



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Derbyshire County Council - Fostering Service**

Derbyshire County Council  
Social Services Department  
County Offices  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 3AG

17-21 November 2003 and 24-28  
November 2003

## 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 Local Authority**

Derbyshire Fostering Service

**Address**

Derbyshire County Council, Social Services, County  
Offices, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG

**Authority Manager**

Mr Ian Johnson

**Tel No:**

01629 580000

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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**

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		17 <sup>th</sup> -21 & 24-28 November 2003	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am-5pm	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Jenny Thornton	074480
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Nancy Bradley	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	Charlotte Cordingley (Locum)	
<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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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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**2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**

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**4. Securing and promoting welfare**

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and 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 Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service. 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 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 Authority fostering services regarding notices to the 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 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 fostering service is part of Derbyshire County Council Social Services Department, and as such is governed by the policies and procedures of the Social Services Department. The fostering service has 6 area offices within 3 divisions.

The fostering service provides the following services for children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years throughout Derbyshire:

- ❖ Time limited placements which include emergency and bridging placements
- ❖ Link Care which offers short term breaks for children with a disability who live with their family.
- ❖ Respite care which offers short term breaks for children cared for by other foster carers
- ❖ Long term placements where adoption is not feasible
- ❖ Project placements which apply to children with emotional and behavioural problems who require carers with additional skills
- ❖ Children First which applies to children with a significant disability. These placements tend to be long term.
- ❖ Contract Care, which recruits salaried foster carers with additional skills, to care for children with particular needs.

Appropriate matching is identified as a crucial part of the service in providing placements to a range of children and young people.

A total of 360 children and young people were placed with the service at the time of the inspection. The service had 380 approved foster carers. The fostering service recruits, registers, and provides ongoing support to new and existing carers. Qualified social workers support the foster carers.

## **PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **Inspector's Summary**

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

This is the first inspection since the Care Standards Act 2000 and National Minimum Standards came into force, and provides a baseline for where Derbyshire Authority Fostering Service is in regards to the new legislation and standards.

Area offices visited on this inspection included South Derbyshire, Chesterfield and Erewash.

### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

The service had recently produced its statement of purpose, which was detailed and clearly set out the aims of the service and the services it provides. The statement of purpose had yet to be approved as a final document by Elected Member(s). The Children's Rights Officer had convened a consultation group to produce a children's guide, involving children and young people's views. A copy of the completed children's guide will be issued to all children/young people and placed on the children's website 'Carezone'.

### **Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)**

The Inspectors found that senior staff managing the fostering service have the appropriate skills and expertise. The six area offices have a service manager responsible for fostering and adoption work, and an area manager overseeing all children's services. Staff interviewed within the area teams expressed the need for an overall manager at operational to lead the service.

The Authority follows good recruitment and selection procedures when employing new staff. Procedures in place promote that appropriate staff are employed and safeguard children's welfare.

### **Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)**

The service is efficiently managed. The service managers at the 3 area offices inspected showed effective leadership skills. The Authority was undertaking a review of the role of the family placement teams, to focus on the core business of fostering and adoption work

The Authority produces an annual business plan, which details the key areas for development and action required. The current business plan showed that the Authority has made good progress in meeting the action plan set for this year.

The fostering procedure manual was detailed and well set out. The Authority has clear procedures in place for monitoring the performance and quality of the fostering service. Work was being undertaken to strengthen performance management and to promote consistency across the County.

### **Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**



The service was making commendable efforts to best meet the needs of children and young people requiring placement. However placement choice for children and young people was limited, affecting the matching process between children and carers.

Carers who the Inspectors met showed a commitment to meeting the needs and welfare of children and young people. Children and young people in foster care felt cared for, and supported in maintaining contact with their families. It was reported that children and young people were receiving the required statutory reviews. However not all children had regular contact with their social worker.

Questionnaires received from a number of children and young people maintained that their opinions and views are not always sought on matters affecting them. The Authority was improving ways of consulting with children and young people. 15 children's advocates had been appointed.

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)**

Two out of three area offices inspected had an established staff team with considerable experience of childcare and fostering issues. One of the family placement teams had experienced staffing shortfalls over the last in the year, and had successfully recruited to all vacancies.

The Authority recognizes that it does not have sufficient carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the current demands on the service. The service has a clear recruitment strategy and is working hard to recruit additional carers, but this was short of the target set for the year. The Authority had obtained approval to increase the fostering allowances from December 2003.

The majority of carers were satisfied with the level of support they receive. However several carers did not share this view. Work was being undertaken to develop the out of hours support service to carers, to include support from experienced carers and staff with fostering expertise.

The Inspectors found differences across the County in the content of the pre-approval training programme, and the time in which potential foster carers received the training. Staff and carers are encouraged to attend regular training, although the training programmes required developing to meet their needs.

### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

Quality assurance managers had recently completed an audit of the files and standard of record keeping within the six area teams. Service managers had provided an action plan to address shortfalls identified. The majority of carers and children's files examined were well set out and contained a good level of information. A new format for files has assisted access to information.

Confidential records were kept securely within the family placement teams.

The recording of essential information by foster carers varied. This highlighted the need for further training on the importance of record keeping. Not all carers had a suitable secure box to store confidential information in relating to children in their care.

### **Fitness of premises (Standard 26)**

The area office buildings are shared facilities with the children's services. The offices used by the fostering service were considered adequate for the purpose. Not all social workers had direct access to computers and e-mail. The Authority was undertaking a programme to upgrade the I.T. system and access to computers throughout all areas. Confidential information was kept securely at the end of the working day.

### **Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)**

The Authority has a dedicated finance team who had responsibility for managing the financial viability of the service. The budget is administered in line with the Authority's financial procedures.

Concerns were expressed from staff and carers that the fostering allowances did not cover the full cost of caring for children and young people. The Authority was increasing the fostering allowances.

Fostering allowances were generally paid promptly. However a number of carers reported having experienced some delays in receiving payments due to administrative delays by a child's social worker.

### **Fostering panels (Standard 30)**

The Department has 3 fostering panels. Of the 2 fostering panels observed the panel members appeared to work effectively and to maintain an appropriate level of independence. Although the Inspectors observed some differences in the way the panels operated.

The fostering panels meet the required composition of panel members, although the North East attended did not include expertise in child health.

Policies and procedures detailed the functions of the fostering panel. All foster carers reviews, exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at the fostering panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

### **Short term breaks (Standard 31)**

The service has policies and procedures relating to short-term breaks for children and young people. Discussions with staff and children and returned questionnaires maintained that the needs of children and young people receiving short-term breaks were being met.

### **Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)**

Relationship and position of family and friends as carers is taken into consideration when assessing family and friends as carers. Consideration was being given to producing specific policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers, as part of a policy review.

## Reports and Notifications to the Authority and Secretary of State (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 Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure 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 failures, informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a 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 Authority fostering service:

NO

### The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

A children's Guide was not available.

Several staff personnel files did not provide evidence of a full employment history and relevant qualifications.

Procedures for recording and monitoring concerns and complaints at local level required strengthening.

A suitable complaints guide for children and young people was not available.

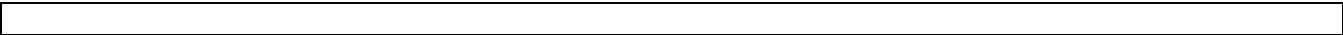
Not all foster carers had received all essential information about a child's health needs

Signed consent had not been obtained from a child's parent/representative for a child to receive emergency treatment for all children in foster care.

There had been considerable delays in providing essential equipment, for certain children with a physical disability receiving link care.

Not all foster carers files examined contained documentary evidence of their identity and criminal record bureau check.

Post approval training programmes did not fully meet the needs of staff and carers. An appraisal system was not in place.



## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**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	

**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>		

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the 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 is required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must be approved as a final document.	30 June 2004
2	3	FS1	The Authority must produce a written Children's Guide, in a suitable format for children and young people.  The service must provide a copy of the Guide to children, young people and foster carers.	31 October 2004
3	20	FS3	Personnel files of all staff working in the service must provide evidence of a full employment history and relevant qualifications.	30 June 2004
4	42	FS4	The Authority must strengthen procedures at area level, for logging and monitoring complaints about the service.	30 June 2004
5	15	FS7	The Authority must ensure that essential equipment is promptly provided in carer's homes, for children with a physical disability, receiving link care.	30 June 2004
6	Children Act 1989 Sect 26(3)	FS9	The Authority must produce an appropriate complaints procedure for children and young people, and ensure that children and young people are made aware of this.	30 June 2004

7	15	FS12	The Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed consent is obtained from a child's parent/representative for a child to receive emergency treatment, and that carers receive a copy of this.</li> </ul>	30 June 2004
8	15	FS12	The Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster carers receive essential information on placement about a child's health needs.</li> </ul>	30 June 2004
9	17	FS12	All carers must receive training in First Aid	31 October 2004
10	27	FS17	The Fostering Service must keep copies of relevant documents pertaining to prospective foster carer's identity and C.R.B check on their file.	30 June 2004
11	21	FS19	All staff working in the fostering service must receive appropriate training and appraisal	31 October 2004
12	17	FS23	The Authority must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the most effective way of delivering pre-approval training for prospective foster carers.</li> <li>Review the post-approval training programme, to meet the needs of foster carers.</li> </ol>	31 October 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	FS4	The Authority should further strengthen procedures for monitoring the performance and quality of the service



2	FS4	<p>A standard form should be used for recording notifiable events to the Commission.</p> <p>The Authority should develop procedures for recording and monitoring of notifiable events at local level.</p>
3	FS4	<p>Employment procedures should require new staff and foster carers to declare any possible conflicts of interest.</p>
4	FS5	<p>The Authority should consult with staff at area levels regarding the review of the family placement teams.</p>
5	FS6	<p>Foster carer's files should clearly show that staff have completed a health and safety risk assessment of their home, and a copy should be submitted to the Foster Panel as part of the approval process.</p>
6	FS7	<p>The pre-approval training programme for potential foster carers should include all aspects of disability.</p>
7	FS8	<p>Foster carers and children's files should contain detailed matching considerations used in individual placements.</p>
8	FS9	<p>Foster carers should receive post approval training on safe caring and child protection</p>
9	FS9	<p>Foster carers should in discussion with the foster child; all members of their family, and family placement worker produce a written policy for each placement covering safe caring in their home.</p>
10	FS9	<p>Children should be made aware that they are able to raise concerns or complaints with the National Care Standards Commission and other independent Agencies.</p>
11	FS11	<p>The Authority should ensure that children and young people are consulted on matters affecting their daily lives.</p>
12	FS11	<p>The Authority should look to establish further children's reference groups throughout the county.</p>
13	FS12	<p>Induction programmes should enable new social workers to develop links with health agencies and other professionals at local level.</p>
14	FS13	<p>The Authority should develop a policy relating to children and young people who are not in full time education.</p>
15	FS15	<p>The Human Resource teams should look to obtain verbal references by telephone, followed up by written references for potential new staff.</p>

16	FS17	The numbers of qualified staff working in the area teams should be reviewed in line with the current workload and demands on the service.
17	FS17	The Authority must continue the emphasis on recruitment and retention, to provide sufficient numbers of suitable foster carers to meet children's needs.
18	FS18	Area managers should ensure arrangements are in place, to provide continued support to foster carers, in the event of their family placement worker been absent from work.
19	FS18	All staff and carers should be made aware of the Authority's Whistle Blowing policy.
20	FS21	The service should endeavour to include items from children and carers in the newsletter
21	FS22	The Authority should update the form used to record visits/supervision to foster carers to include all essential information.
22	FS23	The pre-approval training programme for foster carers should outline all training provided.
23	FS23	Staff should further involve experienced foster carers in delivering the pre-approval training programme for new carers.
24	FS23	The Authority should further develop training opportunities for foster carers to enhance their skills and knowledge.
25	FS23	The training section in carers' files should be duly completed.
26	FS24	The Authority should provide a clear policy on what information foster carers are expected to record and share with relevant persons. Carers should receive a copy of this.
27	FS24	Foster carers should receive further training on the importance of keeping essential records about children in their care.
28	FS24	<p>The Authority should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a standard format for foster carers to record essential information about children in their care.</li> <li>2. Ensure foster carers are keeping appropriate records of children in their care</li> <li>3. Ensure all foster carers have a suitable secure box to store confidential information in about children in their care.</li> </ol>

29	FS24	The Authority should provide a standard pack to assist foster carers to complete life story work with children in their care.
30	FS24	The service should continue to take appropriate action to ensure that all children have an allocated social worker and are receiving the required statutory reviews.
31	FS25	Family support workers should have access to their own lockable storage area to keep current working files and confidential information in.
32	FS26	The Authority should establish robust I.T systems throughout the fostering service.
33	FS29	Weekly fostering allowances should be reviewed in line with allowances recommended by Fostering Network.
34	FS29	The Authority should address delays in payments to foster carers.
35	FS30	The independent members of all 3 fostering panels should include expertise in child health.
36	FS30	Written policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel should include the procedure for despatching and safekeeping of panel minutes and confidential reports to panel members.
37	FS30	Further work should be done in achieving consistency between how the 3 fostering panels operate.
38	FS30	Foster carer's ongoing training and development needs should be fully evaluated through the annual review process.
39	FS32	The service should provide policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers.

\* 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	24
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NO
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	17/12/03
Time of Inspection	9:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	210

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?	2
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The service had produced a statement of purpose in consultation with area teams. This had yet to be approved by Elected Member(s) as a final document. The Inspectors found that the statement of purpose clearly set out the aims of the fostering service and the services it provides. It contained the required information and an annual report and action plan. The Authority planned to produce the Statement of Purpose in a shortened format, for persons who do not require the full document. The majority of staff interviewed were aware of the statement of purpose.

The Children's Rights Officer had convened a consultation group to produce a Children's Guide. A draft Children's Guide had been produced; was not seen on this inspection. Senior managers confirmed that children and young peoples views would be obtained about the content and format of the Guide. The completed Guide will be issued to all children/young people and placed on the children's website 'Carezone'. The fostering service planned to produce a guide for parents.

## 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
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The head of the service and service managers have an appropriate qualification and extensive knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering issues. The Head of Children and Families Services has responsibility for all children and family services, including overall responsibility for fostering and adoption services. Due to his extensive role and the size of the service, the Head of Services has limited time to oversee the fostering service. The management structure within the department combines commissioning and provider responsibilities, which creates a possible conflict of interests. The six area offices have a service manager responsible for fostering and adoption work, and an area manager overseeing all children's services. There is no overall manager at operational level leading the service, below the Head of Children and Families Services. Staff interviewed within the area teams expressed the need for someone at this level.

The Inspectors found that there were heavy demands and pressures on the service to meet the high need for placements. The service managers at the 3 area offices inspected showed effective organisation and leadership skills of the staff and the running of the service. The skills and commitment showed by staff and managers throughout the inspection ensures that the service is professionally managed.

The Inspectors observed good communications within the teams. All staff were aware of the planned inspection.

**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**

A sample of personnel files examined showed that the Authority recruitment and selection procedures were adhered to when employing new staff. Procedures in place promote that appropriate staff are employed and safeguard children's welfare. The Human Resource teams within each area are responsible for carrying out the required checks and references in relation to new staff.

Personnel files examined showed that required checks and information had been obtained for all staff, with the exception of some long service staff. A full employment history and documentary evidence of relevant qualifications was not available on some long service staff's files.

The service managers were clear about information required in respect of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations, and their responsibility to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded.



## 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
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The Inspectors found that the fostering procedure manual was detailed and well set out. Discussions with staff and records examined showed that the Authority had clear procedures in place for monitoring the performance and quality of the fostering service. Some inconsistencies of performance across the areas were identified. Work was being undertaken to strengthen performance management and to promote consistency across the County.

The Authority has a quality assurance team of staff, who carry out various quality assurance checks across the fostering service. Records showed that an audit had recently been carried out on standards of record keeping across the 6-area offices. The report findings were detailed, and service manager's had provided an action plan to address issues identified.

Records showed that the Authority completes a monthly performance management report of the fostering service. The reports contained a good level of information, including the activities of the fostering panels. Senior managers receive a copy of the performance reports.

Staff confirmed that the Authority was investing a considerable amount of money to update and modernize the database and I.T. (information technology) system throughout the organisation. This will further assist communications and monitoring of the service.

The Inspectors examined the annual business plan for the fostering service, which detailed key areas for development and action required to further improve the service. The current business plan showed that good progress had been made towards meeting the action plan set for this year.

The Authority has a written complaints policy and procedure. The Inspectors found that procedures were in place at head quarters for collating and monitoring complaints received about the service. Interviews with staff within the area teams highlighted some differences as to when, and where concerns and complaints received about the service were recorded. The Inspectors were informed that the quality assurance manager in each area office are informed and oversee all complaints received at local level.

The Inspectors found that staff roles and responsibilities were broadly set out in job descriptions, and understood by staff. However social workers throughout the various

children's team were issued a generic job description, which did not take account of their varying roles. Staff interviewed and records examined showed that staff receives regular recorded supervision, which is supportive and reflective in managing workloads.

The service managers were aware of their responsibility to notify the Commission in writing of relevant notifiable events. The Inspectors found that systems for recording and monitoring of notifications at local level required developing. A standard form was not used to record notifiable events.

The Inspectors were informed that staff and carers were asked to declare any possible conflicts of interests. However employment procedures did not require new staff to declare possible conflicts of interest.

<b>Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:</b>	X
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<b>Death of a child placed with foster parents.</b>	0
<b>Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.</b>	0
<b>Serious illness or accident of a child.</b>	X
<b>Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.</b>	0
<b>Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.</b>	0
<b>Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.</b>	X
<b>Serious complaint about a foster parent.</b>	X
<b>Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.</b>	X

<b>Number of complaints made to National Care Standards Commission about the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	0
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<b>Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:</b>	0
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**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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The findings throughout the inspection showed that the fostering service is efficiently managed within the constraints of current resources and finances.

The Inspectors found that workloads and demand for placements within the family placement teams were high. The area teams carried out fostering and adoption work, although some adoption work was undertaken centrally. The service managers had additional responsibilities to fostering and adoption work. Some service managers were overseeing residential unit/s within their locality, although there were inconsistencies in the level of additional duties service managers were undertaking. Service managers interviewed expressed concern at the level of work and time spent on additional duties, which limits time available to manage the core services. The Inspectors shared this concern.

Senior managers confirmed that the Authority was undertaking a review of the role of the family placement teams, to focus on the core business of fostering and adoption work. Staff at area level had yet to be consulted on the review process.

Staff interviewed were generally clear about their role and lines of accountability. Staff worked well together within the area teams and felt well supported by their managers. Staff considered that morale was generally good. However high demand for placements and limited resources affects staff morale at times.

## 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
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The inspection findings showed that foster carers provide a safe and nurturing environment. Staff reported that as part of the assessment for new foster carers, social workers are required to carry out a written risk assessment of the carer's home, to ensure it is safe and meets the needs of children and young people. However only 4 out of 9 files examined contained a health and safety risk assessment of the carer's home. This mainly related to carer's who had been approved some time ago.

The fostering procedures make clear that children should not be expected to share a bedroom without their agreement. Carers who the Inspectors met were aware of this. Although it was not evident on one of the fostering panels attended, that a risk assessment had been undertaken in respect of a placement where 2 children suspected of being sexually abused, would be sharing a bedroom.

Interviews with carers and staff and records examined maintained that where a foster carer provides transport, the service had carried out appropriate checks to ensure the transport is safe and suitable for the child's needs.

Staff and carers reported that the pre-approval training for foster carers covers health and safety issues. The foster carers manual included guidance on health and safety matters.

**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 findings throughout the inspection showed that the service aims to promote diversity and equality within the resources available. Records showed that the matching process takes into account a child's cultural, religious, language, and disability needs.

Pre-approval training for foster carers includes the need to promote diversity and respect other cultures and religions. Staff and carers reported that the pre-approval training enables carers to support children to deal with discrimination. However the training programme did not cover all aspects of disability. Staff had identified the need to update the pre-approval training programme to address this shortfall.

Foster carers whom the Inspectors met showed a commitment to enhancing children's confidence and self worth.

The Inspectors found that staff within the family placement teams endeavour to support social workers to obtain essential equipment for children with a disability. However the Inspectors found two examples where there had been a considerable delay and shortfall in obtaining essential equipment for link foster carers, who were caring for a child/children with a physical disability.

Returned questionnaires and discussions with children, staff and carers confirmed that children and young people are encouraged to pursue their interests and hobbies.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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 an Authority is seeking a carer.

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

2

The importance of matching is stressed in the fostering services procedures. The Inspectors found that importance is given to ensuring that a child or young person is carefully matched with a carer. However high demand for placements, limited resources and information from children's social worker affects the matching process. The service does not have a sufficient range of carers to meet the current demand for placements, and to ensure effective matching of children to carers. The service was working hard to recruit additional carers, but this was short of the target set for the year. This has resulted in increased use of placements within Independent Fostering Agencies over the last year. The service managers reported that Independent Agencies are required to provide evidence of matching considerations between carers and children placed.

Eight out of nine files examined contained matching considerations and a current care plan. The Foster Placement Agreement covered the child's racial, ethnic and religious needs, but did not include cultural and linguistic as part of the matching process.

Discussions with carers and records examined maintained that children and carers are given the opportunity to meet and get to know each other prior to making a decision about the placement. However this practice is not always possible in unplanned placements.

**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 service works to Derbyshire County Council Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and is committed to protecting children and young people in their care. The carer's manual made clear carers role and responsibilities to protect children from abuse, and includes a summary of the child protection procedures. Carers interviewed confirmed that the pre-approval training covered child protection and safe caring. Staff confirmed that carers do not currently provide a written policy on safe caring in their home.

Carers' who met with the Inspectors were aware of the vulnerability of children in care in relation to bullying. An anti-bullying policy and procedure was included in the foster carers' manual.

The foster carer's manual makes clear to foster carers that use of inappropriate forms of punishment are not acceptable. Returned questionnaires from children and young people reported that they felt safe in their foster home.

45 out of 71 returned questionnaires from children and young people stated that they were aware of how to make a complaint. The majority of children stated that they were not aware of how to contact the National Care Standards Commission. The Inspectors found that the service did not have an appropriate complaints procedure for children. The Children's Rights Officer planned to develop this.

Not all staff and carers interviewed were aware of a Whistle Blowing policy.

The foster carers manual included a procedure on what to do in the event of a child or young person going missing from a carer's home.

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

99

%

### 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
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Discussions with children and carers and returned questionnaires confirmed that children are encouraged to maintain and develop contact with family and friends, where there are no restrictions on contact. Care plans examined clearly set out contact arrangements for the child/young person. The Authority has appointed designated workers, to enable contact arrangements to take place. Children's files examined showed that contact with family and friend's is reviewed at statutory reviews.

Carers' responsibility for supporting a child/young person to maintain contact with their family members and other significant persons is clearly set out in the Placement Agreement and the Foster Carer Manual. Staff and carers who the Inspectors met showed a clear commitment to maintaining links with the child's family and friends. The Inspectors found inconsistencies in the level of recording by carers, on outcomes of contact arrangements.

Carers confirmed that where they used their own transport for contact meetings, the Authority reimburses them.

### 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?	2
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The findings throughout the inspection showed that the Authority has made progress in how it consults with children and their families. Senior staff were looking at further ways to obtain the opinions and views of children and young people on matters affecting their daily lives. In particular the service has identified that it does not actively obtain the views and feelings of children with communication difficulties. The service intends to address this shortfall.

The carers' manual clearly states the need to ensure that children's opinions and those of their families are sought over issues. The Inspectors found that carers were clear as to their role and responsibilities in ensuring that children and young people's views are heard and acted upon. Various examples were given where carers had supported children and young people on matters affecting their daily life and future.

Returned questionnaires reported that children and young people see themselves as being part of the foster carer's family.

Staff confirmed that all children over 7 years have access to a computer in their foster homes. The Authority is one of a small number of Authorities, who are involved in a national pilot scheme called Carezone, which is jointly sponsored by the Department of Health and Who Cares Trust. The scheme involves substantial investment in computers for foster carers

and foster children. CareZone will provide comprehensive information for looked after children, and opportunities to communicate with each other via safe and supervised chat rooms. It will also provide a safe and confidential on line consultation, where children will be able to communicate with social workers and managers, and raise complaints without being identified. The Carezone site was due to be launched at the end of 2003.

The Authority circulates a regular magazine/newsletter to children and foster carers.

The Authority has appointed a Quality Assurance Review Manager to chair children's statutory reviews. Children were being encouraged to attend their reviews. Records showed that statutory visiting requirements are monitored and are met. However several returned questionnaires from children/young people reported that children's social workers do not always consult with them about matters affecting their daily life and future.

The Authority has appointed 15 children's advocates, who were paid on a sessional base and were not employees of the Authority.

The Authority has a children's reference group in operation in the west division, which includes young people who have been, or who are currently being looked after in care. One of the Inspectors attended a group meeting.

#### 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
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The carer's manual and the foster carer Agreement makes clear carers responsibilities for promoting children's health needs. Carers who met the Inspectors gave examples of how they were helping to promote the child's health and wellbeing. Children and carers files examined maintained that children's health care needs were being met. The Authority has a dedicated nurse for looked after children.

Carers and staff reported shortfalls in accessing prompt psychological support and expertise, where required. The Authority had identified this shortfall and was looking to allocate additional resources throughout the county.

The manager reported that a child's health assessment is completed on initial referral and annually. This is verified by their G.P. However 4 out of 9 files examined did not contain a full or current health needs assessment.

Carers reported that the level of essential information received on placement about a child's health needs varied. Several carers reported occasions where they had to request information about children's health needs from the child's social worker.

6 out of 9 Foster Placement Agreements examined contained signed consent from the



child's parent/representative for the child to receive emergency treatment. Not all carers interviewed had received signed consent from the child's parent/representative for the child to receive emergency treatment.

Staff reported that a good number of carers had attended First Aid training. The post approval-training programme for carers included First Aid training. However several carers reported difficulty in accessing training due to various factors. Senior managers were looking to improve access to training.

Staff informed the Inspectors that they had formed good links with other health professionals. Although this did not apply to all new staff appointed to children's services.

### 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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The fostering service has access to Step up 2000, an educational support service, which provides a named support teacher for children and carers. Staff and carers reported that such links were beneficial to a child's education.

The Inspectors found that the service and carers give importance to meeting the educational needs of children or young people in foster care. Carers were clear as to their role and responsibilities in supporting a child or young persons educational needs. The carers' manual states what is expected from the carers in relation to children's' educational needs. Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires maintained that carers help children to complete their homework, and were in close contact with the child's school.

Where possible children were placed in close proximity to their own home and school. All children with the exception of 3 placed with foster carers were attending full time education. The Inspectors found that the service did not have a clear policy relating to children who were not in full time education. Staff and carers reported that children not attending regular school create additional pressure on carers and the service. The Inspectors did not see direct evidence of children placed who were not in full time education.

Foster placement agreements set out a child's educational needs, but did not clearly state where financial responsibility lies for all aspects of children's clothing, and additional school costs such as trips and equipment. However information on financial arrangements for carers, contained relevant guidance on these matters

**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 Inspectors found that the service had policies and procedures in place for preparing young people towards adult living.

Staff and carers were aware of their role in supporting young people to prepare for adult living. The carer's manual provided guidance on what is expected of carers in terms of preparing young children for independent or semi-independent living. Carers showed a commitment to helping children and young people to gain independence and daily living skills. Carers gave examples on how this was being achieved. Certain areas worked closely with the Barnardos After-care service. One young person's file contained a detailed pathway plan, preparing them for adult living.

It was reported that initial training for foster carers covers preparation for adult living. Although the pre-approval programme did not clearly show this.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

The Inspectors found that the Authority has a thorough recruitment and selection procedure for appointing staff, which follows good practice and safeguards children and young people. Staff personnel files examined showed that required references and checks had been obtained for all people working in the fostering service, with the exception of long service staff. Confirmation of staff qualifications and a full employment history was not found on several personnel files examined. Files showed that the Human Resource team did not undertake telephone enquiries in addition to obtaining written references.

Records showed that the majority of social workers have substantial childcare knowledge and experience. The findings throughout the inspection showed that staff working for the fostering service, are suitable to work with children and young people. Staff confirmed that they had been issued a written contract and terms and conditions of service.

**Total number of staff working for the service:**

52

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

X

**Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**

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

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

The Inspectors found that procedures were in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads. Senior managers were strengthening procedures to monitor the efficiency of the service and placements.

Staff were effectively managed. However the service managers had additional responsibilities to fostering and adoption work. Service managers interviewed expressed concern at the level of work and time spent on additional duties, which limits time available to manage the core services. The Authority planned to review the role of the family placement teams, to focus on the core business of fostering and adoption work.

Staff considered that there was an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support. Administration time will be more effectively used once the I.T. system is updated and operational throughout the County.

Staff interviewed and records examined showed that staff were receiving monthly supervision and were well supported by their manager/s. Supervision records were detailed. Staff received a summary of their supervision meetings.

Staff interviewed had been issued an information manual on induction, which includes pertinent policies and procedures.

**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?****2**

Two out of three area offices inspected had an established staff team with considerable experience of childcare and fostering issues. One of the area teams had experienced staffing vacancies and changes over the last in the year. A new service manager had recently been appointed to this area, and the Authority had successfully recruited to all vacancies.

Staff within the area teams reported that the staffing compliment had not been reviewed in line with current workloads and demands on the service.

The Inspectors found that there is a clearly defined assessment process for prospective foster carers. Clear procedures were in place relating to the assessment of foster carers. The standard of assessment completed on carers files examined was detailed and reflective. The service managers had identified areas, where assessment of potential foster carers could be further strengthened.

Assessments examined showed that necessary checks had been carried out to ensure that applicants are suitable people to work with children and young people. Local procedures require staff to keep copies of documents pertaining to foster carer's identity and C.R.B check. The Inspectors found some inconsistencies as to what documents were kept on carer's file.

The Inspectors found that procedures were in place to monitor the process of approving new foster carers. Discussions with staff and foster carers and carer's files examined showed some variations in the timescale for approving new foster carers. Staff reported that current workloads and demand for placements, limited time available to complete the assessment of new foster carers. The Authority was working to improve the approval process, and was undertaking a review of the family placement teams to focus on the core business of work.

The service has a good percentage of experienced and long-standing carers. However the Authority recognizes that it does not have sufficient carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the demands on the service. This has resulted in the need to place a number of children with Independent Fostering Agencies. The service had identified the need to recruit additional carers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, to meet the needs of children requiring placement. The Authority had recently established a countywide contract care scheme, which recruits self-employed specialist foster carers who have additional skills, to care for children with particular needs. It was reported that this scheme was working well. However the contract care scheme was relatively new, and there was potential to expand this service considerably.

The Inspectors found that the service had a clear recruitment strategy. The Authority had recently recruited a Recruitment and Retention Co-ordinator. In addition each area office had some allocated hours for recruitment of foster carers. The service was endeavouring to address the shortfall of carers through the recruitment strategy and ongoing recruitment campaign. Various initiatives had been introduced to recruit additional carers. The Authority is determined to remain the major provider of fostering services in Derbyshire, but faces challenges to recruit, retain and support carers to improve it's current standing.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The Inspectors found that the fostering service works to agreed employment policies and procedures as set down by Derbyshire Social Services. Interviews with staff and files examined showed that the service adheres to current employment practice.

Staff working within the family placement teams showed a commitment to ensuring that all carers receive appropriate support and supervision. Carers interviewed and returned questionnaires confirmed that the majority of carers generally felt well supported by their family placement worker. However several carers reported having not received sufficient support on some placements. Various reasons were given for this.

Carers files examined clearly showed the purpose of supervision visits and a summary of

issues discussed. Staff used a standard form to record supervision meetings with carers. Accounts from staff and files examined supported the need to update the form to include all essential information.

Senior managers confirmed that the out of hours support service for foster carers was changing. Work was being undertaken to develop the out of hours support service to carers, to include support from experienced carers who have undertaken essential training and staff with fostering expertise. One of the Inspectors attended mentor training for foster carers, intending to provide out of hours support. The training was well attended and delivered.

**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

Staff reported that they had received a period of induction training and had completed the Authority's induction programme.

Interviews with staff and records examined showed that all staff had attended recent training. The Authority had a generic training programme for staff. However staff reported that this did not fully meet their needs, and did not take into account the diverse training needs of the fostering team. Senior managers had identified this shortfall and were carrying out a review of staff's training needs. Staff reported that individual training needs are discussed in supervision.

Staff confirmed that they were not currently receiving an annual appraisal an appraisal system was not in place. The Authority planned to develop this.

Staff reported that systems were in place to keep them informed of relevant changes in legislation and practice relevant to their work.

Staff and carers reported some opportunities to attend joint training. Senior managers planned to further develop joint training opportunities.

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

The service works to the Authority 's policy on staff supervision. Staff confirmed that they receive monthly supervision. Records of staff supervision seen on inspection were well structured, clear and concise. Staff informed the Inspectors that that they felt well supported by their manager and colleagues. .

Records showed that regular team meetings are held. Minutes of team meetings were clear and concise. Staff confirmed that they have the opportunity to attend and contribute to the team meetings.

**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?****3**

Staff working in the service showed a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for working with and supporting carers. The service had a clear written strategy for working with and supporting carers, including arrangements for training, supervision, out of hour's support and reviews.

Carers who the Inspectors met were clear as to the role of the supporting social worker. The majority of carers reported that they had formed good relationships with their support worker.

Discussions with staff and records examined maintained that staff working in the fostering team endeavour to form good relations and work in partnership with children's social workers. However certain issues affect communication and good working relations. Senior managers planned to address the issues.

Service managers confirmed that support groups for foster carers were not active in all areas. Staff and carers reported that some social events are provided, to which staff, children, young people and carers are invited to attend.

Staff and carers confirmed that the service provides a regular newsletter. This did not usually include items from carers and children.

**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**

The majority of returned questionnaires maintained that carers felt well supported by the service. However a small number of carers did not fully share this view. Not all carers felt fully valued in their work and appropriately reimbursed for the work they undertake.

The foster carer's manual provides clear information about the level of support, training, visits, supervision and reviews. Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires reported that a small number of carers were not receiving regular supervisory visits, mainly due to staff sickness and vacancies.

Accounts and records showed that carers receive a written summary of support visits. Family placement workers were starting to undertake some unannounced visits to foster carer's homes. This is considered good practice.

Staff and carers were clear that the social worker's role is to help carers identify training needs and ensure that these are met. Carers confirmed that they are encouraged to attend training and develop their skills. Returned questionnaires showed that carers had attended various levels of training.

Foster carer's files contained a log of any allegations against the carer.

Staff reported that the Foster Carer Agreement had recently been updated. The Inspectors found that the Foster Carer Agreement included information listed in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations with the exception of point 10. Several carers' files contained the previous Foster Carers Agreement. This was being updated on annual reviews.



**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**

The service has a pre-approval training programme for prospective foster carers; the Inspectors did not attend this on this inspection. Interviews with staff at the 3 area offices and review of information issued to prospective carers, showed some differences at area level as to the content and timing in which the training was delivered and level of written information issued to carers. Carers interviewed and returned questionnaires confirmed that carers had attended the pre-approval programme. Staff working in the service delivered the pre-approval training. Staff recognized that the training programme did not detail all training provided. Carer's confirmed that they were given the opportunity to meet and benefit from the knowledge and experience of established carers on the pre-approval training programme. Carers expressed the need for more involvement of experienced carers' participation in the pre-approval training.

The service had a post-approval training programme in place for foster carers. Carers reported some difficulties in accessing training courses. Senior managers were undertaking a review of carer's training needs and access to training. As previously stated the service encourages carers to attend ongoing training. Carers had attended various levels of training. A number of carer's had/were completing National Vocational Qualification Level 3 training. The Inspectors found that carers' ongoing training and development needs were not fully addressed through the annual review process. The training section in carers' files was not well completed.

## 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?
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The Inspectors were informed that the service follows the Authority's policy on case records. Quality assurance managers had recently completed an audit of the files and standard of record keeping within the six area teams. Service managers had provided an action plan to address issues identified. Staff confirmed that a new format and index had recently been introduced for all files, to aid communication and access to information.

The Inspectors examined nine carers and children's files. The majority of files examined were well set out and information was easily accessible. Records were detailed and provided a good level of information about children and carer's. Children's files clearly showed their legal status. Records were typed or handwritten. Children case tracked on this inspection had an allocated social worker, and records showed that they were receiving statutory reviews. However interviews with children and carers and returned questionnaires reported that certain children were not receiving required statutory reviews, and had not seen an allocated social worker for a considerable time. This information was not cross referenced in the children's files. The Head of Children and Families Services has since confirmed that data showed that during the month when the inspection took place, 97.7% of looked after children had an allocated social worker, and that 93.3% of statutory reviews were held on time.

Children's files contained a current care plan. Records showed that regular health reviews had taken place, although not all files contained a full or current health needs assessment, and the child's immunisation status.

Service managers reported that new carers are informed at pre-approval training of the requirement to keep appropriate records on children in their care. This was not clear in the pre-approval training programme. The Inspectors found that the level of information recorded by carers varied. Not all carers who the Inspectors met were keeping appropriate records of children in their care, and had a suitable secure box to store confidential information in. Foster carers did not use a standard form to record information about children in their care. Not all carers kept individual records for each child in their care.

Staff and carers interviewed showed a commitment to completing life story work for children.

However there were inconsistencies within the areas teams as to who provides the basic equipment to undertake this work.

**Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)**

**The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The Inspectors found that the business service staff within the area offices provided generic support to all the children's teams. The family placement teams had specific admin support workers. The administration staff had established good systems to ensure the service is well run. Checks carried out supported that all required information is kept.

A policy and procedure on keeping confidential information and records was provided. The Inspectors found that confidential records were kept securely. Not all desks provided a lockable storage area. Staff informed the Inspectors that they are required to place confidential documents they are working on, in the main lockable cabinets at the end of the working day. This caused some inconvenience.

The Authority had a policy and procedure for children, parents and carers to access their records. The foster carer manual referred to carers' rights to access their records.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			360
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	77.56	<b>Maximum £</b>	589.58

## 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

The area office buildings are shared facilities with the children's services. Discussions with staff and a tour of the premises showed that the offices used by the family placement teams are appropriate for the purpose.

Security to area office buildings during office hours appeared satisfactory. Staff confirmed that the premises are alarmed out of hours. The Inspectors found that the office buildings were adequately maintained. Staff confirmed that not all social workers had direct access to computers and E-mail. Staff reported that limited access to computers restricts access to essential information and communication with other professionals. In discussions with business services the Inspectors found that the Authority was undertaking a programme to upgrade the I.T. system and access to computers throughout all areas.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The service ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Inspectors found that the Authority had a dedicated finance team who had responsibility for managing the financial viability of the service. The budget is administered in line with the Authority's financial procedures. The Authority operates to Derbyshire County Council's financial and accounting procedures.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Authority produces an annual business plan. The Inspectors found that the Authority has a finance team and expertise to manage the finances and payments to foster carers. Financial procedures are in place. The accounts are regularly audited.

**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?**

**2**

The Inspectors found that the Authority has a policy and procedures for foster carer payments and expenses. The Authority has a team of staff who administer the payments and allowances to carers. The Inspectors found that the finance team had established good systems for ensuring the tracking of, and prompt payment of allowances to carers. Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires generally supported that payments are paid promptly. However a number of carers reported delays in receiving payments due to administrative hold ups by a child's social worker. In some circumstances carers had experienced excessive delays in receiving their fostering allowances.

The Inspectors found that new foster carers are issued with information about the allowances and how payments are made.

Interviews with staff and carers and returned questionnaires highlighted some concerns about the current allowances paid by the Authority. A number of carers reported that the current allowances and expenses did not cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with them. The Authority had obtained approval for the annual inflation increase due with effect from April 2004, to be brought forward and payable from December 2003. Submissions in support of further increases equating to 5% were also to be presented to the County Council.

## 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?

2

The service provides three fostering panels. The Inspectors attended two of the fostering panels. The panel members appeared to work effectively and to maintain an appropriate level of independence. The Head of Children and Families Services is the 'decision maker'.

The Inspectors found that clear written policies and procedures were in place in regards to the functions of the fostering panel. The Inspectors were informed that confidential reports sent out to panel members were sent by recorded delivery. However a written procedure for despatching and safekeeping of panel minutes and confidential reports to panel members was not set out.

The Inspectors found that the composition of the fostering panels complied with National Minimum Standards and the Regulations. Although one fostering panel did not have within it's independent panel members, expertise in child health.

The two quality assurance managers chaired the three fostering panels. The quality assurance manager, who chaired two of the fostering panels, was going on a six-month secondment to another position. The Inspectors have since received confirmation of arrangements for chairing the panels during this period.

Interviews with the chairpersons and observations of the fostering panels showed that the chairpersons have the skills and experience necessary for chairing the fostering panels. The Inspectors observed some differences in the way the panels operated.

The chairpersons confirmed that a satisfactory criminal record check had been obtained for all panel members.

Panel members confirmed that they had received training on the current standards and regulations. Panel members had recently attended a training day to review the functions of the fostering panels.

Prospective foster carers did not receive written information about the role of the fostering panel. The chairpersons confirmed that an information booklet about the fostering panels was being developed in consultation with panel members. An evaluation form had been

drafted for carers to provide feedback about their experience at fostering panel.

Minutes from previous panel meetings and discussions with panel members confirmed that all prospective foster carers applications, carers annual reviews, all exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

The Inspectors found that foster carer's annual review reports presented at fostering panel, included a summary of training attended over the last year. However carer's ongoing training and development needs were not fully evaluated through the annual review process.

Staff reported that the sheer size of the county and distance between the area offices, made the practicalities of meeting panel membership requirements and carer's needs for local panels very difficult. The fact that the fostering service provides three fostering panels at different venues shows a commitment to meeting the needs of panel members and carers. Senior managers acknowledged that not all area offices have appropriate venues to hold the fostering panels. It was reported that current venues restrict some carers from being able to attend their reviews. In addition it was reported that the six-month interim arrangements for chairing the southeast and west division fostering panels, will result in the need for these panels to be held at County Offices at Matlock. This will have implications on carer's attendance and staff time. Senior managers were reviewing the venues for panels.



## 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
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The fostering service provides short-break care for children and young people living at home with their families. Short break care offers children a change of environment and different life experiences, whilst giving families a break. Carers and staff were clear that the child's birth parents remain the main carers for their child, and retain all legal responsibilities. Discussions with staff, children and returned questionnaires reported that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met.

## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **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?	3
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Discussions with staff and files examined showed that the service acknowledges the particular relationship and position of family and friends as carers. This is taken into consideration when assessing family and friends as carers. Staff largely assess and approve family and friends as carers applying the same assessment procedures as other carers.

Family and friends approved as carers are encouraged to attend pre-approval training. Feedback from carers maintained that support provided to family and friends approved as carers, was comparable to the support other carers received.

Staff reported that consideration was being given to producing specific policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers, as part of a policy review.

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**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Responsible 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 17 –21 and 24-28 November 2003 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

NO

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 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 22 April 2004 , which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

Action plan was required

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: <enter details here>

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 Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.**

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 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.