information on how to secure access to an independent advocate and how to make a complaint is included. Children do not have a complaints procedure directed at them specifically, although all children spoken to said that they were aware of their right to complain and felt able to identify someone who they could complain to.

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?

2

The post of Children's Services Manager remains vacant despite many attempts to fill the post. The post is currently advertised. This post holds overall responsibility for the main stream fostering service and shared care. In the interim, management responsibility of the fostering service falls to the Principal Officer. The shared care services are temporarily overseen from within the Health & Disabilities Service. The Inspector noted the increased pressure on the Principal Officer and Team manager while the Children's Services Manager post is vacant and the repercussions on the service as a whole. Given these pressures the Inspector noted that effective leadership was evident and teams were seen to be operating well under suitable guidance.

As noted at the last inspection the service managers are mindful of the expectations of this standard in the recruitment of a replacement manager. However the scoring for this standard reflects the length of time that the post has been vacant.

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 Inspector read the recruitment procedures and noted that they are thorough and comprehensive. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are renewed every three years. Staff recruitment records in relation to the managers, were seen to contain the required information.

Evidence was seen to support that it is common practice to ensure that references are supported by telephone 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?

2

The Inspector spoke with fostering service staff and shared care staff that confirmed that they were clear about lines of communication and accountability.

Management monitoring via the consumer relations officer the team manager and the principal officer is undertaken to gain a general overview of the service. At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that the management monitoring systems should include the monitoring of unauthorised absence from a foster home by a child accommodated and the use of measures of control, restraint and discipline. The Inspector saw the new monitoring forms relating to the above incidents. The Inspector recommends that this information be evaluated more formally to further inform practice.

Since the last inspection written protocol have be developed which formalises the communication, responsibilities and reporting links between shared care and the main stream fostering service.

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

4

The Inspector saw the job descriptions for the managers and noted that they contained clear lines of accountability. The Inspector noted that the role of the manager has been extended in the absence of a Children's Services Manager; lines of accountability have been made available in a written document. Clear arrangements are also in place to ensure that there is a person in charge in the absence of the manager. Staff spoken to were confident that they would know who to go to in these circumstances.

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?

2

The inspectors visited four foster homes in the course of this inspection. Homes were seen to be warm, comfortable, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to good standard of cleanliness. Each home is annually inspected by the foster service and a health and safety audit is undertaken, evidence of this was seen on files. All homes visited by inspectors presented as safe environments for children to live.

One of the young people visited by the Inspector stated that they would be assisted by a home computer. The Inspector was told that one would be made available for him. The service has developed a family safe care policy. The Inspector saw that not all the foster carers had a copy of this plan on their files. The staff team told the Inspector that this work has been started. The recommendation will remain until this work has been completed.

A foster carer told the Inspector that care practices have been covered in support group meetings and are discussed with each placement. These discussions have covered what would happen in the event of an allegation. The foster carers handbook contains information regarding the Authorities Safe Care Policy.

All of children who responded to the questionnaires or spoke with the Inspectors spoke positively about the care they received.

Arrangements for transport provided by foster carers are monitored by the presentation of yearly checking of insurance and driving documents.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that there should be documentary evidence of the consideration of the need for a risk assessment when children share bedrooms. At this inspection the Inspector noted this had been completed.

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**

The Inspector read the Borough's equal opportunities statement and policy adhered to by the fostering service and noted it met the required standard. The Borough also has a managing diversity policy and a minority ethnic children and families recording and practice policy. The assessment process provides the service with details about gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability and language of children needing care and of foster families providing care. This information is used to assist in making the most compatible matches possible.

As noted at the last inspection, the service has a limited range of carers of differing cultural and religious groups and recognises the need to recruit a more diverse base of carers. The Inspector acknowledges that this a challenge given Poole is a predominately white (approximately 98%) area. They have made links with Bournemouth and Dorset Fostering services to develop recruitment strategies. At the last inspection the Inspector stated the service has two Black, one Chinese and one Portuguese carer and is providing care for ten children who are not white British. An additional foster carer has been recruited since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection the positive links with the Civic Chaplin have resulted in the recruitment of a part time Spirituality Project Worker. The Inspector met with this worker who stated that her role is to provide information to children, young people and foster carers about the children's cultural needs to inform the assessment process. She gave an example of providing the service with research about the faith of parsi Indian foster carers.

The shared care scheme specifically recruits carers with the appropriate skills to support children with disabilities for short breaks. One shared carer spoken to said that they felt 'very well supported' by the shared care team. She stated that the majority of her training needs are met through her childminding provision.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that a resource base of information, toys and equipment could be established to support carers of children from differing ethnic backgrounds. The service has partly met this recommendation as a resource library has been established but this could be further developed.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The homes visited by the Inspectors evidenced appropriate matching. Young people who spoke with the Inspector confirmed they were happy with their carers and spoke, in the main, positively on their matching experiences.

The Inspector saw details of all foster carers, their approval status and availability easily at hand. Scrutiny of the team meeting minutes confirmed the team discuss referral requests at the meetings. Matches between the carers and young people are based on the assessed needs of the child and the ability of the carers to meet those needs. Staff members who spoke with the Inspector were positive about the matching process.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended the development of family profiles as young people spoken to express a wish to have known more about their foster family prior to living with them. They noted that the service was already considering developing these profiles. At this inspection the Inspector saw that the process has started as some of the foster carers had family profiles on their files, others spoken to by the Inspector were awaiting a change of placement before stating a profile. Some of the young people the Inspector spoke with stated that they didn't feel they had got enough information before their placements. However these young people had been in placement a substantial period prior to the profiles. They stated that they thought profiles were a good idea. The recommendation will remain until all the files seen by the Inspectors contain the family profiles. However the Inspector acknowledges the work that has already been completed.

The new computer database shows vacancies. Staff members in the child care teams told the Inspector that the sharing of information between themselves and the fostering service would improve by more compatible I.T systems and they made similar comments in relation to the forms.

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?****2**

The Inspector noted that incidents of all allegations of abuse are collated by the service, monitored by the manager and reported to panel.

At the last inspection the Inspectors required that policy and procedures should be written which establish the fostering services protocol and expectations of safe care and the development of safe care guidelines. At this inspection the Inspector saw the policy and procedure had been completed. Foster carers who spoke with the Inspector confirmed they had received the draft format. However scrutiny of a selection of the carer's files indicated that all the carers have not as yet completed the plan.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that a stand alone written policy should be established which addresses matters of bullying. Procedures should be established which recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and helps foster carers cope with it. At this inspection the Inspector noted that this policy is in place. However the service should develop formalised monitoring in relation to this issue. This would then inform training

required by foster carers and form part of the annual training plan.

The fostering service makes clear its expectations and issues written guidance that the use of corporal punishment is not acceptable. Training and guidance on permissible forms of control are given. Foster carers sign their acceptance and adherence to the service policy on control and discipline which includes a 'no smacking' expectation. A new positive handling and use of restraints policy and procedure is available in the foster carers manual.

The Inspector only received four questionnaires from young people therefore cannot provide reliable evidence about the number of young people who have reported being bullied.

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

Scrutiny of the young peoples and carer's files, feedback from the questionnaires and discussions with the young person confirmed that contact arrangements were, in the main, satisfactory. The young people were able to maintain friendships and contact with significant people in their lives where there were no legal restrictions. One kinship carer stated she was not clear about contact arrangements and this information was shared by the Inspector to the service.

Discussions with the foster carers and scrutiny of their files and questionnaires confirmed that training and written guidance is available about contact arrangements. Arrangements for contact are included in the placement plan.

The 'looked after' children procedures outlines guidance for staff to promote contact with families. The Independent Reviewing Officer also reviews all contact arrangements.

The fostering service routinely support contact as necessary, e.g. with sessional workers, transport and financial help.

At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended a clear and consistent message is given to all foster carers of what the service expects in relation to good practice and record keeping. The Inspector saw the guidance that would be sent to carers and noted it was a comprehensive document. Two foster carers seen by the Inspectors confirmed that they received guidance on what should be recorded. One of the carers had attended recent training on how to record information about the children in her care.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Inspector met with a representative of the independent advocacy service and noted that the service they provide to the children is of a high standard. A pack of information is sent to looked after children. This includes information and accessories. All the young people who spoke with the Inspector were positive about the service. The young peoples forum is well attended. The young people told the Inspector they, mostly felt they were listened to and described ways their carers ensure their needs are met. The children's guide also gives children and young people access to information on how to make their views known.

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?**

4

The Inspector saw the policy and operational guidance for staff in respect of the health of all 'looked after' children and noted it met the required standard.

There are dedicated health visitors for 'looked after' children and a "looked after' children's nurse specialist. The Inspector met with the specialist nurse who provided evidence that a health assessment is completed on children under five years old twice a year, then yearly after that age. Following the assessment the nurse draws up an action plan which is sent to the young person, the social worker and the G.P. This system ensures that information on the health needs of young people is readily accessible if they move around the country. She maintains a database to track health assessments, reviews, dental care and inoculations. She uses this information to identify any gaps in the provision for the young people. The nurse is also able to access or promote fast track health care for children who may move within the care system and may otherwise slip through usual systems. She also provides training for foster carers on young peoples sexual health.

The Inspector saw evidence in the young peoples' files they have access to a variety of health professional. As stated in standard 14 the specialist nurse puts an onus on the health needs of care leavers.

Young people who spoke with the Inspector that they felt that their health needs were being met. The questionnaires from the foster carers indicated they received sufficient information about the health needs of the children in their care.

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?**

4

The Inspector read the policy and guidance in respect of the education of 'looked after' children' and noted that met the required standard. The Inspector met with the dedicated educational welfare officer and teacher for 'looked after' children' and noted that the fostering service has good lines of communication with the Borough's education services. Scrutiny of the young peoples' files confirmed that personal education plans were in place and were regularly reviewed.

Training is available for foster carers but the Inspector was told that uptake is limited. The team stated they would welcome the training about personal education plans being linked to payment to encourage foster carers to attend. They also suggested that this training forms part of the carers' induction training.

All the young people who met with the Inspector were taking several G.C.S.Es and they stated they were well supported by the carers. It was clear from talking to the young people that educational achievement is both an expectation of the young people and the of the service.

Computers are available to assist the young people with homework.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service developed written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living in conjunction with the leaving care Service. Guidance was seen to be in place but the Inspector did not see its inclusion in written agreements on foster carers files. At the time of inspection the Inspector noted there is little in the way files training for foster carers in relation to independence training and pathway planning. The Inspector was told that specialist training would be commissioned in 2005.

The Inspector was told that once a young person is transferred to a social worker in the leaving care team then pathway planning starts. At eighteen years onwards the young person are supported in relation to their need. The leaving care team organise four day residential breaks for young people to discuss pathway planning, accommodation and team work. The specialist nurse attends one day of this course as she has a specific role ensuring the health needs of care leavers are met. She also organises courses for care leavers on shopping and cooking independently. She said she plans to organise training with school nurses and psychologists about the health needs of young people, highlighting their emotional needs.

The Leaving Care Team supports and runs the leaving care group. Scrutiny of a small selection of young peoples' files confirmed Pathway Plans were in place where applicable and the young people had been contributory to its development.

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?

2

The Inspector read the staff files and noted that the requirements of this standard were met apart from a recommendation made at the last inspection. The recommendation made was in relation to keeping Criminal Records Bureau checks until a Commission inspector has reviewed them. The staff files seen by the Inspector confirmed that this recommendation has not been fully met.

The other recommendation of the last report was that the service extends the take up of CRB checks to all administrative staff in recognition of their access to sensitive information was seen to be completed.

Total number of staff of the agency:

20

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

At the last inspection the Inspectors noted that the fostering service had been under extreme pressure resulting from staff vacancies, long-term sickness and the departure of several staff including the Children's Services Manager (CSM) who was responsible for the management of the fostering service. The current Team Manager had had a period in an 'acting up' capacity, returning to Senior Practitioner post and eventually, following interview to the permanent post. This resulted in a significant level of disruption for all workers. However, at this inspection the Inspector noted that this is now mostly resolved with the introduction of new staff.

As noted at the last inspection carers were seen to have received training and copies of some training certificates are held on carers' files. As the records held by the fostering service were not complete, a recommendation was made to support and guide carers in the development of their own training portfolios as indicated by standard 16.9. Discussions with two foster carers visited by the Inspectors confirmed that they not seen, discussed or completed a training profile to date. One carer stated that she is involved in a core group with staff members to set up training for carers

Members of the staff team confirmed that this work on training profiles has started but is not as yet fully implemented across the service. Therefore this recommendation will remain.

A new laptop has been purchased in order to support training presentations.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

At the last inspection the Inspectors noted that the fostering service did not have a formalised carers recruitment strategy. At this inspection the Inspector noted that a recruitment strategy has been written. Therefore the recommendation made in relation to this matter, made at the last inspection has been met.

The Inspector noted that joint work has started with Bournemouth and Dorset fostering services in relation to recruitment with particular focus on black and ethnic minority carers. The fostering fees and allowance guidance was revised, updated and re-issued to carers in 2004. A review of the fees and allowances also took place for carers in the shared care service to achieve consistency with other foster carers. The additional staff within the service and the above initiatives has all impacted positively upon recruitment of foster carers. The numbers of new foster carers has not greatly increased since the last inspection but the staff team stated they felt more positive about the services ability to match the number of children with current number of foster carers.

At the last inspection the all foster carers spoken to or who returned a questionnaire felt that there was inadequate staff in the fostering team. None of the carers visited by the Inspectors or who completed questionnaires voiced any concerns about current staffing levels.

The staff members who spoke with the Inspector stated that to the current financial assessment about how much the carer is paid for each individual child is cumbersome and they felt that sometimes foster carers had to wait too long for the decision to be made. The crux of the matter is whether a child is deemed as either applicable for the standard or project rate of payment. This is further complicated if a carer is registered to care for children at the standard rate wishes to care for children at the higher project rate. The decision is ultimately taken by the CMS in both the childcare and fostering services. The team felt that the situation would benefit from having a CMS in the fostering service as an advocate for them. The Inspector again notes the impact of the lack of a CMS in the fostering service and recommends that the current financial assessments of the foster carers are reviewed until the post is filled.

Foster carers' files were seen to contain evidence that the required recruitment procedures are followed. Assessments were seen to meet the required standard.

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?****2**

Staff are employed by the Local Authority within well-established and fair employment practices.

Foster carers files reviewed by inspector evidenced that regular supervision, appraisal and support was taking place on both an announced and unannounced basis. The service aims to offer regular supervision on a monthly basis. Discussions with carers and information on their files confirmed that was achieved.

One foster carer visited by an Inspector stated that ,although her supervising social worker is part-time this has not proved to be a problem for her as there is always someone else available if necessary, including the Out of Hours Team. T he Manager of which gave a talk to the support group about the team. She stated that she found her supervising social worker to be very supportive and very aware of the matching process. Discussions with other carers and feedback for questionnaires completed by carers indicated they felt supported by the service and by an out-of-hours duty team.

At the last inspection the Inspector recommended that carers to be given comprehensive policies on health and safety, which includes making, clear all legal requirements. At this inspection the Inspector noted that this document is in draft form. This will remain a recommendation until it has been issued and implemented by all foster carers.

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?****3**

The Inspector read the training programme for staff and carers and noted that it met the required standard. Scrutiny of the staff files and discussions with members of the staff team confirmed that they had received an induction and had access to training.

All staff are subject to an employee development scheme, which undertakes a yearly appraisal of their work and identifies developments required to support the service and personal and professional development. Records of annual appraisals of staff, including their training needs, were seen on staff files.

A service plan consisting of the teams training profile was seen. This plan then informs the training department of the staffs training needs.

Some carers confirmed that they had attended training events with staff.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Staff are provided with clear details of their duties and responsibilities expected of them via job descriptions. The Borough has a range of policy and procedures and the fostering service have many that are service specific procedures. The manual for fostering services National Minimum Standards for Fostering was seen. At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that the folder would benefit from a thorough review and update. At this inspection the Inspector noted that the manual has been reviewed since the last inspection and, was told that will be subject to further review. Once this is complete e.g. the policies and procedures currently in draft form are finalised, the recommendation will be removed from the report.

Scrutiny of the staff files and discussions with the staff team confirmed that staff receive, in the main, the required management support and supervision from an identified line manager. Team meetings are held weekly with all staff having an opportunity to attend. The Inspector read the minutes of the meetings and noted that covered all aspects pertinent to the running of the service for example matters relating to matching and allocations.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Scrutiny of the carer's files confirmed that that the arrangements for supervision visits, support and access to training, the role of supervising social worker, assistance with accessing other services for foster children, arrangements for review and the expectation of out-of-hours support met the required standard.

Discussions with carers confirmed that carers are visited by their supervising social workers at least monthly on both an announced and unannounced basis.

Annual review reports are prepared and available to the fostering panel. In the interim period, prior to the appointment of an independent reviewing officer, the service has recently streamlined the foster carer's review process. The staff team stated that this involves taking out the "independent" element of the review i.e. input from the childcare teams. Although this has been done relatively recently the Team manager stated that this has impacted positively on the process. The Inspector noted that less than 20% of foster carers reviews were overdue. A requirement was made last year to ensure that all reviews take place on time. This requirement remains.

As noted at the last inspection, the service encourages membership of a local and active carers group and membership with 'Fostering Network'. The previous Children's Services Manager and now the Team Manager maintains regular contact and support to carers via a Fostering Update Newsletter. This gives information about up and coming training and/or events and developments in fostering at both a local or national level. Information and advice is available to the carers from specialists who support the service, e.g. education, nursing, psychological services.

The relationship between foster workers and social workers was reported to be generally positive although there were some concerns raised about lack of clarity of the roles of the child's social worker and the family placement social workers. It is the Inspectors view that, given the proximity of the teams in the same building, they should discuss and resolve this issue.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

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

Foster carer agreements are detailed and ensure that carers have a full understanding of the expectations placed on them, the foster service and the Local Authority. At the last inspection the Inspectors noted that an updated version has been developed which includes space to record the specific terms of each carers approval. However they a review of carer files showed that this has not been implemented. At this inspection the Inspector saw that some of the carers files held the appropriate information but it is not consistently implemented across the service. A Requirement is made to ensure that all carers complete an appropriate agreement which meets with the expectations of this standard, regulation 28(5)(b) and schedule 5 and a copy is available on each file.

On approval each carer is given a handbook, which covers a good range of policy, procedures and practical information. The Inspectors at the last inspection found it to be incomplete; for example health and safety, matters of contact arrangements, preparation for independent living and bullying were not available.. At this inspection the Inspector noted that the above information was completed but was mostly in draft form awaiting finalisation. This recommendation will remain until the handbook id finalised and available in this form for carers.

The Inspector read the shared care scheme handbook and noted that it met the required standard.

At the last inspection the main stream fostering service used either a family placement social worker or a social work assistant to supervise and support carers. At this inspection the Inspector noted that social work assistants no longer carry caseload and supervising responsibility.

The arrangements for supporting carers who are subject of allegations have been under review by the service. However some carers stated that they still feel vulnerable. The Inspector recommends that training in this area is available for carers.

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?****2**

Foster carers receive pre approval training which uses material and formats produced by Fostering Network and includes sessions on; skills to foster, What foster carers do, Who are the children and young people, Working together, Safe Caring, Understanding behaviour, Moving on, Sons and daughters). Evidence of pre approval training attendance is held on carers' files.

The shared care scheme also has training, which includes disability awareness, communication, protecting disabled children and resuscitation skills.

The training needs of carers are considered within each review. A recommendation had been made in the last report in relation to the service to supporting carers in establishing their own training portfolios. Work in this area has started but, as previously noted, the training portfolios are not completed consistently through out the service.

In order to meet a recommendation of the last report, that current training for carers be evaluated and reviewed with particular reference to the views of more long-standing carers whom, the Inspectors noted, were not taking advantage of training opportunities. A staff/carers group has been established to look at the training needs of the service. The Inspectors met with a carer who attends the group. She stated that their plan is that at each review and supervision, training needs will be addressed with the aim of getting carers to be more proactive in regard to training. Carers will then be automatically booked onto available courses and it will then be up to them to explain why they are unable to attend. There have been four meetings to date. The Inspector saw the training plan and noted that a variety of courses were available. The service records the number of carers attending each course. An evaluation via questionnaires has been undertaken and an annual plan produced to reflect the needs of the carers.

Scrutiny of the carers' files confirmed that that some carers are very proactive in attending training whilst others attend little. The Inspector acknowledges the moves made to meet the recommendation. The recommendation will remain until there is evidence that carers consistently attend training across the service.

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

A sample of four carer files (one shared care, three main stream fostering) were reviewed, some for the purpose of welfare tracking and three more randomly chosen. The files seen held the required information in accordance with Regulation 30. A recommendation was made at the last inspection attention is given to more systematic file management. Since that inspection the Team Administrator has reviewed and reorganised the files. Files that were seen were up to date in respect of case recording.

The shared care files reviewed, met with expectations.

Foster carers are made aware of their responsibility in respect of keeping and maintaining records. Two carers seen by the Inspector confirmed diaries are kept by carers. Both confirmed that it is checked by their family placement social worker when they visit. Both confirmed that they had received training on the importance of the diary and what should be recorded. Training on the upkeep of diaries has been planned for 2005.

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?

3

The Inspector looked at the content, maintenance and storage of the fostering services administrative records and noted that they met the required standard.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

75

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

74

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

60

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

18

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

15

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

81

Maximum £

520

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?

2

Premises used for the fostering service are limited. The building is shared with other social services activities, including a day centre for older people and social work assessment and long-term teams. Access to the building is via coded or call systems.

The mainstream fostering service offices consist of one large and three smaller rooms. Since the last inspection the large room has been further re-organised to make better use of its space. Two separate smaller offices are available for the Children's Services Manager and Team manager. This room has a variety of uses, as it is one of the few spaces available for staff supervision. This impacts on the managers who often have to vacate the room. Additional staffing within the fostering and adoption teams has put pressure on the already limited space. The third is a very over crowded room used by administrative staff. This offers barely enough room for three people to work.

There are plans for the service to be relocated. The Inspector requires that this be completed as soon as possible.

Shared care services are located in an older style building adjacent to the main stream fostering office. Security systems are similar. The shared care service staff share space with the Children's Health & Disability Team. This space is considered to be adequate.

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?

9

This standard is not applicable.

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?

9

This standard is not applicable.

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?

3

Allowance and fees are subject to written policy and are reviewed annually and are well known to carers. Financial procedures were presented to inspectors. The payment review will link payment to skills. Carers in the shared care scheme have had their allowances and fees reviewed so that they are in line with mainstream carers.

Fees for shared carers have been reviewed in recognition that this may hold the key to increasing a greater number of carers and retaining those already caring.

None of the carers who spoke to the Inspectors had any negative comments about the fees and allowances.

As previously stated staff members in the fostering service felt that the current system for determining the payment for carers was cumbersome and took too long to complete.

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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Inspector noted that Poole's fostering service panel is constituted in accordance with the guidance of Standard 15 and Regulation 24, with two exceptions. The panel does not have someone as a panel member who has previously been in foster care or has had their child in foster care. The Principal Officer and the Team manager stated that they are still attempting to address this issue but, as stated at the last inspection, have so far been unsuccessful. Secondly the panel does not contain a social worker with expertise in the provision of the Fostering Service. At present the Independent element is provided by the Team Manager. However the Principal Officer stated this is shortly to be reviewed. The panel chair is a Children's Service Manager with the Borough of Poole but who does not have day-to-day line management responsibilities for the main stream fostering service.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection in relation to the foster panel receiving management information about information about foster carer reviews and the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. The Principal Officer stated that the management information that is given to the panel is reviewed by the management Information Officer. A format has been devised to provide monthly reports to panel.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection in relation to the policy and procedures for the fostering panel should be written and gathered into a comprehensive document to support the work of the panel. This was seen to be available in draft form. The recommendation will stand until this document is fully implemented.

Due to time constraints the Inspectors did not meet with panel. This standard cannot be fully assessed and should be a focus of the next inspection.

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?

3

The fostering service short term break provision for children with disability is located with the Children's Health & Disability Service (CHAD) and is referred to as the Shared Care Scheme. The Children's Service Manager for Adoption, Fostering and Residential has overall responsibility for the service. As previously stated this post remains vacant the responsibility is temporarily with the Principal Officer. Day-to-day management takes place within the CHAD team. Staff who spoke with the Inspector stated that the length of time that this post has been vacant has impacted upon them. At the last inspection the Inspectors recommended that procedures be in place to report statutory notifications, allegations and accidents for central collation to the mainstream fostering service. A protocol is now available for staff.

The Inspector saw the family and friend's policy and procedure, which includes guidance on the payment of fees and allowances and noted that it was an informative and comprehensive document.

The team is small, which the staff team explained, leads to good communication. An additional part time family placement social worker post has been ring fenced to further promote family and friends care. The service has a good range of policy and procedure to support the work of the service. The matching process is robust and although the feeling of the team was that they would welcome more carers they felt that the service met the needs of the children.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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A small number of kinship/friend carers were being supported by the fostering service. Policy and procedure guidance was seen to meet the required standard. One foster worker has special responsibility for overseeing these arrangements.

The inspectors visited and tracked one for the purposes of this inspection. The family were very positive about the support they received from the service. They raised concerns about the contact the children in their care had with other family members. The Inspector discussed this with the fostering manager who stated that he was aware there had been concerns and would follow this up.

The assessment was seen to be sensitive and comprehensive. The carers stated they did not often attend training but knew it was available.

One of the young people living with the carers did not have a computer. The Inspector brought this to the attention of the fostering manager who stated this would be resolved immediately.

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 23rd February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

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

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 2nd September 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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