



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Brighton and Hove Fostering Services

253 Preston Road

Brighton

East Sussex

BN1 6SE

28th February – 4th March and 16th March
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

Brighton and Hove Fostering Services

Address

253 Preston Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6SE

Local Authority Manager

Sharon Donnelly

Tel No:

01273 295445

Address

253 Preston Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6SE

Fax No:

01273 295444

Email Address

Sharon.Donnelly@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

12-16/01/04

Date of Inspection Visit		28 th February – 4 th March and 16 th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Camilla Wood	078390
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Corrie McKeown	
Name of Inspector	3	Mr Paul Taylor	
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms Sharon Donnelly	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Fostering and Adoption service employs a total of 66 staff and is organised into a number of teams each with specific areas of responsibility: fostering, family and friends, concurrency, placement support, and permanence and adoption. The service was undergoing minor restructuring at the time of the inspection resulting in the placement support team and the special placement service being brought together into a single team.

The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of carers.

There are two panels. The fostering panel is responsible for making recommendations about the approval of short-term foster carers, family and friends carers and Barnardo's Link Plus carers. The permanence panel is responsible for recommending the approval of long-term foster carers, concurrency carers and prospective adopters. The agency decision maker is also the Head of Child Protection for Brighton and Hove. Both panels are chaired by the same independent chair, and are supported by a professional advisor. The professional advisors are non-operational managers within the service and play a quality assurance and policy development role.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This was the third inspection of the Brighton and Hove fostering service since the introduction of the National Minimum Standards. It was positive to find that all of the recommendations from the inspection in 2004 had been addressed.

Inspectors concluded that the service is operating effectively and efficiently. Staff showed a commitment to reflective practice and to the development of the service. They are keen to learn from other fostering organisations and to share their own good practice with others.

No failures to meet statutory regulations were identified during the inspection. All of the minimum standards were met; some were exceeded.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The fostering service has a comprehensive and detailed statement of purpose available to foster carers and professionals as a written document and on the service website. Age appropriate information about fostering is provided to children and young people.

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

The service is managed efficiently and effectively by suitably trained and experienced managers. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities; lines of accountability and levels of delegation are clear.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

There are good arrangements to monitor and control the activities of the fostering service.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

There is a recruitment strategy that is now targeted at carers for children and young people who have traditionally been more difficult to place in-house. There is a shortage of black and minority ethnic carers; a recruitment and publicity officer has been appointed to address this issue. The assessment process is rigorous; carers are carefully prepared for the fostering task. Procedures for the management of complaints, child protection and standards of care issues are in place. Good arrangements are in place to support the education and health needs of fostered children and young people. The importance of young people's participation is well understood; looked after young people have been involved in the provision of foster carer training.

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

Procedures for the recruitment of staff were not examined during this inspection. Arrangements for the recruitment of foster carers were judged to be robust and properly implemented. Training for carers is available; some is mandatory. An NVQ programme is being introduced. The supervision of foster carers is properly undertaken, including unannounced visits. The service is resourced to achieve its purpose and function. Staff reported feeling well supported through management supervision and appraisal and by peers.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Records were found to be relevant and to include all necessary information. Arrangements for storage ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

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

The premises used by the fostering service are adequate. However, there is no room to support any expansion of the service and, although staff make good use of available space, there are times and areas when conditions are cramped.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

Budgets are properly managed; there are auditing systems in place and operational. Payments to carers are reviewed annually; the scale of payments is graded to reflect carers' knowledge/expertise and the complexity of some placements.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

The fostering panel is a joint panel with the local Barnardo's Link Plus service. It is well chaired and administered; the scrutiny and questioning of reports presented is rigorous and thoughtful. Participants have a good understanding of fostering issues.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not assessed; the majority of short-term breaks are arranged by the Barnardo's Link Plus service which is the subject of a separate inspection report.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

Considerable work has been done in this area since the last inspection and the standard is now met. Practice is underpinned by a new policy framework; arrangements for the management of this area of work and for the supervision of family and friends carers are improved. Training has been provided to panel members about family and friends assessments.

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:

YES

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?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

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 Camilla Wood **Signature** _____

Second Inspector Corrie McKeown **Signature** _____

Regulation Manager Rita Griffiths **Signature** _____

Date _____

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	

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	FS 26	Increase the accommodation resources available to the fostering service.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	15
Survey of placing authorities	NA
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	YES
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	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	45

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?

4

There is a detailed and comprehensive statement of purpose that is reviewed at least annually. The content of the statement accurately reflected the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided, as found by the inspection team.

The statement is provided to carers in the foster carers handbook, a copy of which is given to all carers. It is also available on the Brighton and Hove fostering website.

The annual report of the service supplements the information in the statement by providing more detailed information and analysis about core issues in any given year, e.g. about placements and complaints.

Care has been taken to provide information for children being fostered in formats that are accessible and helpful. Brighton and Hove Children's Rights Service has produced a filofax for looked after children over 12 years of age and this includes additional pages specific to fostering, including how to make a complaint. Children aged 5 to 12 are given the BAAF guide to fostering, again with additional bespoke information about local services such as the Advocacy Project and the Children's Rights Service. All under fives are given a copy of a Children's Society booklet entitled 'Dennis Duckling' that tells a story about going to stay with another family in a child centred and thoughtful way.

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
---------------------------	---------------	---

The senior management team have considerable knowledge and expertise in fostering and in children's services. Brighton and Hove has a programme of in-house management training and senior staff are supported to undertake relevant external professional training. The Head of Service has professional qualifications in social work and in management. The two service managers are professionally qualified and have extensive experience in their areas of responsibility. Practice managers are all qualified and experienced social workers. Overall the service was judged to be effectively and efficiently managed, and was considered to be respected within the department and by elected members.

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?	0
---------------------------	---------------	---

Standard not assessed.

Recruitment records were not examined during this inspection. It is understood that Brighton and Hove operates a recruitment policy that includes CRB checks and references; the implementation of this was not evaluated by inspectors on this occasion.

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?

4

This standard was found to be exceeded at the previous inspection and remains an area of strength.

There are clear and effective processes for monitoring and quality assurance within the service. Communication works well; lines of accountability are well understood by staff and by foster carers.

Considerable efforts have been made to develop an integrated service in which staff within the different teams understand and respect one another's roles and share a common vision for the future of the service.

The management team meets monthly; the agenda includes discussion about referrals, assessments and matching, as well as more strategic matters.

There is a resource panel for looked after children and a weekly meeting to discuss children awaiting foster placements.

The agency decision maker and the professional advisor to the panel both have a quality assurance role in monitoring the practice and decision making within the fostering teams.

Agency placements are monitored and there is a 'preferred provider' list.

The notifications below relate to the same issue over which the fostering service has liaised appropriately with the CSCI.

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

1

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The service is effectively and efficiently managed. Levels of delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and operate as stated.

There are proper arrangements for cover in the absence of the Head of Service or the Service Managers. Staff were clear and confident about the arrangements for management cover and confirmed that they felt supported at all times.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The homes of 10 foster carers were visited during the inspection. Without exception they were found to be providing good standards of physical and emotional care to the children and young people placed. They were comfortable, warm and nurturing; children's bedrooms were cosy and well furnished.

The assessment of carers includes a detailed health and safety checklist of their home and garden; this is up-dated at the time of a carer's annual review, and when there is any significant change to the home environment e.g. a house move or the building of an extension.

The foster carers handbook includes some health and safety guidance; issues are also discussed during preparation training.

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?

4

The service is committed to providing services that recognise and celebrate diversity. The training of foster carers promotes understanding of and respect for, difference.

Last year the service completed a race equality impact assessment; this resulted in an action plan part of which was the creation of the new post of recruitment and publicity officer for black and minority ethnic (BME) carers to develop links with BME communities in the locality with a view to improving the recruitment of BME carers. A new policy has recently been produced on the placement of black and minority ethnic children. A resource pack for foster carers of children who are trans-racially placed was nearing publication at the time of the inspection.

There is a support group for gay and lesbian 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?**

4

The fostering service works hard to achieve suitable matches between the skills and abilities of foster carers, and the needs of children awaiting placement. The recruitment strategy has been successful in increasing the number, and thereby the choice, of possible carers although there are still shortages in specific areas e.g. for older teenage boys.

The initial referral form that is completed each time a child or young person needs a placement addresses matching considerations. There is a weekly 'children awaiting placement' meeting that ensures thoughtful discussion of placement needs for those young people that do not require an immediate emergency placement.

Towards the end of 2004 an audit of placement stability was undertaken. This was helpful in considering possible reasons for placement breakdown and has led to some recommendations for improvement in relation to supporting the stability of placements.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Foster carers receive training in child protection including safe caring practices. Since the last inspection a Safe Caring Policy Agreement form has been introduced. This is used to specify a foster carer's 'house rules' in relation to caring for a named child in areas including dress codes, showing affection, and access to bedrooms. Although some carers commented that they had been initially sceptical about the form, in practice they had found it useful in clarifying their thinking around some basic issues related to the day-to-day care of some one else's child.

The service provides carers with clear guidance about discipline and the use of appropriate sanctions.

Allegations of abuse and standards of care within foster homes are collated and monitored by senior managers.

Bullying is addressed in the foster carers handbook and in the children's guides. Several children and young people were met with as part of the inspection but the total number was not sufficient to provide a percentage figure in relation to bullying, although it was not raised as a concern by any of the young people met with.

Foster carers are provided with written guidance about children missing from home, informed by the joint protocol between Brighton and Hove and Sussex Police.

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 fostering service is committed to supporting contact between children and young people who are fostered and their birth families. Contact is one of the considerations in the matching process between carers and children; it is also addressed in the foster carer preparation training.

In practice contact arrangements are often prescribed (or prohibited) by court order and foster carers are supported to understand and work within any imposed legal framework. Carers met with understood the importance for young people of maintaining contact and demonstrated sensitivity in their wish to support any such arrangements both practically and emotionally.

The maintenance of contact between children and their birth parents is a particularly significant aspect of the concurrency work within the service, that inspectors found to be managed with skill and sensitivity.

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?**

4

Brighton and Hove has a well established children's rights service, about which fostered children are informed. They are also given clear information about how to make complaints. Staff within the service showed an appreciation of the value and importance of securing children's involvement and in obtaining their views. They have completed 'Total Respect' training that promotes understanding of the importance of children's rights.

Young people in foster care have been involved in delivering training to prospective carers. In addition to established feedback processes, young people are now able to make comments and raise issues about fostering via the fostering service's new website.

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?**

4

There is a robust approach to identifying and addressing the health needs of young people in foster care. There is a nurse consultant for looked after children who completes a health plan for all children placed by the service. The post holder also provides training for foster carers and sits on the fostering panels.

The nurse consultant works closely with the medical officer, who comments on the health reports of all applicants for fostering and is also involved in foster carer training.

There is a 'fast track' referral process to the local CAMHS team for fostered children. This not only ensures a timely response, but also means children are seen by professionals who have an understanding of the issues faced by looked after children.

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

There is an education project for looked after children that includes children within the fostering service. The development officer for the education of looked after children sits on the fostering panel, provides training and advice for staff and carers and has a lead role in advocating for the needs of looked after children within the education service. Since the last inspection work has been completed to devise a new personal education plan format for looked after children; this was to be implemented shortly after the inspection. Concern about the impact on foster placements of children excluded from school was expressed by staff and carers. The placement support team within the fostering service provides valuable support in such circumstances; the education project is able to provide some home tutoring. Inspectors heard several examples of creative packages of support for individual children. Alongside this there was also some expression of frustration from staff and carers that educational support for children excluded could be slow to put in place and be limited in amount.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carer handbook includes the service's policy on preparing young people for adult living. There are good links with the leaving care team, supported by the team's manager being a member of the fostering panel. The change of key worker responsibility to the leaving care team was reported to now take place at 15 years rather than 16; this was considered to better support a smooth transition and minimise the number of changes facing young people during their sixteenth year. Carers met with who were looking after older young people reported feeling involved in the development of Pathway Plans and in supporting young peoples' transition into adult living.

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?

0

Standard not assessed.

Recruitment records were not examined during this inspection. It is understood that Brighton and Hove operates a recruitment policy that includes CRB checks and references; the implementation of this was not evaluated during the course of this inspection.

Total number of staff of the agency:

66

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?

4

As stated previously, the service has a clear management structure within which responsibilities and lines of accountability are well understood.

There is a willingness to review and evaluate the way in which the service is organised in order to deliver the best possible outcomes as evidenced by the recent merging of the placement support service and the special placement team.

All operational staff of the service are sited within the same building; this supports integration and cohesion of service delivery.

The use of IFAs is monitored by a senior manager outside of the fostering service; there is a preferred provider list.

Some joint training has taken place between supervising social workers, children's social workers and foster carers; the focus of this was developing partnership working to support foster placements.

The administrative support within the service was found to be helpful and efficient.

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

Staffing within the fostering service has been stable over the previous year. The three departures noted under standard 15 relate to administrative staff. The teams within the service are experienced and skilled in their specialist areas. Workloads are busy; a caseload weighting system is used. Freelance workers are used to undertake some foster carer assessments; this avoids prospective carers experiencing undue delay. There was some discussion at the foster panel attended about the processes for monitoring and quality controlling the work of these staff; this is something that the panel intend to enquire about further.

There is a recruitment strategy for foster carers which is being increasingly targeted towards the recruitment of carers for young people for whom there has historically been a shortage of in-house carers e.g. older teenage boys.

Foster carer assessments are detailed and comprehensive. The competency based assessment format is used for 'mainstream' fostering and the BAAF Form F for permanence and for family and friends assessments. Practice managers carry out a 'second opinion' visit to all prospective carers.

The professional advisor fulfils a useful quality assurance role by examining all reports and identifying any gaps or queries so that these can be clarified before they are presented to panel.

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

No shortfalls were identified in employment practices in relation to staff or to foster carers. Carers receive regular supervision in accordance with prescribed timescales together with ongoing regular telephone contact from supervising social workers. Carers receive copies of their supervision reports.

Out of hours support is provided to carers by the fostering service.

There are whistle blowing procedures in place for staff and carers.

There is a comprehensive health and safety policy with relevant information provided to carers in the foster carers handbook.

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>There is a comprehensive programme of training available to staff and to carers. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake professional post qualification training, as well as completing relevant short courses. A performance appraisal system is used to formally review staff development and training needs.</p> <p>The training programme for carers has been further developed since the last inspection; some areas of training are compulsory and attendance is monitored through the annual review process. Looked after young people have been involved in delivering some of the preparation training. An NVQ programme for foster carers is being commenced from April 2005.</p> <p>There is an induction pack for new carers; they are also invited to attend a coffee morning at the fostering service offices, providing an opportunity to meet staff and other new carers.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>Staff reported feeling well supported by managers and by peers. Staff have written job descriptions and were clear about their roles and responsibilities. They receive regular, recorded supervision and appraisal. There is comprehensive policy and procedural guidance to underpin and inform practice. Staff meetings are held; there is a whole service team day once a year.</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?	4
<p>Carers who met with inspectors reported that they felt well supported by the fostering service; this was also the majority view in the written questionnaires completed by carers for the inspection.</p> <p>In 2004 the newly established Foster Care Association in Brighton and Hove conducted a telephone survey of local foster carers. Feedback included comments that carers did not feel sufficiently valued by the service and that respite arrangements, while appreciated, could be better organised. The service is looking at how best to respond to the issues raised in the survey, and has already begun to progress some of the suggestions made e.g. the development of a 'buddy' system for carers.</p> <p>Established support arrangements centre around the services offered by the placement support team. Carers who had benefited from this spoke highly of the team, indicating that their input had often been essential in maintaining placements through times of extreme difficulty, that would in all probability have broken down without the intervention of the team. There is an out of hours service staffed by fostering employees. Carers valued this and appreciated being able to discuss issues with staff who were familiar with fostering, rather than having to go through the generic out of hours service.</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?**

3

Carers receive regular, recorded visits from their supervising social workers.

There is an extremely comprehensive foster carers handbook that is regularly reviewed and up-dated with new information. All carers are required to sign a foster carers agreement that, together with the handbook, makes clear what is expected of them particularly in key areas such as discipline and child protection.

Carers are given relevant information about complaints, standards of care enquires and child protection.

Unannounced visits to carers take place at least once a year; some staff appear more comfortable in making these visits than others. Managers recognise that this is still a relatively new area of practice the purpose and value of which needs to be consistently reinforced through supervision, so that all staff become equally at ease with this aspect of their role.

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?**

4

As previously noted, there is a strategy and a comprehensive training programme to develop carers. One of the practice managers has lead responsibility for carers' training and the post holder works closely with the organisation's Learning and Development Officer.

The training programme includes mandatory pre-approval (preparatory) training and induction. Payment of foster carers' fees is linked to the expectation that they will attend mandatory training. Short courses and workshops cover areas including child protection, anti-discriminatory practice, and the health and education needs of looked after children.

There is a programme of support and activities for foster carers' own children; these young people also have a page on the fostering service's website.

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 service maintains individual files for each carer and for each child that they are looking after; there is also a duty module for each child containing referral and matching information. Children's main social work files are retained by the field work service. Files held by the fostering service were found to be well organised and to contain relevant and up-to-date information. Carers who met with inspectors and/or completed a questionnaire commented that, aside from emergency placements, they were usually provided with sufficient information about children being placed. There was a perception from some carers that on occasion field social workers did not always provide full information about children to the fostering service, although this appeared to be less of an issue than in the past. Foster carers' preparation and training includes guidance about record keeping.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service has good administrative systems. Records are well organised and securely stored.

The majority of file entries are word processed.

Managers carry out a quarterly audit of a sample of foster carers files held by supervising social workers; all files are examined through this process at least once every twelve months.

The figures below for weekly payments reflect the standard payments to mainstream carers and do not include the allowances paid to family and friends carers or those on the special placement scheme.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

182

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

123

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

125

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

19

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

9

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

242.40

Maximum £

333.70

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 adequate. It is positive that all staff work together from the same base; this supports the delivery of an integrated and accessible service. However, there is no available room within current premises to support any expansion of the service and, although staff make good use of available space, there are times and areas when conditions are cramped.

There is space to ensure that administrative arrangements are properly conducted and to maintain confidentiality and security of records.

Rooms are available for meetings, supervised contact, and individual work with children and young people. The basement area used by the concurrency team for supervised contact and work with birth parents would particularly benefit from refurbishment and the provision of additional space so that facilities are not shared with other users of the building.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service is properly resourced to fulfil its statement of purpose and function. The service manager has been creative and resourceful in identifying and accessing any additional funding sources that might be available e.g. through 'one off' grants.

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 accommodation service is subject to the proper local government systems for financial audit and monitoring. Operational managers meet with their counterparts in financial services to monitor and review the budget on a regular basis.

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?

4

Foster carer allowances were comprehensively reviewed in 2003, and a new payment scheme introduced. Payments incorporate a basic allowance plus a fee element that recognises the skills and knowledge of experienced carers, together with the additional challenges and resources required in looking after a child or young person with specific needs.

Payment rates are reviewed annually.

None of the carers met with during the inspection raised any issues or concerns about either the levels of allowance, or the arrangements for payment.

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?

4

The fostering service shares a joint panel with the Barnardo's Link Plus scheme (responsible for the majority of short-term break placements of disabled children and young people). An independent person is employed to chair both the fostering and the permanence panels. Composition of the fostering panel at the time of the inspection met the requirements of the statutory regulations.

The panel is attended and supported by a professional advisor part of whose role is to 'quality assure' assessments being presented.

The panel observed by the lead inspector was well organised and administered. Panel members were clearly well prepared; assessment reports were rigorously scrutinised and questions asked about applicants were appropriately probing. The role of panel was carefully explained to applicants at the outset; recommendations and feedback were sensitively and thoughtfully conveyed.

In the waiting area prior to attending panel a laminated sheet is made available with photographs and pen pictures of members, together with an information booklet about the panel process.

Persons attending panel are asked to complete a feedback sheet; one example of a change made because of this feedback has been the re-arrangement of the seating arrangements so that attendees sit in a more central position at the table and are not isolated at a far end.

A system for the appraisal of panel members has been recently introduced; this includes self-evaluation plus input from the panel chair and the professional advisor.

Panel members confirmed that they have received relevant training and guidance, for example in relation to trans-racial placements, and family and friends as carers.

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?
---------------------------	---------------

This standard was not assessed.

The Brighton and Hove fostering service has a very small number of respite carers; the overwhelming majority of short-term breaks for children and young people with disabilities are provided by the Barnardo's Link Plus service that is the subject of a separate inspection.

The special placement scheme provides respite to foster carers employed by the Brighton and Hove service, as part of the enhanced support provided to these placements.

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
<p>At the last inspection arrangements for family and friends as carers were assessed as needing further development.</p> <p>The service has worked hard to improve this area. Practice is now underpinned by a written family and friends policy; this was developed by a working group that included family and friends carers. Panel members have received guidance on family and friends assessments including evaluating the significance of health and CRB references.</p> <p>A further positive change has been that from December 2004 the fostering service took over the supervising social work role of family and friends carers that had been held within fieldwork teams. Additionally, a dedicated (part-time) practice manager has been appointed to oversee this work, whereas it had previously been part of the role of the concurrency team manager.</p> <p>There is a support group for family and friends carers.</p>		

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 28th February – 4th March & 16th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	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	YES

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 27th 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	YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	NO
Other: <enter details here>	

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 _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

S0000062799.V192691.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source