



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **The Xcel 2000 Partnership Ltd**

8 London Road

Sittingbourne

Kent

ME10 1NA

8th November 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?**

NO

**Name of Authority**

**Address**

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES

**Name of Agency**

The Xcel 2000 Partnership Ltd

**Tel No**

01795 470222

**Address**

8 London Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1NA

**Fax No**

01795 436181

**Email Address**

enquiries@xcel2000.com

**Registered Number of IFA**

H060000603

**Name of Registered Provider**

Eric Worton

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

Diane Gay (Registration pending)

**Date of first registration**

5th November 2003

**Date of latest registration certificate**

14th September 2004

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

29.04.03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , & 11 <sup>th</sup> 11.2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am (start)	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Alex Turner	099984
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Felicity Reeves	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not applicable	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		Not applicable	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Diane Gay (Manager) / Eric Worton (Responsible Individual)	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

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**(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**
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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 The Xcel 2000 Partnership Ltd. 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.

Xcel 2000 is an Independent Fostering Agency as defined by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. There are currently thirty-five foster carers approved by the agency. In total seventy-one placements can be provided. At the time of the inspection forty-five placements had been made. The agency offers foster placements for assessment, support, respite and rehabilitation guided by individual children's and young peoples ongoing care plan. As appropriate placements can be made for the short, medium and long term and if required on an emergency basis. Foster carers benefit from clear systems of support including an allocated supervising social / support worker. There is a facility for day care provision for children who are not attending full time education. This provision is very much a stopgap intervention pending suitable educational arrangements being made in conjunction with the placing local authority and the local education authority / private tutoring organisations. Child centred therapy can be arranged if required. The office premises are close to Sittingbourne town centre and can provide a suitable venue for training, meetings and contact visits – supervised or otherwise. The agency has foster carers based in Kent, Medway and South East London.

## **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.)

The inspection was announced and conducted over four consecutive days with an additional visit to observe the fostering panel. Previous recommendations from the last inspection report had been incorporated into practice. A total of thirty out of thirty-two standards have been assessed (two standards were not applicable at the time of this inspection). Twenty standards have been rated as met, eight standards have been rated as almost met and two have been rated with standard exceeded. Throughout the inspection process the social work, administrative and management team were cooperative, open and receptive to the inspection process. Four foster homes were visited and the children and foster carers who took part in the inspection are thanked for the valuable contribution that they made. Eighteen children, seventeen foster carers and ten placing social workers completed pre inspection questionnaires again contributing significantly to the inspection process.

### **Statement of Purpose - Standard 1**

#### **Standard met.**

The Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide provides the information required by this standard. The Statement of Purpose reflected the operation of the fostering service at the time of this inspection.

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

#### **One of the standards was met.**

The qualifications, experience and achievements of senior personnel working within Xcel 2000 relate to their operational functions and support their fitness to carry on a fostering service. The manager of the fostering service had not at the time of this inspection attained a management qualification.

### **Management of the fostering service - Standards 4 & 5**

#### **Both standards were met.**

The fostering service has been managed with energy and diligence by people who are competent and committed to do so. Fostering practice is closely monitored; there has been ongoing quality assurance.

### **Securing and promoting welfare Standards 6 to 14**

#### **Seven standards were met / two standards were nearly met**

The agency operates in a manner that protects and promotes children's & young peoples welfare. Xcel 2000 have demonstrated a firm commitment to ensuring looked after children access suitable educational facilities. Recommendations made relate to documenting the factors taken into account in the matching process and refining safe care policies and guidelines with foster carers on an individual basis.



**Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers - Standards 15 to 23**

**Four standards were met / One standard had been exceeded / Three standards were nearly met**

Staff and foster carers were well managed. Foster carers were unanimous in their praise of the support provided to them by Xcel 2000. The staff team were complimentary of employment practices and expressed that they felt supported and enabled by the fostering service and their colleagues. Recruitment procedures for sessional staff and panel members need to be brought in line with regulatory requirements. Xcel 2000 has demonstrated commitment to ensuring all staff and carers have opportunities for training and professional development though recommendations have been made with regard to introducing a clear training needs analysis and linking training provision with identified needs and shortfalls.

**Records - Standards 24 & 25**

**One of the standards was met and one was nearly met**

Children's and foster carers files were legible, well organised and in line with the standards. Information retrieval was both quick and efficient. Shortfalls identified were in relation to specific information required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 not having been obtained and / or maintained.

**Fitness of premises for use as fostering service - Standard 26**

**The standard had been exceeded**

The premises of the fostering service met all the criteria of the standard and exceed them in some respects for instance in the facilities provided for meetings, training, day care and contact visits.

**Financial requirements - Standards 27 to 29**

**All three of the standards assessed were met.**

The agencies financial systems and procedures have been effective in maintaining and developing the ongoing operation of the agency.

**Fostering panels - Standard 30**

**Standard met**

The fostering panel has been constituted and has exercised its functions in line with the standard and regulatory requirements.

**Short-term breaks - Standard 31**

Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

**Family and friends as carers - Standard 32**

Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

## **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
			There were no statutory requirements made in the last inspection report (April 2003).

**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      Alex Turner

Signature



Second Inspector      Felicity Reeves

Signature

Locality Manager      Alison Spreadbridge

Signature

Date      25.11.04

## 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	7(2)(b)(i)	FS2	The Registered Person shall ensure the person appointed to manage the agency is suitably qualified to do so (see recommendation no.1)	01.04.05
2	20 & 22	FS15	The Registered Person shall ensure that all elements of schedule 1 & 2(2) (Foster Service Regulations 2002 (FSR2K2)) are met in respect of all persons employed (refer to FSR2K2 reg. 2(3) for definition of the term 'employing a person') by the Fostering Service.	01.02.05
3	28(5)(b)	FS22	The Registered Person shall make arrangements to review individual Foster Care Agreements at each annual review and where applicable to update these in line with regulations.	01.01.04
4	22	FS25	The Registered Person shall ensure that all elements of schedule 2(1) (Foster Service Regulations 2002) are maintained.	01.01.04

### 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	FS2	The Registered Person should ensure the manager of the agency begins appropriate management training as soon as is practicably possible.
2	FS4	The Registered Person should make arrangements aiming to ensure that any foster parent or prospective foster parent of the fostering service, and any child placed with a foster parent by the fostering service and the parent of any such child is aware that a regulation 42 report is produced and will be made available to them on request.
3	FS8	The Registered Person should make arrangements to evidence the specific elements of matching taken into account when placements are made and clearly identify what support will be provided to compensate for any gaps.
4	FS9	The Registered Person should ensure safe caring policy / guidelines are developed, based on a written policy, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household. The guidelines should be cleared with social workers making placements and are explained clearly and appropriately to any child placed with the foster carers.
5	FS12	The Registered Person should review the manner in which health care information is recorded aiming to have an up to date record of a child / young persons health care status which at the end of their placement can move with them.
6	FS19	The Registered Person should ensure there is a process introduced which identifies the training and development needs of foster carers and all staff involved in fostering work. Programmes of training should be linked to assessment of staff and carer needs, and relate to the tasks assigned to them.
7	FS30	The Registered Person should plan to include as an independent member of the panel a suitable person who has expertise in child health.

\* 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	4
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	08/11/04
Time of Inspection	0930
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	31.5

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Xcel 2000 has published a Statement of Purpose that provides clear and where necessary detailed information that describes the aims, objectives, facilities and services provided. A children's guide has also been published. At the foster homes the inspector visited young people confirmed they had received a copy of the guide.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager's application for registration with the Commission for Social Care Inspection is underway. The manager has a social work qualification and suitable experience to undertake the role. The manager has yet to attain a suitable management qualification or embark on a course to attain one thus constituting a minor shortfall against this standard. The majority of standards inspected however have been met thus indicating that the service has been organised, managed and staffed in a manner that has enabled the delivery of good quality fostering.

### 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

Records demonstrate that the checks specified in this standard have been completed and that the outcomes have been satisfactory.

## 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

The manager and staff of the fostering service were clear about their own and each other's roles. All staff members spoken to were well informed about the affairs of the fostering service indicating there is good communication between them. Clear lines of accountability have been established. Financial procedures are monitored by the directors leaving the manager to focus on social work / childcare practice. Records demonstrated that information regarding charges for services is provided to purchasers of services. The Fostering Service Regulations require registered managers to monitor specific matters with regard to the activities of the service and report on their findings. The first report relating to this exercise has recently been completed and was made available to the inspector. The report summarises relevant issues and details action for improvement. The manager's attention was drawn to whom these reports should be made available to. The recommendation was made to keep in mind the intended audience of the report and how best to inform these people that such a report is produced and is available to them on request.

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

X

**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.**

X

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

0

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

X

**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?****3**

The manager has a clear job description setting out duties and responsibilities and does not hold a similar position in another organisation. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, have been defined. Arrangements are in place to have a specific person in charge when the manager is absent.

## Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspectors visited four foster homes as part of the inspection process. The homes visited were warm; well maintained and free from any obvious health and safety hazards. Documentation demonstrated that foster carer's preparation and training cover health and safety issues and that carer's are provided with written health and safety guidelines. Where foster carers provide transport the fostering service carries out checks, for instance of insurance documents and MOT certificates. These checks and other health and safety checks of the foster carers home are carried out at the initial assessment and approval stage and then normally repeated as and when there are changes in circumstance or at the foster carers annual review.

### 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 agency works within a framework of equal opportunities. The recruitment of staff and foster carers aims to reflect the diversity of the areas the agency operates in and of the children / young people being referred. The agency gathers information about a child's background and individual circumstances at the point of referral and takes this into account in the matching process. Pre inspection questionnaires completed by fostered children confirm that their foster carers give them encouragement and provide opportunities to develop and pursue interests and hobbies. The training syllabus for foster carers covers the topics set out in this standard.

**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

Matching has been based on information sharing between the agency, the placing authority, the foster carers and wherever possible the child in question. Foster carers have commented verbally and in writing that information provided by placing social workers has at times been of questionable quality. In conversation with foster carers and supervising social workers it has been ascertained that discussion takes place between the foster carers and their supervising social / support worker regarding referrals and a collaborative decision is made whether to put the foster carers forward as a suitable match. The factors taken into account in the matching process were poorly documented. Foster placement agreements did not contain specific reference to the elements of matching taken into account when the placement was made and neither did they consistently identify support to compensate for any gaps. Foster carers have confirmed the decision to accept a placement rests with them.

**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

Training for foster carers incorporates topics identified in this standard. The recommendation was made to ensure each foster carer develops a safe care policy specific to their circumstances and to review and where necessary update these when a new placement is made. The written information / guidance provided to foster carers incorporates the topics set out in this standard including for example procedures relating to missing children and bullying. In conversation with young people and foster carers it was conveyed to the inspector that in their experience incidences of bullying had been recognised as such and effectively dealt with. The manner in which information about allegations, abuse or neglect is processed is in line with the standard.

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

X

%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

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

3

The foster carers handbook provides guidance relating to promoting contact and supporting children / young people in this area. The agency takes care to ensure contact arrangements have been discussed, agreed upon and recorded. Contact arrangements were reported to be one of the factors taken into account in the matching process. Where it has been agreed that contacts must be supervised the agency has done much to facilitate this and has taken into consideration the needs of children and the appropriateness of where contact should take place, the manner in which it is supervised and by whom. The outcomes and observations made in relation to contact visits have been recorded and fed back to placing social workers by amongst other means the statutory review process.

**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**

Foster carers gave examples of where children have made their views known and how these have been responded to positively for example choice in diet, activities, decorations and clothes. Comments made by children and young people indicate that Xcel 2000 have achieved a degree of success in ensuring that foster carers understand the importance of listening to children / young people and are able to do so effectively and respond appropriately. Information about how to make known any concerns or complaints is included in the children's guide. There has been regular communication between the agency and placing authorities.

**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**

The agency is well informed about health services local to the areas where they have foster carers providing placements. It was asserted that this information is taken into account in the matching process. In the files inspected information regarding children's health was patchy. It was confirmed that each child / young person was registered with a doctor and a dentist near to their foster home. The way in which health records are maintained was discussed. Recommendation was made to review the manner in which health care information is recorded aiming to have an up to date account of a child / young person's health care status which at the end of their placement can move with them. First aid training is provided for staff and foster carers. Foster carers role in promoting health is clearly set out in the foster carers handbook.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

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

The foster care agreement sets out the expectations placed upon foster carers by the agency in terms of their role in supporting a child's educational needs. Foster carers spoken to confirmed an awareness of their role and were able to give examples of some of the actions they had taken in relation to this. Foster carers have stated that the agency had provided support in this area when it was needed. Examples of the type of support provided included liaison with schools, use of the agency's day care provision and contracting services in for private tutoring. Written and verbal feedback from children and young people has included comments indicating they are being encouraged and supported by foster carers with their schoolwork. Efforts to ensure that children in foster care attend regular schools local to their foster homes have largely been successful.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Foster carers visited demonstrated they had understanding of the need to provide all children in their care with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills. One of the young people spoken to described being encouraged and supported to develop self-care skills and to secure work experience at their local college. For some of the young people the day care facilities provided have served to help them develop independent living skills. The fostering service and foster carers emphasised that planning for and work towards independence is child focussed and specific to each young persons circumstance.



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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has established recruitment procedures. The procedures include the completion of an application form and if short-listed a formal interview; follow up checks on references are carried out and an application made for a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure at the enhanced level. Social workers employed by the agency are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake their respective functions. The recruitment records relating to part time and sessional staff did not meet regulatory requirements in their entirety and a requirement has been made to address this shortfall.

Total number of staff of the agency:

15

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

2

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It was evident from speaking with staff of the fostering service that there are clear lines of accountability. Staff members were knowledgeable about their own role and the role of their colleagues. Staff said they enjoyed working with the fostering service and that they were managed well and supported in their work. Assessments, reviews and approvals of carers have been well managed; there was evidence to demonstrate foster carers annual reviews have been completed within a twelve-month time schedule. Administrative support is efficient and in tune with the needs of the service. The manager provides professional supervision and consultation for social work staff. Training opportunities are provided for staff and foster carers. Administrative support is efficient and in tune with the needs of the service. The service has access to medical and educational advice.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**  
**The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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Feedback from placing authorities and foster carers indicates that the staffing of the fostering service has been in line with meeting the needs of children placed and effective in terms of fulfilling its everyday business functions. Staff turnover has been low. The recruitment policy and strategy for staff and foster carers takes into account and aims to reflect the diversity of the areas in which the fostering service operates. The fostering service's assessment of prospective foster carers adheres to the criteria of this standard.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**  
**The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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Staff and foster carers were unanimous in their praise of the service in terms of employment practices and support. Foster carers spoken to were emphatic that support from the fostering service was always there whenever it was needed. There are established systems that have been evidenced in practice for the supervision, support and appraisal of all foster carers. Foster carers are all issued with a handbook containing amongst other information, details regarding health and safety and what is expected of them in relation to these matters. The directors of the fostering service confirmed that there is a public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**  
**There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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Training for staff and foster carers has been arranged. The training foster carers had attended was summarised in the annual reviews though did not clearly link to any identified shortfalls or developmental aspirations. There was no evidence presented to demonstrate that a training needs analysis had taken place or was informing the development of training programmes. It was confirmed that staff and carers do on occasions attend joint training sessions. The staff induction procedures serve to ensure new staff are supported and guided with respect to familiarising themselves to their roles and the day-to-day operation of the service.

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

Staff spoken to knew whom they were accountable to. They were complimentary about the support they received; this included formal systems of support via line management and supervision and more informal support for instance ad hoc advice and consultancy from colleagues. Job descriptions have been developed clearly detailing what is expected in terms of the capacity in which staff are employed. All staff members receive management supervision; a record is kept of the content of the supervision and of progress made. Supervision sessions have been regular and planned in advance. A system of staff appraisal is in operation. Regular staff meetings are held; it was confirmed that each member of staff has the opportunity to attend and contribute to these meetings.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)****The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****4**

Clear strategies have been developed for working with and supporting foster carers and these have been evidenced in practice. Foster carers that provided written feedback (x18) and verbal feedback (x8) were unanimous in the positive regard they had with respect to the support they were provided. Taking into account the views expressed by foster carers relating to the support received, the approachability of staff and the accessibility and responsiveness of the directors of the fostering service the rating of 4 (standard exceeded) has been awarded. The role of the supervising social / support workers was clearly articulated by foster carers and the workers themselves. Detailed annual review reports are prepared and made available to the fostering panel. Documentary evidence and feedback from placing social workers (x11) indicate effective communication has been established between the fostering service and placing local authorities.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)****The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Before taking any placements the Fostering Service and Foster Carers are obliged to enter into an agreement that sets out what is to be expected from the fostering service, the foster carers and placing authorities. The agreement (The Foster Care Agreement) has been updated in line with changes in legislation and now includes all but two of the matters that it should (relating to any applications to adopt children or for registration for child minding or day care and to make reference to the missing persons procedure). These matters must be included and the requirement was made to revisit the Foster Care Agreement at each annual review, update it where necessary and for each party to sign where changes have been made. Fosters carers are provided with a handbook and a policy and procedures manual. Foster carers visited said they had rarely needed to refer to this written information as support and information was always available from their supervising social worker.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

2

Pre-approval and induction training for each carer has been organised. Training foster carers had attended was summarised in their annual reviews though did not clearly link to any identified shortfalls or developmental aspirations. There was no evidence presented to demonstrate that an individual or collective training needs analysis had taken place or was informing the development of training programmes (see standard 19 & recommendation no.9). This was acknowledged and it was confirmed that plans are afoot to address this issue. The fostering service premises provide a suitable training venue. Examples of topics covered in the last years training programme include child protection, men in foster care, safe care and education of looked after children. In addition to the core training programme Foster carers have also been supported to attain relevant National Vocational Qualifications. There are systems to evaluate training provision though this is under review.

## 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

The case records of nine fostered children were inspected. The files demonstrated that the fostering service receives and takes into account information from placing authorities relating to children referred and subsequently placed. Where additional information has been required there was evidence indicating that this has been requested. The fostering service record agreed action plans following statutory child care reviews, contact arrangements and perceived outcomes / impact of contact visits. The files were well maintained and easy to navigate. Individual daily logs / diaries kept by foster carers were regularly reviewed by supervising social workers. Foster carers visited spoke about ways they had supported children placed with them to keep a record of life events including photographs, letters and other assorted keepsakes. Foster carers visited demonstrated awareness of the need to keep records securely.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A range of records was inspected including children's, staff and carers' files, and records of complaints, allegations and accidents. Separate records were kept for permanent staff and sessional workers (for instance independent social workers and panel members); the records relating to sessional workers were unsatisfactory and failed to meet regulatory requirements (see requirement no.2) The register of children placed via the Fostering Service was broadly in line with regulatory requirements though lacking detail with regard to childrens addresses. Records are stored securely and the premises are alarmed. The records were in the main clear and legible to read. The content of entries was in keeping with professional standards. Record retrieval systems were effective.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			45
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			45
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			44
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			7
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			3
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	385	<b>Maximum £</b>	600

## 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?**

4

Effective administrative systems have been established and continue to evolve, including computer and electronic communication systems. Measures have been taken to safeguard electronic data. The premises offer a suitable base from which staff may work. In addition to meeting the criteria of this standard the premises provide comfortable facilities for training sessions, meetings, and for supervised contact visits. There is also provision for day care service; there are plans to improve this facility pending relevant permissions from the local authorities planning / building department.

## 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 Chartered Accountants for Xcel 2000 have confirmed no problems were identified with the financial management of the agency following the audit for year ending 31/10/03. The accountants have offered the view that the directors are open to and follow their advice in terms of the financial position and budgets forecasts of the fostering service.

### 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 Chartered Accountant for Xcel 2000 has offered the view that the fostering services financial procedures are sound and adequate to ensure suppliers of goods and services are paid promptly and that payments to foster carers and staff are made in good time and on a regular basis. The accountants have confirmed that the fostering service uses a recognised accounting system, which produces regular monthly figures for the directors' scrutiny. The agency was not asked on this occasion to produce for inspection the written set of principles and standards that govern its financial management and whether these are communicated to its managers and accountants. It was also not ascertained during this inspection whether the agency has a written set of principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants, professional experts, directors, trustees and any manager. However, based on the combined findings of this inspection and those of the last a rating of 3 (standard met) has been recorded.



**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

Foster carers confirmed that they receive an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the financial cost of caring for each child or young person placed with them. Foster carers have said that payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually. The allowances paid are in line with the agency's written policy on fostering allowances. Foster carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them prior to any placements being made.

## 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?

3

There are clear written procedures that cover decision-making when unanimous decisions have not been reached. Clear stipulation is made requiring all panel members to undergo CRB checks. The inspector was informed that the current procedure for appointing panel members is under review, and in future recruitment records relating to panel members will meet regulatory requirements (see requirement no.2). The inspector attended a panel meeting where it was evident that there was access to medical expertise however it was the inspector's view that direct access to medical opinion would have further enhanced the discussion regarding an assessment. Evidence was obtained at the panel and also by discussion with the panel chair that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. The agency's commitment to ensuring consistency of approach in the assessment of potential foster carers was further evidenced by written guidance, provided to assessing social workers. The inspector considered this to be an example of good practise. Guidance for applicants is also being prepared. Observation of the panel confirmed that the panel receives management information about the outcomes of foster carers' annual reviews. The stated intention of the fostering service is to provide panel members with information relating to reviews before outcomes are determined. This was also considered by the inspector to be an example of good practise. Independent members of the panel include expertise in education and also a person who has been placed with foster carers. Expertise in child health is not included.

## 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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Not applicable at the time of this inspection.
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## 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?	9
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Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

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

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 8,9,10,11 November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

In general, we are pleased with the results of the inspection and we feel that the comments made reflect the hard work and commitment of our staff team over the past 12 months. We would however like to make the following comments.

The Registered Manager has now identified a suitable management course in order to comply fully with Regulation 7. The Registered Manager will commence the training within the next few weeks as soon as the course application has been processed.

We note your comments with regard to the recruitment of sessional workers including panel members, and we have immediately addressed this issue. This non-compliance was due to a misinterpretation and not a deliberate disrespect for the Regulation.

We accept that our matching records could be clearer and we have instigated a new procedure to improve this. This will include a better link between a child's needs and the skills of the prospective carers.

Individual safe caring policies for each foster family are continuing and will be completed by March 2005.

The Foster Care Agreement has now been amended and the new version will be presented at the carers' reviews as they are due.

We believe that our Childrens Register covers all the information required in Schedule 2(1), although we do accept that details regarding the addresses of children has been lacking, due in part to difficulty in obtaining these on occasion.

Overall, we believe the report is fair and offers reasonable and constructive comments, which we will adopt as we believe it will improve our practice and the service we offer.

Eric Worton  
Registered Provider

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

**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 10 January 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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"/> NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

**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 Mr Eric Worton of Xcel 2000 Partnership Ltd. confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

<b>Print Name</b>	<u>Eric Worton</u>
<b>Signature</b>	<u>On File</u>
<b>Designation</b>	<u>Registered Provider</u>
<b>Date</b>	<u>6<sup>th</sup> January 2005</u>

**Or**

**D.3.2 I Mr Eric Worton of Xcel 2000 Ltd. 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:**

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

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



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