



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

The Cottage
Avonvale Road
Redfield
Bristol
BS5 9RH

13th – 17th September 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

Address

The Cottage, Avonvale Road, Redfield, Bristol, BS5 9RH

Local Authority Manager

Christine Teller, Ian McDowall, Karen Gazzard

Tel No:

0117 9548604

Address

The Cottage, Avonvale Road, Redfield, Bristol, BS5 9RH

Fax No:

0117 9412103

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply?

NO

Date of last inspection

01/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		13 th -17 th September 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Wilfried Maxfield	146484
Name of Inspector	2	Jacqueline Sullivan	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Christine Teller	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
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D.2. Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Bristol Social Services 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 local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

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.

Bristol City Council's fostering service team is part of the children's services division and based in a former school building at Avonvale Road in Redfield, Bristol.

The resource is central for providing services to 'Looked After Children' in Bristol: 342 children out of a total 535 'Looked after Children' in Bristol were placed with 'in-house' foster carers. 116 were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. At the time of this inspection approximately 270 (298 in 03/03 when first inspected by NCSC) approved foster carers worked for BSS Fostering Service. 64 were approved 'Fostering Plus' Carers. 2 were 'Remand Foster Carers'.

Next to its considerable size the service also covers a wide range of essential key areas and supports a wide variety and styles of fostering such as Mainstream family placements, Fostering Plus, Permanent, Remand (Youth Justice) and Emergency placements. The team also deals with all aspects of adoption.

The following additional services are also based at Avonvale Road and in the teams remit:

- Birth Parent Counselling
- Section 51 Counselling
- Foster and Adoption Panels

Core services are provided by 3 distinct teams each specializing in particular aspects of service delivery and supervised by a team manager:

Recruitment Team: Recruitment, training and assessment of foster carers and adopters. Initial support for foster carers recently approved (Up to one year). Preparing and supporting carers during their first reviewing process.

Permanency Team: Support for long-term foster carers and their regular review. Assessment of prospective adopters.

Short Term & Duty Team: Support and regular review of short-term foster carers. Duty desk and family finding. Out of hour support (Overall management). Youth offending team.

A fourth team provides a Family Link Service for disabled children and operates largely independent from the fostering services with its own 'Statement of Purpose' and Children's Guide.

This team provides a range of additional services specific to the needs of disabled children such as: Support groups including BSL interpreters, support for deaf carers, boys and girls groups for disabled children.

A fifth team (Kinship Care) is currently being developed following agreement for the appointment of two care workers. A permanent worker has been in post for some months and the task of identifying Kinship Carers in Bristol produced a definite list of approximately 90. This service maintains a strong link to the 'Hadley Centre for Adoption and Fostering' (University of Bristol) to promote best practise by linking research, training and practise.

All teams maintain strong links with the local Clinical Psychology Service team, the Education of Looked After Children Service (ECLAS) and the Avonside Foster Carers' Association.

The senior management of BSS fostering also supports regular meetings between AFCA, City Councillors and the Director of Social Services and Health.

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).

Brief Introduction

This was Bristol Social Services Fostering Services third inspection under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. Because all three inspections were conducted in the space of the last 18 months a great number of findings have been pointed out before. Subsequently, in an effort to avoid duplication this report points to earlier reports on a number of occasions. It is therefore advisable that this inspection report is read in conjunction with the two previous ones.

This report also echo's many of the positive findings of the previous reports and underlines the comments made by an earlier inspector highlighting the rapid progress the teams have made towards meeting the standards and regulations.

As evident from the service description the teams have a wide range of highly demanding duties and responsibilities. The inspectors found a very 'stretched' (sometimes overworked) but also highly skilled and motivated team, which feels well supported by its senior management and current management structures.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

1 of 1 standard assessed was met

While all of the requirements have been met a new requirement will have to address the inclusion of the Kinship Care Service into the description of services.

As the Family Link Service publishes its own Statement of Purpose this also needs to be in line with NMS 1.4.

Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

Inspectors were impressed with the range and depth of experience of the managers and their expertise in managing this service. This is a stable workforce, which is committed to the aims and objectives of the fostering service.

Gaps in staff records require action.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

Inspectors met a well-structured team with clear and well-understood lines of communication. The recent appointments of 'Senior Practitioners' has had a positive effect on the delegation of responsibilities and the well being of teams.

The work of specifying managers job descriptions needs to be ongoing.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

9 of 9 standards assessed were met

Additional equipment needs for children and young people need to be assessed and met quickly and efficiently.

There is ample evidence that issues of diversity and equality as well as strategies to enhance children's and young people's confidence and feeling of self worth are promoted throughout the service.

Matching continues to be problematic due to the high demand and whom carers wish to care for.

Individual support for carers by social workers is very good. The new 'CLAN' makes a very good impact on health support for 'Looked After Children'

Updating of 'Missing in Care' procedure needs to be ongoing.

Inspectors recommend more 'Basic listening' and 'Basic Counselling Skills' for foster carer training.

Links to the ECLA and Care After Teams need strengthening.

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

9 of 9 standards assessed were met

Staff felt well supported and talked positively about the way they are being managed and monitored. All were complimentary about the level of training, professional supervision and the opportunities for consultation provided for social workers. All teams work on the very limits of their capacity and 'stress' was mentioned during a number of interviews with staff. Some operational problems around telephone, admin and IT support need streamlining. Foster carers can encounter major problems receiving appropriate levels of support when their respective support social worker is not in the office, on holiday or off sick. Inspectors found the 'Foster Carers Bulletin' an excellent publication to aid communication and levels of information.

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

Fitness of premises for use as fostering services (Standard 26)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

Inspectors congratulate the service for their excellent new canteen facilities. Points about the age and general suitability of this old school building have been well made in the two previous reports. In addition to these some staff seemed unhappy about the efficiency of the central heating system and the general draught proofing of the building.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 of 3 standards assessed were met

In line with findings during the inspection visit in March 2003 carers interviewed and questionnaire feedback indicated again that payment problems are still common.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

Not assessed on this inspection.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

1 of 1 standard assessed was met

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

1 of 1 standard assessed was met

The newly appointed kinship care worker has started in post and is developing the service fast and efficiently.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Not applicable.

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3. (1a,b)	1.4	To include a more detailed statement about each service (i.e. "Fostering Plus) provided by the by the fostering service.	1.03.05
2	3	1	Amend statement of purpose for Family Link service. Add details of new service on BSS statement of purpose.	1.03.05
3	2,3	3	Staff records to comply with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations.	1.03.05
4	21	5	The updating of accurate job description needs to be ongoing.	1.03.05
5	15	6	Each child is provided with such individual support, aids and equipment which he may require as a result of any particular health needs or disability he may have.	1.03.05
6	33	8	Ensure that each child or young person in foster care is carefully matched.	Immediate
7	13(3)	9	A written policy for 'Missing in Care' procedures.	1.03.05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	13	Links to the ECLA Service need strengthening. PEP's need to be completed for all children and young people according to policies.
2	14	Links to the Care After Team need strengthening. Pathway Plans need to be completed for all young people according to policies.
3	11	Training schedules to include more training on 'Basic Listening' and 'Basic Counselling' for foster parents.
4	16	Review some operational administration, telephone and IT problems as outlined in Standard 16.
5	26	Conduct a 'Health and Safety' assessment on heating and draught proofing of the premises.
6	29	Ensure that carers are paid promptly and correctly.

* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	13/09/04
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	42.0

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

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Family Placement Team's Statement of Purpose complies with the relevant standards but needs to consider whether simply stating its services complies with Regulation 3. (1a and b), which asks fostering service providers for a *statement and details* of the aims and objectives as to the services and facilities provided by the service.

More detailed description of services would also have to be included in foster carers handbooks. This is because inspectors found considerable confusion around the meaning and sphere of activity of some services such as "Fostering Plus" with a number of foster parents questioning the exact criteria that are currently being used to become part of this particular group and enjoy the much higher payments that these carers receive. Information about its new and developing Kinship Care service into the 'Services and Facilities' section also needs to be included.

Other requirements regarding the Statement of Purpose from the last report have been addressed.

The Children's Guide is aimed at children and young people aged 11-18. The last report recommended producing a guide suitable for younger children and the service is currently engaged in this task.

The Family Link Service publishes its own Statement of Purpose. This does not contain all the details recommended in NMS 1.4.

The Family Link Service has recently produced its Children's Guide in the 'widget' format. This was in 'final draft' at the time of inspection.

It also recently produced a video for recruitment purposes.

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?

4

All managers of the different parts of the service have DipSW or equivalent.

- The team manager of the Family Link Service is CSS qualified and holds an NVQ 5 in management.
- The 'Recruitment' team leader holds a DipSW and has a Certificate in Management.
- The manager of the 'Short Term Team' holds a CQSW and DipSW and is in the process of completing the Diploma in Management.
- The 'Permanency' team leader holds a CQSW at Masters level.

Managers easily comply with the level of qualification required by NMS 2.2 and have relevant background experience in management, childcare practise and fostering issues. All managers regularly attend Bristol City Councils management conferences and workshops (The Bristol Manager).

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?

2

Inspectors were impressed with the range and depth of experience of the managers and their expertise in managing this service. This is a stable workforce, which is committed to the aims and objectives of the fostering service.

As part of the 'Best value Review 2004' Bristol Council has centralised all its personal files. Files for Social Services Departments are stored in a designated room.

Staff records were scrutinized. In order to fully comply with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations 2001 the following details need to be in place.

- 1) Recent photographs were not in evidence on all files.
- 2) Telephone enquiries to follow up written references need to be evidenced.
- 3) The service has started to implement requirements to renew enhanced police checks every 3 years. This process needs to be ongoing as there are still considerable gaps.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All social workers interviewed were clear about the management structures they were operating in and were able to detail lines of management and accountability. Apart from the Statement of Purpose written Organisational structures can also be found in the Foster Carers Handbook. Teams have recently been re-organised to provide a Senior Practitioner role. In spite of this post still evolving and developing most members of staff commented on the positive impact of this additional tier. Not all members of staff agreed with the criteria chosen to make appointments. They make a case that academic achievement is currently the main selection and promotion measure and that 'time of service' and professional experience was not regarded highly enough.

All carers interviewed understood the way the service was set up and were informed about lines of communication and the different roles for managers and staff.

The finances of the department are allocated and monitored by the finance department, which issues a monthly 'statement of expenditure' to each of the team managers. Bristol City Council – Social Services and Health – 'Client and Carer Financial Services' issues its 'Prices, Charges and Allowances' booklet each financial year, which includes detailed information on Foster Care and also itemises wider services. The most essential parts of this information are also to be found in the 'Guide to Fostering in Bristol' and in a separate leaflet (SSL 14a).

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The job descriptions of team managers were still found to be generic rather than detailing the exact remit of their functions.

The organisational map clearly defines roles and responsibilities of managers. The team managers plan their leave to ensure that one manager is always available.

All team managers were interviewed and commented positively on team operational service links and on how workloads were managed and divided between teams. Some team members remarked about a lack of meeting time for teams to regularly assess developments.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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This report is consistent with findings in the two previous reports with regards to the positive quality of foster care homes. Homes randomly inspected at this inspection were of a very good standard.

Inspectors visited the home of a kinship carer and were very impressed with the level of care provided and the dedication afforded by these carers. The young person living there has a range of very specific needs resulting from considerable disabilities and the carers in question have made every effort to adapt the environment to the needs of the young person. The carers reported positively on the services support but questioned some of the procedures leading to long time delays and sometimes misunderstandings about important equipment needs and the way to finance those. Requests for financial help with a car lift, bath aids and hoists have all taken unduly long to process and efforts to obtain some of this equipment have been unsuccessful. While the carers praised the support of their individual social worker they felt "frustrated by the system which only provides for people who push and push". NMS 6.4 demands that bed and accommodation arrangements need to reflect the specific needs resulting from disability.

Risk assessments for the sharing of rooms were seen the majority of which were carried out by family placement social workers.

Cares training covers health and safety issues. Health and safety issues are included in the initial assessment of potential foster carers.

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
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There is ample evidence that issues of diversity and equality as well as strategies to enhance children's and young people's confidence and feeling of self worth are promoted throughout the service. The agency strives to match the ethnic needs of any child placed with a foster carer. Links with the child's ethnic origins are maintained wherever possible and placements in a multi-racial area are supported if deemed an assessed need.

Equality and diversity issues are addressed in support sessions with social workers as well as in the comprehensive preparation and ongoing training package.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Manager's self assessment forms included observations on the problems facing the service such as: "Matching continues to be problematic due to the high demand and whom carers wish to care for." These comments were confirmed and underlined by family placement statistics provided by the service for this inspection. They also showed that the demand for short term and emergency placements exceeds the in house provisions.

In the family link team the picture is similar with demand for emergency placements for disabled children being beyond the current capacities of the scheme.

Given this evaluation it is clear to inspectors that careful matching is currently not possible. Inspectors noted that between March and August 2004, 60 children and young people were awaiting short term planned placements and between 10 - 20 were awaiting respite placements.

At the time of this inspection the service was starting to test a software module, which was specifically designed to improve the matching system. It will eventually allow locality social workers to communicate electronically with family placement teams in relation to matching resources. The service is one of few in the country, which has been identified to start 'Beta-testing' the efficiency of the new system.

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

There is good evidence that foster carers training consistently addresses issues around children who have been abused, safe caring skills, managing behaviour and recognising signs of abuse. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they were happy with the support and training they received in these areas.

The foster care agreement currently in use specifies the expectations of the service in respect of corporal punishment and that carers are not to slap, pinch, squeeze, shake or rough handle in any way.

A bullying policy has recently been completed and the family link service is in the process of developing this policy in an accessible form for disabled children.

There are currently no procedures available for children and young people that have gone missing. Senior management confirmed that 'Missing in Care' procedures for foster carers are in progress.

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

0

%

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

Previous inspection findings were positive and the following findings from these reports are confirmed:

- Preparation training includes guidance on the promotion of contact.
- Contact issues are monitored by social workers during supervision sessions.
- LAC forms are used to specify individual contact arrangements for each child.
- The foster carers handbook promotes contact and gives guidance on reporting and concerns.

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

The children's guide gives clear advice on how to make complaints and contains a range of useful addresses. A chapter on 'Respect and being listened to' emphasises the skills and training children and young people can expect from social workers and carers. Inspectors studied training schedules for foster carers ranging over a period of 2003 - 2004 and found this and related topics to be under-represented. A course on 'basic counselling skills' seemed the exception. It is important that basic counselling and listening skills play a prominent part in any training schedule enabling carers to support children's wishes, views and feelings on a daily basis.

The commissioning of Voice for the Child in Care (VCC) to provide a generic advocacy service for young people, including Looked After and Children in Need has now been completed.

Talking to senior managers about consultation issues inspectors were reassured that the fostering service can provide enough opportunity for children to express their views by using the LAC reviewing system.

It is good practice to include children's feedback into foster carers annual reviews. This practice is part of the services procedures.

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?**

3

Inspectors had an opportunity to meet two nurses designated to provide health care advice and health care planning and assessment to the fostering service. This service is provided by 'CLAN' (Children Looked After Nurse). It is working closely together with the CAMHS psychology service and is much in demand. The nurses confirmed that the sheer size of the fostering service was putting enormous pressures on their workload. There were no statistics available for inspectors to track how many of the children and young people were benefiting from this excellent service.

Data provided by the nurses and scrutinized included comprehensive Health Care Plans for a number of Looked After Children. These proved to be impressive documents and included the monitoring, reviewing and tracking of health care.

Tracking children's LAC review files showed that health issues were well recorded and discussed with foster carers.

'Health care' features highly on foster carers training.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Bristol Council has taken corporate responsibility to promote educational achievement of children in their care. A separate service for the educational needs of children looked after (ECLA) supports children and young people and works closely with the fostering service. Inspectors were able to meet the manager of this service.

The ECLA Service has been significantly expanded in the recent past and now consists of a multi-professional team of teachers, a PEP Co-ordinator, Children's Officer and Connexions PA support. A citywide service is now offered to young people in children's homes as well as foster care. The service will assess the needs of both newly placed children and children in placement to provide advocacy in seeking school and college placements. The ECLA team is also involved in the training of BSS fostering social workers as well as foster carers.

According to statistics compiled by ECLA the number of PEPs recorded in Bristol, as being in place is approximately 65%. Without wanting to claim total accuracy inspectors found this figure consistent with the sample of children's files inspected at the fostering service.

Inspectors were not able to access information systems evaluating educational attainment of the children and young people in foster care or ascertain the numbers excluded from school.

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?**

2

In spite of a clear policy, transition issues and pathway planning are still an area of some uncertainty within the service. Inspectors asked a number of professionals about their understanding of the delivery of NMS 14.5 and the current practise of pathway planning. Findings confirmed that the service needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different professionals in pathway planning in order to ensure a consistent approach to transition. Uncertainties also exist in early planning and the best timing of provisions. Inspectors felt that the impact and links to the Care and After team were still tentative and that the comments made by a previous inspector (24/03/03) were still relevant. In line with this report requirements are made again... "that there are written records of discussions of this issue between teams, other services and with the young person and Pathway Plans kept on children's files".

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 council has appropriate written procedures for recruitment and checking prospective members of staff. All managerial staff that engage in the selection and interviewing process are trained to do so.

All the social work staff in the team are professionally qualified and the majority are highly experienced. For an appreciation of the qualifications and experience of team managers see the commissions report from March 2003, Standard 2.

Social work staff undertaking the assessment of foster carers are qualified and the team collectively have many years experience in this process. The manager of the recruitment and training team supervises assessments of prospective foster carers.

See standard 3 for issues relating to records as in NMS15.4.

Total number of staff of the agency:

42

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

Social workers interviewed felt that the management of their workloads had significantly improved over recent times. Workloads are monitored during individual supervision meetings and allocation is discussed at team meetings and agreed between team manager and social worker. Staff felt well supported and talked positively about the way they are being managed and monitored. All were complimentary about the level of training, professional supervision and the opportunities for consultation provided for social workers.

Foster carers are also offered an annual programme of training and opportunities for development. Their training records were seen on their files and most had attended some of the training offered.

Inspectors met a very open and competent administration team. A number of issues were highlighted by the admin team as well as social work staff:

- 1) Telephone reception work, including the processes involved to pass on messages were debated and found to be in need of some improvement. This was confirmed by

comments from some social work staff some of which claimed that important messages were getting lost. Some foster carers were very negative about the difficulties they encountered when trying to make telephone contact with social work support staff.

- 2) There was some criticism about the fact that administration staff should be dealing with inquiries from prospective foster carers.
- 3) Some social work staff perceived the admin team as (very) overworked and inundated with typing request that subsequently took a long time to process.
- 4) There were varied comments about IT support and the reliability of PARIS, the software currently used. Concerns were around information held or not held on the system, ease of input and user friendliness and the frequent system failures whereby the user might suddenly be 'thrown out'.
- 5) There were problems in the development of a single database and the complications resulting from the parallel use of 'Soft box' and PARIS.

All these difficulties had been identified and were well recorded. Consultation and problem solving on some of the above areas was well advanced.

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
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The majority of staff employed have worked for the BSS fostering service for a number of years and are committed to its ethos and policies. Next to training, supervision and general terms and conditions staff mentioned wanting to work for the public sector as the main reason for their continuing commitment and loyalty.

All teams work on the very limits of their capacity and 'stress' was mentioned during a number of interviews with staff. This was partly due to a number of posts that have been vacant for some time, causing operational difficulties. On the vast majority of Foster Carers Questionnaires staff shortages were mentioned as a major difficulty. The two following quotes taken from questionnaires sum up all others: "They do a good job if only there were more of them"..."They appear to do the best they can but are always short staffed." Management of the service employ an active advertising and recruitment strategy to try and fill these posts.

The inspection found the service to be compliant with NMS 17.6 and 17.7.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The service fully complies with this standard.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

All staff interviewed felt that the service was providing them with every opportunity for training. Social workers described a great variety of training options available to them both on external as well as in-house training courses. Staff undertake an annual appraisal jointly with their manager.

Social workers acknowledged that there had been problems in the past in providing the full range of training subjects. This had been due to staff shortages.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Staff receive formal recorded supervision and appraisal from their team managers on a monthly basis, and informal supervision via the 'open door' policy that team managers operate.

Team meetings are held weekly for the long term and short term teams and fortnightly for the recruitment team. They are held on Wednesdays to enable all staff (including those who job share) to attend.

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**

In Standard 17 Inspectors collated some of the views expressed by foster carers about support services. While this represents a view regarding the service as a whole the representative sample never questioned the high quality support, information and advice available from their individual support worker. Foster carers can encounter major problems receiving appropriate levels of support when their respective support social worker is not in the office, on holiday or off sick.

The service provides a duty advice line for carers throughout the day at the office and until midnight after office hours by a rota of team members. Carers appreciated the support provided out of hours.

There are foster carer support groups throughout the city and carers find these groups particularly useful to link up with others in their area.

Feedback from carers indicated that many would like to see an improvement in respite arrangements. The team managers also identified this as an area for improvement. They are currently actively engaged in looking at a variety of different possible schemes. Inspectors recommend that this process continue.

The service publishes an excellent monthly Foster Carers Bulletin. This informs about a very wide range of topics and developments within the service including training updates, team updates, news about support groups and their agendas, interviews with foster carers, children and more.

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?****3**

Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named social worker. The service and support received from these is consistent and of a high quality. There are clear procedural standards, policies and agreements governing the relationship of the carer and the fostering service. The Foster Care Agreement is in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

The service provides regular supervision meetings and access to individual and group support for all foster carers. Experienced carers participate in training and support of new carers.

Foster carers receive information about procedures for dealing with complaints. These can be raised informally with the team managers or sent to the complaints department where they are formally recorded.

Information about the procedures for dealing with investigations into allegations is given to staff and is in the foster carers' handbook. Children are given information about how to complain and this is included in the children's guide.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

There are two social workers located in the recruitment, assessment and training team who have responsibility for providing training for foster carers. They produce an annual training programme and carers can select appropriate sessions they wish to attend. The effectiveness of training provided is evaluated from carers' feedback after each session and at their annual reviews. Written feedback from carers showed a good level of attendance at training events amongst that sample.

Experienced foster carers are used as co-trainers on the induction programme and other on-going training. Foster carers can also access training via the central training department, which provides them with opportunities to train alongside social work and residential staff.

Where two adults in one household apply to be approved as joint carers they are expected to complete all the induction training. There are specific training days identified in the annual programme for foster carers' children and for male carers.

Training is organised at convenient times in local venues around the city. The council also provides reasonable expenses for childcare.

Foster carers are able to access NVQ training in childcare via the central training section in the city.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A number of case files were inspected and found to be well kept and audited. A written policy for record keeping is available and is well understood by staff.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Separate records are kept for staff, carers and for children and young people. Team managers monitor records and the service managers undertake random audits. There is a written policy on case recording and for access to confidential records. Records are stored securely and the building has a burglar alarm. The building is well secured to prevent unauthorised access during the day. Staff use a card protected entry system.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

535

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

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

108.50

Maximum £

191.38

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

It is unusual for inspectors to start a 'Fitness of Premises' section by mentioning the canteen first. This is for three reasons. One reason is that this is a new development and no previous inspection report makes a mention of this new space because the canteen area was still being refurbished. Secondly, the impact of the canteen on staff morale is undoubtedly very high and positive and, thirdly, the food sampled by inspectors was of a fine quality. The new canteen undoubtedly has made a very positive impact and provides a well structured and maintained area for the informal meeting of groups of staff.

Other points about the age and general suitability of this old school building have been made in the two previous reports. In addition to these some staff seemed unhappy about the efficiency of the central heating system and the general draught proofing of the building.

Service managers are aware that the general availability and shortage of IT provision is still a problem in some teams.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering services are funded as part of the local authority social services department. There is an annual allocated budget, and the service plan determines how the budget will be spent. Each manager receives a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending patterns. The finance department provide advice in relation to budgeting matters.

The local authority payroll services ensure regular payment of staff salaries, including deduction of income tax and national insurance.

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

The chief executive, chief elected member and the director of social services determine how the overall budget will be allocated. The budget is held centrally and delegated to the team managers for management of individual budgets.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances, which is contained in the foster carers' handbook, and details about allowances are published in recruitment information. The policy states clearly what expenses the allowances are expected to cover. Further payments are made automatically throughout the year.

Since the last inspection foster carers have had their fostering allowance rate increased. Holiday payments can be negotiated with the locality children's team managers.

In line with findings during the inspection visit in March 2003 carers interviewed and questionnaire feedback indicated again that payment problems are still common.

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?	0
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The panel was not assessed during this inspection.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The family link team was inspected as part of the fostering service inspection this year and information about their service has been included throughout this report.

At the time of the inspection the team supported approximately 85 carers and 100 placements. The team manager reported that new recruitment strategies were being tried, such as advertising in hospitals, and that numbers of carers have increased over the past year.

The family link team approves family and friends as carers where this is possible and appropriate.

Children placed for more than 120 days per year are monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Looked After Children system.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The newly appointed kinship care worker has started in post and is developing the service fast and efficiently.

A draft proposal for developing this service was seen and discussed with the member of staff appointed to transfer existing carers into the new service:

- All Kinship Carers approved at panel will be offered support. Cases transferred will not be accepted without the relevant information including Form F, all checks and transfer summary.
- All Kinship Carers can expect a minimum of 3 monthly contacts from the Kinship workers.
- All Kinship Carers will be reviewed annually and the review will be presented to panel every 3 years.
- Trainers in the Family Placement Recruitment Team will run appropriate courses. Courses suitable for Kinship Carers will be highlighted on the yearly programme for foster carers.
- A leaflet explaining what Kinship Care is will be incorporated in the information pack.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this draft report relating to the Inspection conducted on 13th – 17th September 2004 of inspection Bristol Social Services Fostering Service and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 17th January 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of Bristol Social Services Fostering Service 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 Bristol Social Services Fostering Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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