



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering

Aneurin Bevan House

35 Avenue Road

Hartlepool

TS24 8HD

13th January and 24th – 28th January
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

Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering

Address

Aneurin Bevan House, 35 Avenue Road, Hartlepool, TS24
8HD

Local Authority Manager

Carole Snowdon

Tel No:

01429 523926

Address

Aneurin Bevan House, 35 Avenue Road, Hartlepool, TS24
8HD

Fax No:

01429 523906

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

06/10/03

Date of Inspection Visit		24th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Stephen Smith	073899
Name of Inspector	2	Darren Hobson	073895
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.		No Lay Assessor	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		No Specialist	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Carole Snowdon	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

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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**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

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 Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering. 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.

Hartlepool Borough Council Family Placement Service is based in Aneurin Bevan House in Hartlepool. The service recruits, assesses and supports foster carers to provide placements to children and young people with a wide range of needs including long term foster care, short term placements for teenagers and provides foster carers for young people with disabilities within a Sharing the Caring scheme. Additionally the service assesses and supports kinship carers and provides remand foster carers. At the time of the inspection visit the service was supporting eighty-seven foster placements across these various areas of work. At the time of this inspection the family placement team included a staff team of eight people including the manager and an administrative support worker and, in addition to providing a fostering service, also recruits and places children with adoptive parents. This inspection only considers the fostering service provided by the team.

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.)

It is evident from this inspection that Hartlepool Borough Council Family Placement Team Fostering Service offers an effective and efficient fostering service that delivers positive outcomes for the young people it has placed with foster carers. Particularly commendable is the effectiveness of the management and staff team of the service and the fact that a high quality of support and supervision for foster carers has continued through a period of staff turnover and change in management.

During the inspection four foster carers were case tracked including two "mainstream" carers, a respite carer and a "kinship" carer placement. These placements were clearly receiving high levels of support from the family placement team and were producing positive outcomes for the majority of the young people fostered. One situation was obviously difficult for a young person and the foster carers concerned but it was clear that the service was engaged in appropriate activities to address this situation for the benefit of the young person.

The outcomes for children have been identified in this report are set out below in accordance with the five outcomes in 'Every Child Matters' published in 2004 by the Department for Education and Skills.

Being Safe:

The fostering service undertakes comprehensive assessments of all prospective carers, considering their competencies as well as their attitudes. It was noted that the quality of these assessments and subsequent reviews of foster carers is high and it is positive that young people's views are sought as part of foster carers reviews. Additionally, the quality of the records of young people's reviews is good and demonstrates that reviews are thorough. Records in staff files did not, at the time of the inspection, provide sufficient evidence that full checks of identity, qualifications and references had taken place for staff employed by the service. The service's fostering panel was not at the time of the inspection correctly constituted and this needs to be addressed to ensure that decisions and recommendations made are in line with the relevant regulations. Young people's records examined did not all contain full Looked After Children documentation; it is important that this is in place to ensure that foster carers have full up-to-date information about the young people in placement. The service provides child protection training to its carers but should ensure that anti-bullying and safe caring training is provided and that all carers having a safe caring policy for their own home. Foster carer training is given a priority by the service and it is positive that approximately one quarter of its foster carers are undertaking NVQ training in childcare to level 2 or 3. Written guidance in the foster carers' handbook provides information on health and safety, health promotion, identification of abuse, drug and alcohol awareness and sex education. The service has taken robust action in responding to allegations and complaints against foster carers in order to promote the emotional and physical well-being of the young people concerned. Children and young people consulted during the inspection said that they feel safe in their foster homes and, when asked about sanctions, all reported methods of appropriate behaviour management. "One young person stated in the questionnaire returned, "My carers works hard to get me the right help and keep me safe. She is kind and

caring and has helped me through some difficult times.”

Being Healthy:

An examination of foster carers' and children's files showed that appropriate health information is maintained in respect of children's health needs. Children receive annual health assessments and information about children's health is available to carers and children in placement. The young people spoken to during the inspection were all registered with a GP. Training is provided to foster carers in first aid, food hygiene and health and safety as well as in specific conditions that young people may have. Information on young people's sexuality and sexual health education is included in the foster carers' handbook. Foster carers interviewed said that the service helps them to meet the young people's health needs and the young people consulted, in person or by questionnaire, during the inspection described how their carers help them with their health needs. Young people's files examined did not all contain full information in respect of a health plan for the young person.

Achieving and Enjoying:

Not all school aged children who were case tracked as part of the inspection had personal education plans (PEP's) in place in their file but it was clear that the young people case tracked were supported by their foster carers and their social workers to attend and achieve at school. All of the children with whom the inspectors had contact stated that they were happy within their placements and were engaged in social and leisure activities and discussion with foster carers, staff and examination of records showed the wide range of activities undertaken by foster children. Young people's comments included, "I've got socialised and go out more", "I'm helped to learn things" and "We go on a lot of holidays." One young person stated the best thing about the foster placement as "Meeting new people and being treated like other children."

Making a Positive Contribution to Society:

Children interviewed and those who completed questionnaires showed that they are involved in a range of community activities based on their own preferences including attending out of school activities and leisure pursuits. It is noteworthy that eleven of the thirteen young people consulted by questionnaire said that foster carers ask and take account of their opinions and the same number said they are consulted about their foster carers. Ten of the young people consulted by questionnaire said they know how to make a complaint and those children interviewed who were able to express a view echoed this. All of the children interviewed commented positively on their fostering experience. Children who are of an age whereby they are preparing for independence were found to have pathway plans in place, and guidance in respect of health issues, drug and alcohol awareness, keeping safe and sexual health is available to children.

Social and Economic Well-being:

It is the view of the inspection team that children placed in foster care with Hartlepool Borough Council fostering service are generally well supported and provided with care and nurture which will aid their personal and social development. Young people interviewed and those who completed questionnaires expressed positive views of their care. Comments in questionnaires include, "I am well looked after", "I am a lot happier in myself", "I am very happy here. I do not want to move" and "I want to stay where I am now." Foster carers are well trained and supported by an experienced and well-qualified team of social work practitioners. The children's records maintained examined during the inspection did not all include full Looked After Children Documentation but would if they were to be examined by a child contribute to the understanding of the individual's life events. Young people leaving

care are supported by the authority, with work done by foster carers and social work staff to promote independence and find and maintain appropriate post 16 educational/employment placements.

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	22	FS25	The children's register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 22 and Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	To be met by 31/03/04
2	31	FS25	The foster carers' register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	To be met by 31/03/04

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	
This area is not applicable as Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service is not registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Stephen Smith	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Darren Hobson	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Christine Wharton	Signature	_____
Date	7th Aril 2005		

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, 20	FS3 FS15	Recruitment records in respect of the manager and staff of the service must include evidence that all the information required by Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 has been obtained in respect of the person.	To be met by 31/05.05
2	28	FS9	The new foster carer agreements that include all the matters set out in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 must be issued to all foster carers.	To be met by 31/05.05
3	22	FS25	The children's register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 22 and Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	To be met by 31/03/04
4	31	FS25	The foster carers' register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	To be met by 31/03/04
5	24	FS30	The service must ensure that the fostering panel is constituted in line with Regulation 24 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	To be met by 30/04/05

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	FS1	It is recommended that the fostering service issues the young person's guide to all young people placed with foster carers.
2	FS3 FS15	Recruitment records in respect of the manager and staff of the fostering service should include evidence that telephone calls are made to follow up written references.
3	FS6	It is recommended that evidence on foster carers' files that Criminal Records Bureau disclosures have taken place makes clear that the disclosure was undertaken at Enhanced level and related to working with children.
4	FS8	The new placement agreement that has been developed should be used for all placements.
5	FS9 FS23	It is recommended that foster carers are provided with anti-bullying and safe caring training.
6	FS9 FS6	A safe caring policy should be developed for each foster home and considered for its appropriateness at each new placement.
7	FS24 FS25	The authority should ensure that full Looked After Children documentation is in place on all young people's files and that the files are accurate and up to date.
8	FS25	It is recommended that the authority give consideration as to how management information regarding the number of new placements made can be separated from respite care episodes.
9	FS30	The fostering service should endeavour to appoint to panel a person who has been placed with foster carers or the parent of such a person as is set out in Standard 30.9 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. This recommendation was identified at a previous inspection.

* 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
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	24/01/05
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	75

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

Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service has a statement of purpose in place that meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and contains all the information set out in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Staff members spoken to were aware of the content of this statement and it is evident that it is reviewed whenever changes occur and is agreed formally agreed by elected members of the council.

Foster carers spoken to said that they have received a copy of the statement of purpose and that it accurately reflects the service's practice. Policies and procedures examined during the inspection reflected the statement of purpose.

The service's children's guide is presented in a leaflet form to make it easily accessible to refer to, contains useful information for young people and summarises the statement of purpose. Seven of the thirteen young people who returned questionnaires, however, said that they had not received a copy of the young person's guide or a similar leaflet and it is, therefore, recommended that the service issues this document to all young people placed with foster carers.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

It is evident from this inspection that Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service is effectively and efficiently managed and has made considerable progress in developing its services over the last two to three years. The period of time since the last inspection has seen continued staff changes and the recent departure of the previous manager. The service's new manager has taken up her post only two weeks before this inspection. Despite these changes, foster carers, young people, placing social workers and the teams own supervising social workers spoke very highly of the effective work carried out by the team. This effectiveness was noted throughout the inspection particularly in terms of the high quality of foster carer assessments and reviews, the processes for seeking the views of young people and the support and training provided to foster carers. It is commendable that the social services department's line management and the staff of the fostering service have continued to work so effectively throughout this period. The new manager is appropriately qualified and has a significant levels of experience and the organisation provides effective line management support and close oversight of the service. Evidence examined during the inspection, showed that the service is operated within a suitable budget that is appropriately monitored.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

It is clear from the inspection that the organisation and manager are suitable to run a fostering service in terms of the skills, competencies and procedures brought to the service. The service's recruitment records in respect of the manager, however, did not contain evidence of proof of her identity being sighted or evidence of her qualifications as required by Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Additionally there was no evidence on file to show that telephone enquiries had been made to follow up written references received. It is accepted that the manager has been employed by Hartlepool Borough Council for a number of years but evidence of a rigorous recruitment procedure must be maintained.

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

It is clear from all records examined and from discussions with the manager, staff, members, foster carers and external professionals that the service has a clear procedure in place by which the manager is able to monitor the operation of the fostering service.

Foster carers spoken to said that the service is effective at communicating with them and responding to any requests for support and it was clear from discussion with the manager that, despite her newness in post, she is already familiar with many aspects of running the fostering service and knows foster carers and young people from her previous post within the department.

An established and well-developed staff supervision and appraisal system is in place, team meetings take place on a regular basis and there is a clear identification of roles and responsibility within the service. A system is in place to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of significant events in line with Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 which applies to independent agencies.

Clear evidence of careful work taking place was available in relation to the two recorded complaints against foster carers and the child protection enquiries that had taken place with the fostering service carrying out its role effectively in the investigation and response to these issues.

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

3

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.

1

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.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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**

It is clear from the inspection that the fostering service of Hartlepool Borough Council provides an effective fostering service that is appreciated by the placing social workers who use the service. Placing social workers said that communication with the fostering team is very good and that it takes appropriate action with regard to foster carers where necessary. During discussions, many examples of close working between fostering and placing social workers were cited and this represents a particular strength of the service. Foster carers, young people also commented very favourably about the service. Clearly defined job descriptions are in place and areas of responsibility within the team have recently been redefined with the creation of a deputy manager's post to formalise lines of responsibility and accountability in the manager's absence. Staff members interviewed were aware of their own roles and responsibilities and were all knowledgeable about the operation of the service and its activities and expressed their satisfaction with the management arrangements.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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During the inspection process four foster carers who had young people placed with them were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors welcome in their home and cooperated fully with the inspection process. It was clear from these visits and discussions that foster carers provide warm, comfortably furnished accommodation and that supervision and support by the fostering service is of high quality and supports the quality of the young people's placements. Responses in foster carers' questionnaires showed that carers feel generally very well supported by the service and that a high degree of training is provided. Evidence that a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure has been undertaken is contained on foster carer's files though it is recommended that this evidence makes clear that the disclosure was undertaken at Enhanced level and related to working with children. One foster placement case tracked was experiencing difficulties at the time of the inspection and it was evident that the supervising and placing social workers were working hard to address the situation for the wellbeing of the young person concerned.

Examination of foster carers' records and discussion with staff members and foster carers demonstrated that the foster carer assessment, approval and review processes are commendably thorough and represent good practice in these areas. Health and safety issues are covered in foster carer induction training and health and safety checklists of foster carers' homes are undertaken during assessment and at review and information is provided about this issue within the foster carer handbook. Foster carer assessment and review processes also include checks on any transport provided to ensure its safety. It was noted, however, that foster carers do not have safe caring policies for their homes in place.

Clear evidence was available of the action taken by the fostering service to deal with issues in which complaints or allegations had been made against foster carers

All young people spoken to comment favourably about their foster carers and their accommodation as did those who returned questionnaires. One young person, said in the questionnaire returned, the best thing about the fostering service is that the foster carers "are kind, they help you". Another said the best thing about the fostering service is "Being in a warm, kind, caring home that protects me from my dad, the skills I am being taught, being with my carer, feeling safe, being happy and getting help and support." Eleven of the thirteen young people who returned questionnaires stated that their foster carers ask their opinions about things and that the fostering service asks their opinions about their foster carers.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

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

The Foster Carer Guidelines set out the need for foster carers to value and work positively to address each individual child's needs and training in anti-discriminatory practice and is included in training provided to foster carers.

Foster carers, social work staff and the young people's social workers commented on the careful consideration given to each young person's needs and the close working relationships between all parties to ensure that each child's needs are met. All young people spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that they were happy with their foster placement and their carers and said that the placement met their needs. Evidence was available to demonstrate that young people are encouraged to develop friendships and become involved in clubs and activities based on their interests. The overwhelming majority of young people consulted said that foster carers ask their opinions on matters concerning them and take these into account; they also said that the service asks their opinions about their foster carers.

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**

It is clear from interviews with foster carers and placing social workers that efforts are made to ensure a suitable match between the young person and foster carer takes place. Foster carers interviewed said that they were involved in the matching process and generally the process worked well but some said that they did not always get sufficient information about the young person before their placement. Examination of the Looked After Children (LAC) Documentation Placement Plan Part II used as foster placement agreements showed that they did not adequately refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and any actions required to compensate for any gaps. The fostering service has developed a new placement agreement to use instead of LAC agreement. This document will cover all the necessary areas of matching considerations and should be implemented for all placements. It was positive to note that, where appropriate, young people's files contained 'Form E' assessments carried out to assist the matching process.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The fostering service places a high priority on safeguarding and protecting the young people it places with foster carers. Foster guidelines set out acceptable and unacceptable punishments and all foster carers spoken to were familiar with these and said that their practice was in line with the requirements. This was confirmed by the responses from the young people, none of whom cited any punishments that are unacceptable taking place. Foster carers have received training in behaviour management and managing violence and aggression and training for foster carers in child protection is continuing on an ongoing basis. Safe caring information and guidelines are in place in the foster carers handbook as is information relating to bullying and unauthorised absence and the organisation has policy and procedural guidance relating these issues. Appropriate management systems are in place within the service to collate any information relating to child abuse or neglect.

It is noted, however, that foster carers have not received training in safe caring or in dealing with bullying and it is recommended that this training be provided. Additionally it was noted that foster carers do not have a specific safe caring policy for their own homes as set out in Standard 9.3 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. Such a policy should be developed for each foster home and considered for its appropriateness at each new placement.

The Foster Carer Agreements used by the service meet the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and require foster carers to comply with the organisation's policies relating to child protection, behaviour management and unauthorised absence. It was noted, however, that not all foster carers have received and signed this agreement and are working under a previous agreement that did not make this requirement specific. New foster carer agreements must be issued to and agreed with all foster carers.

The young people spoken to said that they feel safe and those who completed questionnaires repeated this view. Placing social workers interviewed all said that they were satisfied that the young person they were responsible for was safe. When asked, none of the young people spoken to said they were being bullied but information regarding the percentage of children placed by the service who report never, or hardly ever bullied is not available for this report, as it is not gathered in the young people's questionnaire and therefore there is not enough responses to be statistically valid. Ten of the thirteen young people who completed questionnaires said that they know how to make a complaint if necessary.

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**

Information in young people's records contained clear information about contact arrangements with families and foster carers interviewed were aware of this information and were complying with it. The fostering service has developed its own placement agreement that will cover information about contact more fully than the LAC Placement Plan Part II. In situations where contact takes place, carers were clearly working hard to support this and evidence of examples of very good practice by foster carers was noted.

Information given to foster carers and training during induction covers issues relating to contact with families and the service's policy and procedural guidance relating to contact has been developed further since the last inspection. One young person who completed a questionnaire said asked the inspectors to include in the inspection report a comment that she would like more contact with her family. This information was discussed with the service's management team who undertook to consider the possibility of this request.

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**

Evidence from discussion with young people, foster carers and placing social workers as well as staff from the fostering service showed that the young people's opinions are sought and acted on and that where possible and appropriate their families opinions are taken into account. Young people's records viewed evidenced their involvement in reviews and records showed that visits to the foster home by staff of the service include talking to the young person in private. Additionally it is clear that young people's views are sought at the time of foster carer reviews and at the end of placements. Information is given to young people within the children's guide about how to raise concerns or complaints, including how to access advocacy services and records held in the fostering service and discussion with staff members showed that action is taken promptly when any concern is raised. Thirteen questionnaires were returned by young people, of which eleven said that they are asked their opinions by their foster carers and that the service consults them about their carers and the care they receive.

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 examination of young people's files showed that the health care needs of young people placed are given appropriate consideration by the service. This was confirmed by interviews with staff members, placing social workers, foster carers and young people. Foster carers receive Looked After Children (LAC) documentation on the young people they take which includes health information. Young people's care plans examined contained information about the child's health needs and evidence of links with health professionals was apparent and foster carers maintain daily records including health information which are used as part of the planning and review process. Young people's files examined did not, however, all include health plans for the young person concerned. Foster carers interviewed were able to demonstrate their awareness of the health needs of the young person placed with them, the action taken to address these needs and situations in which they would require consent to arrange treatment. All young people, whose foster carers were case tracked, were appropriately registered with appropriate health professionals and their ongoing health is monitored during their LAC reviews. Young people spoken to and those who returned questionnaires described how they are assisted by their foster carers in terms of their health needs. The fostering service has policy and procedural guidance in place relating to the health needs of the young people and foster carers receive guidance and training in health and health and hygiene issues.

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**

Foster carers interviewed said that their induction training covered issues about young people's educational needs and all those spoken to explained how they work with young people and schools to promote educational achievement and cited examples of hard work and commitment in working with schools and other services to promote the educational needs of the young person placed with them. Young people spoken to said that they receive help with their education.

The foster placement agreements examined set out the actions needed to meet the educational needs of the young person placed and clear evidence was available in the young people's files inspected of work carried out with other professionals to arrange educational services and promote educational achievement. Support is available for young people to promote and support their educational achievement as necessary. The fostering service has procedural guidance relating to education in place and includes information about the promotion of educational achievement in the foster carers' handbook. Not all young people's files examined contained Personal Education Plans.

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

It is clear from the inspection that appropriate information is made available to foster carers within the foster carers handbook regarding the promotion of skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Support is in place also from the authority's leaving care social workers and examination of young people's records showed that Pathway Plans are in place for young people where appropriate. Foster carers interviewed spoke knowledgeably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood and evidence was available in young people's files of work being carried out with other professionals and agencies.

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

It is apparent from the examination of social work staff members' files that the people concerned are appropriately professionally qualified and continue to undertake training appropriate to their role. Those staff members interviewed during the inspection process demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role. Each was able to talk about examples of their work that demonstrated their competence in their role and examination of Form F assessments and approval reports gave further evidence of the high quality of the work carried out.

It is evident from the inspection that staff recruitment practices within the service are generally thorough and evidence was available to demonstrate that all staff members' are subject to Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures at enhanced level. Staff members' files examined however did not contain evidence that telephone calls had been made to follow up written references and one file did not contain evidence of the person's proof of identity and qualifications.

Total number of staff of the agency:

7

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

3

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

All staff within the fostering team receive monthly supervision provided by the manager of the service with appropriate records being maintained of these meetings. It is clear that the service has been effectively organised and managed both prior to and after the departure of the previous manager. The staff team are appropriately qualified and experienced and ongoing training is provided. Staff members spoken to during the inspection were clear about their own responsibilities and how these fit with the roles of colleagues in the children and families teams and the management structure within the organisation. Staffing levels within the team are good with seven social work staff supporting around 75 carers including mainstream, respite, kinship, remand and youth carers. It is commendable to note that despite the level of staff turnover in the past year that foster carers expressed the view that the quality of support from the fostering service remains good. Copies of the departments policies and procedures are in place and accessible to staff.

The fostering service has clerical and administrative support and during interviews staff reported that administrative systems are effective.

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?

4

It is evident from interviews and observation of records that the authority provides an effective fostering service that is producing positive outcomes for the young people placed. Foster carers and placing social workers interviewed said that they thought they fostering service carries out its functions effectively and that it is sufficiently well staffed by appropriately qualified people. The majority of people interviewed expressed the view that the work carried out had not suffered during the recent changes in the staff team. Clear evidence of staff members' undertaking training and receiving planned, recorded staff supervision is available. Records maintained within the service are of good quality and clearly structured.

Observation of records of foster carer assessments demonstrated that these are commendably thorough and detailed. The work undertaken assesses competence and aptitude as well as exploring applicants' attitudes and their motivation for applying to foster children. Evidence was available of all appropriate people being contacted regarding their views of the applicant and any identified issues being explored. All foster carers spoken to said that they thought the recruitment and assessment process was thorough and appropriate. Clear evidence was available in foster carers' files of the full assessment process, the consequent approval report for panel, the minutes of the panel's deliberations as to their suitability and the recommendation made to the authority's decision maker.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The authority has well developed staff employment procedures in place and evidence available during the inspection showed that the service operates within these and clear guidance is provided for foster carers in their handbook. The supervision system for foster carers is effective with foster carers being visited around once per month with supervision taking place on an at least three monthly basis. All foster carers spoken to said that they value the high level of support they receive. Foster carers also commented positively about the out of hours support provided by the Emergency Duty Team. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place as is a health and safety policy and whistle blowing procedure of which carers and staff are aware. Appropriate insurance arrangements are in place for the service and for foster carers with these arrangements being set out in the Foster Carer Agreements. Foster carers' reviews were noted to be thorough and include the views of young people in placement.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The fostering service provides a structured induction training programme and training continues based on an individual basis identified by the staff member and the manager during supervision. A clear record is maintained of training undertaken. Team meetings take place on a regular basis. Some training is available jointly to staff members and foster carers if appropriate and all parties spoken to about this said that this is of benefit. Staff members interviewed said that training provided by the organisation is of good quality and that a great commitment is shown towards staff training and staff involvement.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Evidence available at the inspection showed that a formal, structured supervision system exists for all staff. This takes place regularly, is minuted and records include the agenda and details of the discussion. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members. Staff members interviewed said that they are well managed and supported by the manager. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. A formal staff appraisal system is in place. Supervising social workers work closely with the childcare social work teams to ensure that communication is effective.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The service maintains effective procedures and has a clear strategy for supporting carers. Staff guidance is contained with the authority's policies and procedures, some of which are specific to the fostering service. Additional guidance is set out for carers in the form of the foster carers handbook, and both carers and staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the supervising social worker. During interviews with supervising social workers and children's social workers the issue of communication between the teams and clarity of roles was explored. All parties expressed the view that communication is very good with all necessary information being shared. All parties were clear about their own roles and how they relate to those of other professionals and described working relationships as effective.</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?**

4

It is evident from feedback from foster carers that the level and quality of support and supervision of carers is good. Very favourable comments were received from the four sets of foster carers interviewed during the inspection and this view was supported by the carers who returned questionnaires who expressed the view that support from supervising social workers is good. Comments made in respect of supervising social workers by carers included the one comment that the foster carer's supervising social worker "supports me emotionally and professionally", another said "I feel that they operate an open door policy at all levels." A further comment made was "They do a fab job considering the changes of staff in the next couple of years. I have always felt they have excellent knowledge of my foster son and family."

The quality of guidance available to carers is good. The carers' handbook is presented in an easily accessible format. Carers interviewed demonstrated a sound understanding of their responsibilities and had an appropriate level of awareness in how to make complaints and deal with allegations of abuse. Clear records are maintained of any allegations against foster carers and robust action has been taken by the authority, where necessary, to de-register foster carers where practice has not been appropriate. Records of foster carer supervision sessions are maintained on file and these are generally well recorded. Reports of reviews of carers are good. Some negative comments about support were made by foster carers, though these were generally related children's social work staff and a perceived lack of support afforded by them.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Evidence was available at the inspection to demonstrate that all foster carers undertake comprehensive and thorough induction training as part of the recruitment and assessment process and that this training continues for foster carers either as identified individually or as mandatory training. Where couples provide foster care, training is offered to both partners. Training includes a range of courses relating to working with emotionally damaged young people and those with special needs as well as induction training including health and safety, infection control and food hygiene. The fostering service has 13 foster carers currently undertaking NVQ training in childcare at either level 2 or 3. Foster carers reviews include the identification of training needs and foster carers said that they are involved in identifying their own training needs and can make requests for specific training that the service endeavours to meet. The service carries out an evaluation of the training provided. Training records showed that a great deal of training has been undertaken since the last inspection including managing behaviour, child protection and training about the irreplaceable family. It was noted, however, that safe caring training and anti-bullying training has not been provided to foster carers and it is recommended that this take place.

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?	2
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Children's files examined were generally well structured with the information contained being easily accessible. The majority of the files of the children case tracked as part of the inspection were found to hold relevant LAC documentation although some files were noted to not contain Personal Education Plans and one file contained an Essential Information Record that had not been updated to reflect a change of a young person's looked after status. Additionally, one file did not contain a care plan in respect of the young person and in a number of instances health plans were not in place and the social worker's three monthly summaries had not been fully completed. It was noted that the quality of young people's review records was particularly good. The young people that the inspectors had contact with said that they were aware of the plans in respect of them and had been consulted about them. Inspectors were of the view that the recording arrangements for children's information would if examined by a child contribute to their understanding of their life events. It was positive to note that, in long term fostering situations, Form E's were in place on children's files

Foster carers interviewed said that they are generally well informed of the identified needs of the young person in their care and were involved in reviews and case conferences appropriately. The view was expressed that in some situations there is not sufficient information about a young person when they arrive but that this was an issue for the young person's social worker rather than the fostering service who, they felt shared as much information as there was available. Arrangements are in place to ensure that information in the carers' households is retained confidentially.

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

At the time of the inspection the fostering service's administrative records were generally well maintained. Foster carers' records were comprehensive and the detail and content of foster carer assessments, reviews and records of approval decisions were noted to be of high quality. The children's and foster carers' registers did not however, at the time of the inspection, contain all the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The authority's information technology system does not produce all the necessary information in one place and while it is acknowledged that the service does hold the required information it must be available in the form of a register in order to comply with regulations. Young people's records held are contained in the children's social work team files but, as noted earlier did not all contain the necessary information. Recording in files was noted to be clearly evidence based and records of the approval process showed a clear separation between facts and their interpretation. Evidence was available to show that the manager regularly monitors the content and quality of recording in the fostering service's records.

The service has a system to record any complaints and any allegations made and records of the actions undertaken to investigate and respond to any issues are maintained.

The figure cited below of number of placements made in the last twelve months includes each individual respite care episode that occurred as the authority's system was not able to separate this information from the number of new placements made and it is recommended that this situation receives attention in order to produce this management information for the service.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	87
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	431
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	8
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	13
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	108.00
Maximum £	504

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used by the fostering service are easily identifiable as office premises and are shared with other children's services of Hartlepool Borough Council Department of Social Services. Access arrangements are appropriate. The fostering service is equipped with IT and communications systems and appropriate security measures are employed with relation to the safe storage of confidential information and the information retained on the computer system. Lockable and secure storage facilities for confidential information are available.

The premises comprise sufficient space and facilities for the operation of the fostering service. The service was, at the time of the inspection, beginning arrangements to move into larger offices in the same building. Training facilities for staff and foster carers are available at the department's training facility.

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

At the time of the inspection the manager of the fostering service was able to provide a detailed annual budget for the service that showed that it operates on a secure financial footing. Evidence from interview with the manager and examination of the services budget statements showed that the financial situation is monitored and reviewed by the organisation regularly.

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

It is clear from the inspection that the financial procedures of Hartlepool Borough Council are extended to the fostering service and such there is a clear set of principles and standards governing the financial situation and satisfactory management oversight of the services finances to ensure satisfactory operation of the service.

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

Evidence gained during the inspection showed that foster carers receive an allowance that covers the cost of caring for the young person placed with them and that the fostering service's youth carers receive a fee in addition to this allowance. Clear information is provided in the foster carer agreement about foster carer payments. None of the foster carers interviewed expressed any concern about the level of or arrangements for allowances.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

During the inspection the minutes of panel meetings and supporting documentation including Form F assessments and approval reports were examined and a panel meeting was observed. It is evident that the fostering service's panel engages in a thorough consideration of the information presented to it, has a clear structured decision making process and that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. The quality of information presented to panel was noted to be high and careful consideration was given to each issue.

At the time of the inspection, however, it was noted that the panel is comprised of eleven members and, as such, its composition is not in line with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. This was discussed with the service's management team and a plan was developed to correct this situation. Additionally it was identified, as at previous inspections, that the panel membership does not include '...a person who has been placed with foster carers or the parent of a child placed with foster carers' as is set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.

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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Hartlepool Borough Council Family Placement Team operates a respite or 'shared' care service provided to parents of children with disabilities through which young people are placed for short periods on a planned basis with foster carers recruited specifically for this purpose. The service has a designated supervising social worker who advises and supports carers, undertakes formal assessments of prospective carers and provides continued formal supervision once approved. This service is fully managed within the fostering service and the worker has well developed links with the children with disabilities social work team. Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that this area of work receives the same level of attention as the work with mainstream carers.	
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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?	3
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Evidence was available at the inspection from a visit to family carers, discussion with staff members, examination of records and from observation of panel minutes that the service responds to family and friend carers in the same manner as other foster carers. It was clear that the process of assessment and support is the same as for any other foster carer and, although assessment is often undertaken after the child has moved to the home, this is carried out within the six week period allowed for emergency placements with friends or family of the child. Full training is offered, however the service is sensitive to the fact that some kinship carers do not view themselves as foster carers within the normal sense of the term.

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 13th, 24th and 28th January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Providers comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

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

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 5th April 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all 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 Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering 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 Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering 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.

Commission for Social Care Inspection
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