



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Kirklees MC Family Placement Services

Westfields

Westfield Road

Mirfield

West Yorkshire

WF14 9PW

14 and 25 February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Kirklees MC Family Placement Services

Address

Westfields, Westfield Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire,
WF14 9PW

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

01924 483707

Address

Westfields, Westfield Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire,
WF14 9PW

Fax No:

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

02/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		14 and 25 February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Stella Henderson	110610
Name of Inspector	2	-	
Name of Inspector	3	-	
Name of Inspector	4	-	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		-	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		-	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Janet Matley, Andrea Hoofe, & Rob Taylor	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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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

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 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**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

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Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

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 Kirklees MC Family Placement Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council fostering service provides a full range of fostering services including emergency, short term, long term, respite care, family link, friends and family and remand placements. The fostering service is part of the Family Placement Unit, which also provides the local authority's adoption services.

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 was a generally positive inspection of Kirklees Fostering Service. Substantial progress has been made since the last inspection, in regard to compliance with regulations and recommendations, and the inspector commends the hard work of acting managers Andrea Hoofe and Rob Taylor in maintaining momentum towards these achievements.

Evidence of how the service is functioning came from returned questionnaires from and visits to foster carers, and children and young people. The views of placing social workers were also elicited. Nine questionnaires were returned by children and young people. Two of these young people particularly wanted the inspector to report that: 'I would like my foster carer to get a prize because he is ace', and, of another couple, 'Because they made us feel welcome and helped us to settle in easily.'

This group of children and young people felt that some of the best things about being fostered were, 'Being part of family life' and, 'Knowing you are safe.' The worst thing was 'being away from my family.' According to these responses, children and young people are helped with school work, to take exercise, eat healthily and be involved in a wide range of hobbies and leisure activities. They are consulted about both day to day matters, and rather more serious key decisions and problems in their lives. School, emotions and bullying were some examples given, and there were clearly good outcomes from this process – 'I wanted to live with my sister so they moved me to the placement she was at', and 'I requested a mentor and got one'.

The inspector received a rather more mixed response from 24 foster carers who returned their questionnaires, although on the whole, comments were positive. The process of restructuring of payments to foster carers, 'feeling under-valued', 'a them and us attitude' and concerns about shortages of carers were some areas of concern identified by these respondents. However, on the whole, foster carers feel well supported by the service and that staff are doing a good job. 'We have 24 hour help line and our own support worker'; 'I think they do an excellent job and deserve recognition for that' were some comments received. Consultation was also found to be good – 'The fostering service do take our opinions on board...I've found working together with social services enjoyable and rewarding. I give them 10/10.'

Placing social workers returned 14 questionnaires (for 26 children placed), and these were overwhelmingly positive. All considered that children and young people were 'safe in placement', and that carers worked 'very well' with the local authority and the families of looked after children. 'Encouragement, warmth, genuine concern for children in their care, commitment, professionalism, good routines' were typical responses from placing officers, who also identified carers being 'proactive in promoting education and outdoor activities', 'supportive through difficult times', and 'providing an excellent, stimulating environment'. There was very high praise for some individual foster carers.

The inspector's overall assessment therefore is that Kirklees Fostering is working hard to achieve good outcomes for children and young people in its care. Foster carers are supported by a committed, skilled staff team, who were very helpful in contributing to this inspection.

The inspector identified two main areas of concern arising from this inspection. First is the management of those who care for children with a disability, and secondly, the inappropriate use of exemptions. These are discussed more fully in the body of this report.

Additionally, the service is not fully meeting its Statement of Purpose, and some areas of work need further attention and development, such as the foster placement agreement, which the recently appointed manager began work on during the course of this inspection. Whilst some changes may need a more strategic long-term response, the inspector is confident that the manager and her team can quickly address the majority of the shortfalls identified in this report.

Not all the National Minimum Standards for Fostering were inspected on this occasion, in line with guidance from the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The inspector would like to thank foster carers, children and young people and staff for their contributions to this inspection.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was not met

Whilst this is a helpful, comprehensive document, there are several areas of practice where the service is not meeting the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. The inspector advises that the manager use the Statement of Purpose as a tool to measure the service's performance.

Fitness to manage a fostering service (Standards 3)

This standard was met

A new manager has recently been appointed to the service who is competent and qualified to manage the service.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Not assessed at this inspection

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-13)

5 of these 8 standards were met, 1 was partly met and 2 were not met

Overall, the service secures and promotes the welfare of children and young people in its care, with foster carers providing safe, healthy, nurturing environments. Education is given a high priority. Consultation with carers and children and young people is a strength of the service. The foster place agreement and meeting the needs of children with disability needs further attention.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15, 17 and 21)

1 of these 3 standards was met, 1 was partly met, 1 was not met

All statutory checks had been carried out on employees and prospective carers. An ongoing recruitment drive is in progress. The service is not meeting the target for annual reviews of foster carers.

Records (Standards 24-25)**2 of these 2 standards were met**

Records relating to foster carers and children and young people were found to be compliant with the regulations.

Fitness of premises (Standard 26)

Not assessed at this inspection

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

Not assessed at this inspection

Fostering panels (Standard 30)**This standard was not met**

Panel functions well and provides an important and effective safeguarding mechanism. There is a minor breach of regulation relating to the recording of recommendations, and some aspects of the assessment process needs reviewing.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)**This standard was met**

Foster carers work well with families whose children receive short-term breaks. Birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs.

Family and friend carers (Standard 32)**This standard was met**

Wherever possible, the service strives to place children and young people with friends and family. There is a good system in place for assessing these carers and bringing them promptly to panel.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	34	FS8	<p>Making of placements</p> <p>Before making a placement, the responsible authority shall enter into a written agreement (in these regulations referred to as the 'foster placement agreement') with the foster parent relating to the child which covers the matters specified in Schedule 6</p>	1/07/04
2	29	FS18	<p>Reviews of approval</p> <p>A review shall take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year.</p>	1/07/04

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Stella Henderson</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Niall Roche</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>6 April 2005</u>		_____

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	FS1	<p>Statement of Purpose</p> <p>The fostering service provider shall ensure that the fostering service is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose</p>	31/03/05
2	34	FS8	<p>Making of placements</p> <p>Before making a placement, the responsible authority shall enter into a written agreement (in these regulations referred to as the 'foster placement agreement') with the foster parent relating to the child which covers the matters specified in Schedule 6</p>	31/03/05
3	15	FS12	<p>Health of children placed with foster parents</p> <p>The fostering service shall promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents. 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.</p>	30/04/05

4	29	FS21	Reviews and terminations of approval The fostering service provider shall take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of no more than a year	30/06/05
5	24	FS30	Establishment of fostering panel The fostering panel shall consist of no more than 10 members and shall include (c) In the case of a local authority service, at least one elected member of the local authority	30/04/05
6	25	FS30	Meetings of fostering panel A fostering panel shall make a written record of it proceedings and the reasons for its recommendations	31/03/05

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	FS6	The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment Each child place has her/his own bed and accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or any specific need resulting from a disability Foster carers understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission inspection process
2	FS13	The foster placement agreement identifies where financial responsibility lies for all school costs, including school uniform, school trips and school equipment
3	FS17	The fostering service has an adequate number of suitably 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

- 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	8.5
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	14/02/05
Time of Inspection	09.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	63

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?
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The introduction to the Statement of Purpose states that it is 'a useful source of information to staff, foster carers and parent...'. Whilst this is true, it is, more importantly, the means by which the service explains to carers, staff and others how it will conduct its business. Regulations state that the service must, at all times, 'be conducted in a manner which is consistent with its Statement of Purpose', however the inspector found several areas of practice that breached compliance with this regulation:

- Emergency carers: rather than being time limited in this placement as outlined in the Statement of Purpose, there are currently three children in this resource who appear to have drifted into short term care. For one of those placed this is effectively a pre-adoptive placement that could well take several more months before an appropriate resource is secured.
- Training for foster carers: the Statement (and other documentation) emphasises how important training is for carers, yet it was identified that some carers for children with disability have had no post-approval training.
- Annual reviews: some carers are slipping through the net and are not receiving these within the required timescale. There is also a contradiction about who undertakes foster carer reviews.
- Not all carers interviewed had received an unannounced visit.

The statement is promptly amended to reflect changes in policy, which is good practice. The inspector advises that this document is used as a tool against which the service can measure its performance, and that cross-referencing is made with other policies in the Foster Carer handbook to ensure consistency of information.

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?

0

Not assessed at this 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 new manager has been recently appointed to the Fostering Unit. Janet Matley has substantial experience in fostering work, and has social work and management qualifications. All appropriate checks have been carried out and were found to comply with this standard and the associated regulations.

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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

0

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.

0

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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

From discussions with, and visits to foster carers, returned questionnaires and records on files, it was evident to the inspector that, generally, the fostering service provides safe, healthy and nurturing environments for children and young people in its care. 'Good child care practice and values' was one of the comments received from a placing officer, and the inspector would endorse this view that was apparent in those foster placements visited.

However, the inspector found several areas of practice that the service needs to improve upon:

- Child 'A', with a very complex disability was found to be sleeping in a camp bed. At home A has special supports to assist with body posture, his gastronomy feed and to ensure a comfortable night's sleep. When this support was borrowed from the family for a short period, the carer stated that A 'sleeps much better'; without it he 'slips down the bed'. The carer has also purchased a piece of equipment to enable A to be propped up in bed, as this assists in his gastronomy feed. However, it is not acceptable that this child's needs have not been properly assessed and that the proper equipment is not provided.
- A 'moving and handling' risk assessment was carried out some time ago on A. This concluded that a hoist should be used, but the carer finds this difficult. When asked what the carer feels about putting herself at risk from not using the hoist, the response from the fostering service was that 'the carer doesn't mind' and indeed the carer stated this to the inspector. However, the fostering service cannot abrogate responsibility for this, as the carer and, importantly, A are being put at risk by this practice. The inspector strongly advises that another risk assessment is conducted, and its findings acted upon.
- Additionally, all personal care for A takes place in one of the main downstairs rooms rather than the bathroom. Clearly, other young people have been in placement at the same time as A, and the inspector queries the extent to which A's need for privacy and dignity has been respected.

This is no criticism of the carer, who is very skilled, experienced and has a great deal of expertise, and who has clearly helped to secure good outcomes for A. Information on the case file indicates that there was no LAC paperwork available at the time A was placed however and, in retrospect, it is hard to see how this placement was assessed, in environmental terms, as being appropriate to the child's needs.

- It was clear from file case notes and discussion with foster carers that they had been made aware of this inspection and that they may be approached by the Commission. Some (family link carers) felt, however, that the process had nothing to do with them as they do not consider themselves to be 'foster carers', and 'would prefer not to receive any correspondence to do with fostering'.

The inspector's opinion is that this is quite a worrying perception, and, along with the case of A mentioned above, reinforces the view that this group of carers for children with disability, and the children themselves, are not subject to the same standards that apply to other carers. This may not be helped by the fact that guidance and policies are not applied consistently to this group of carers.

For example, one has had no post-approval training, yet the carers handbook and other policies state quite clearly the expectation that carers will attend training, and indeed that not doing so may be a reason for termination of approval. This perception makes both carers and children vulnerable, and the inspector advises that the management of this group of carers is reviewed.

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 fostering service provides training on difference and diversity, and there was evidence of good practice in foster carer homes with regard to, for instance, the preparation of halal foods. An issue raised by a social worker with regard to a foster placement lacking culturally appropriate books and toys was raised with the acting manager, and was found to have been addressed.

On those files inspected, carers are clearly contributing to good outcomes for children with disability, and act as effective advocates when necessary.

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?

1

The inspector found good practice in the matching of carers and those children and young people needing permanency. These cases go to fostering panel for recommendation, which again is good practice.

The fostering service is still failing this standard, however, with regard to the foster placement agreement. Parts of the LAC documentation comprise the foster placement agreement, but there are several flaws with this:

- The foster placement agreement should be completed *before* a child is placed. Yet the Foster Carers handbook states that LAC forms 'should be completed within three days'. Information was often found to be missing and as one carer commented 'LAC paperwork is never completed and given to us without many reminders'.
- The LAC forms do not fully comply with Schedule 6.
- The LAC forms do not contain 'specific references to elements of matching which were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and identify areas of additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer' (Standard 8.4)
- In signing the LAC forms to agree to the placement, carers are signing to comply with regulations that are now obsolete.

The inspector's assessment is that too much reliance is placed on social workers to provide information that it is the responsibility of the fostering service to secure. Gaps in information had clearly not been followed up.

The inspector strongly advises that a 'stand alone' document is devised, covering all points outlined in Schedule 6, and with particular regard to Standard 8. Indeed, all the elements needed to make an effective foster placement agreement are there in other documentation (parts of the duty referral and matching considerations pro forma, for example), and some parts of the agreement will be standard (points 4 and 8 of Schedule 6).

This change need not, therefore, involve a great amount of work, but the manager, who has already begun work on this, must ensure that, given the slow progress on this issue, the use of new forms and different approach to securing this information is quickly embedded in practice.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8) The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>One young person commented in his questionnaire that the best thing about being in foster care is 'that you are kept safe'. Carers receive training on caring for the child who has been abused and managing difficult behaviour. All carers are expected to provide and work to a 'safe caring' policy for their individual household. Foster carers visited were conversant with the policy on absconding.</p> <p>The fostering service has systems in place to collate information on allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in the care of the service. Information on bullying is also kept; one young person reported that when bullying was reported to her foster carer, something was done about it and the bullying stopped.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	97	%

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
<p>There was evidence on files inspected that contact with family and friends is promoted, encouraged and maintained. Contact was discussed with two young people who felt that they were helped to stay in touch with family, and that their views on contact had been taken into account. The inspector noted good recording on supervised contact arrangements.</p>		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5) The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector found that children and young people have several means by which their views and opinions are sought, such as through the formal review process, via meetings with, and surveys conducted by, children's rights officers, and more informally through day to day discussion with foster carers.</p> <p>Questionnaires returned suggested that children and young people are often asked about the care that is being provided by their carers, but fewer reported being consulted about how the service itself was being run. However the inspector visited a home where the young person had just received a questionnaire to complete about this very subject, with the incentive of a gift voucher if it was returned.</p>		

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?**

1

Children and young people who returned their questionnaires had a lot to say about how the service looks after their health. There is clearly a focus in foster placements on healthy eating, proper dieting and exercise. 'I get plenty of fruit and veg'; 'I'm not allowed too many sweets' were some typical remarks, and this group also reported to be engaged in a wide range of physical activities and leisure pursuits.

All those looked after by Kirklees fostering are registered with local GPs, and have routine health checks with dentists and opticians. There was evidence on file of good working relationships with health professionals, and the service benefits from having a designated nurse.

Accidents and the administration of medication were found to be properly recorded, and there is specialist training for those caring for children with particular disabilities.

This standard is scored as 1 as the service has not properly assessed and provided appropriate equipment for a child with disability.

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?**

2

Again, questionnaires received from children and young people demonstrate that foster carers give education a high priority. 'My school work got better – she was pushing me to do it and kept asking the school for homework – it was a good thing really'. Carers clearly provide environments in which education and learning are valued, as these comments illustrate; 'If I don't understand my school work then my carers always help me', 'I get help with my homework' and 'School is going well'. Carers regularly attend parents evenings and open days.

The service keeps information about numbers of children and young people excluded from school, and other important information about their educational attainment that is regularly discussed with staff in education and other professionals. However, it was difficult to interpret some of this data; for example, some individuals had very high levels of unauthorised absences, but whether this was due to truancy or illness was not clear. It was also reported that when an individual absconds, schools are recording this as an 'authorised absence', which again does not help to give a clear picture. It is therefore difficult to assess, from this information, whether educational outcomes for children and young people in the care of Kirklees fostering are good or otherwise.

The paperwork currently used as the foster placement agreement does not include information consistent with Standard 13.

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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
Personnel records inspected were fully compliant with regulations. There is good practice in that all previous employment history is checked, and referees, as well as providing written references, are contacted by telephone. There are processes in place to renew Criminal Records Bureau and other checks on staff and carers after 3 years.			
Total number of staff of the agency:	11	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	6

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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

The inspector found the staff team to be appropriately qualified, and all were clearly knowledgeable and experienced in both social work and fostering. One foster carer reported that 'I have always found the fostering service (support) to be of an excellent standard'.

Carers had views on the process of recruitment and assessment: 'The focus on how bad things can be and the fear behind what happens when an allegation is made nearly put us off and has deterred several of our friends' wrote one carer. Others felt the assessment process was 'thorough but fair', and another wanted the service to 'lose some red tape and speed up the process'. One prospective carer had asked why they had been told the assessment process 'would take up to a year', when friends being assessed by a private agency had theirs completed in under half that time.

It was explained to the inspector that delay is sometimes caused by prospective carers taking a long time to complete the 'competence' part of the assessment, as it is up to them to provide the evidence. Along with the recommendations made under Standard 30, the inspector advises that this aspect of assessment is tightened up to avoid assessments drifting on unnecessarily, as this will clearly have an impact on the numbers of cares available for to the service.

Resources were also clearly an issue for some carers. 'A shortage of foster carers means the child is placed where possible, rather than in best place' and 'not having enough carers and having to rely on carers to cover placements at short notice' were noted as being the worst things about the service.

There are nearly 43 children and young people placed with independent fostering agencies, around 25% of all those accommodated, and the service's only emergency foster placement already has three children in placement. Exemptions are routinely used to overcome this deficit. This is not appropriate, and the way these have been arranged was found to be in conflict with Schedule 7 of the Children Act 1989.

Exemptions are intended to be time limited (one young person on exemption had been there for over 8 months) and at one time two children were placed on exemption. The new manager has already given high priority to addressing this issue and at the time of writing this report, has imposed clearer timescales on exemptions and will be monitoring these much more closely.

There is a recruitment drive in place, and one carer felt there was 'plenty of information and adverts' about fostering for Kirklees. One carer felt her skills could be used more in meeting potential foster carers and discussing with them the challenges and rewards of the job.

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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?	1
<p>The fostering service is still struggling to meet the requirement for annual reviews to be carried out. Annual review reports are prepared, and are available to panel if required, but the inspector is concerned that a carer who has had no post-approval training was able to be given re-approval without this being identified as an issue to be addressed.</p> <p>Although a couple of foster carers who returned their questionnaires felt that there was a 'Them' and 'us' attitude – it should be a team effort at all times', the majority of respondents felt that they were very well supported by the service. 'My support worker is fantastic', and 'I think we all work well together to provide 'circle of support' for the child' were some of the more typical responses.</p> <p>The service has a strategy for working with carers, contained within the Foster Carer handbook.</p>		

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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?**

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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

Case files of both foster carers and children and young people were in good order, which helped the inspection process, and information was easy to locate. There was evidence that files on children and young people are audited. This is good practice.

The inspector found that information kept at foster carers homes were kept safely and securely.

Life story work is undertaken to help children and young people to understand and come to terms with past events. One young person visited was proud to show the inspector the life story work being undertaken with him.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)			
The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.			
Key Findings and Evidence		Standard met?	3
The fostering services records for looked after children and foster carers were found to be compliant with Regulation 22 and 31 respectively.			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			195
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			194
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			195
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			27
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			22
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		216	Maximum £ 1577

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

1

Panel was found to be quorate, and functioning well. In particular there is good practice in relation to

- Both social workers and fostering officers present cases to panel.
- Good advice and intervention from panel adviser.
- Reviews/changes of profile – panel refers to previous panel minutes and information to help inform decisions
- Matching reports brought to panel for decisions on permanency.
- Good monitoring of Regulation 38 placements, and other cases that are deferred and need to come back to panel.
- Efficient administration of panel – members commented that they get paperwork in plenty of time.
- There is an on-going quality assurance of reports.

There are some areas for development, namely:-

- Inconsistent recording in reasons for recommendations (Reg 25) – the summary needs to be separate from reasons for recommendations
- Monitoring of variations/exemptions. These need to come to panel for information purposes and to identify where there are deficits in the system.
- Competences, contained within carers' portfolio, are an important part of the assessment process. One member of panel feeds back the information in these portfolios, but this appeared to be in an ad hoc rather than structured way, and some very important information came out almost by accident.

The 'F' form on its own is descriptive rather than analytical. Panel need to consider 'all relevant information', and the inspector advises that information on competences is contained in main assessment along with proper analysis by the assessing officer. An alternative would be to have more formalised feedback from and more rigorous questioning of whoever is reading the portfolio, but again there should be some analysis of the applicant's competences.

A new councillor is in the process of being appointed to panel.

The inspector recommends that applicants be invited to panel as a matter of course, rather than just when there are problems with the application.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector found that those providing short term care for children with disability work effectively with the parents of children for whom they care.

There are some specific support groups and training for these foster carers and they are also expected to complete some general foster carer training.

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 service has made good progress on the outstanding recommendations from the last inspection, and this standard is now met. The inspector visited 'friends and family' carers, who commented that things have improved greatly in terms of support and receiving information.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

N/a

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted between 14 and 25 February 2005 of Kirklees MC Family Placement Services and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We are working on the best way to include provider responses in the published report. In the meantime responses received are available on request.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
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

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
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:	<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 Kirklees MC Family Placement Services 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 Kirklees MC Family Placement Services 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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