

inspection report

Fostering Services

Foster Care Associates (North West)

Palatine House

53 Palatine Road

Didsbury

Manchester

M20 3PP

8th December 2003

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Foster Care Associates North West

Tel No

01527 556480

Address

Palatine House, 53 Palatine Road, Didsbury, Manchester,
M20 3PP

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Foster Care Associates Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Isobel Tempest Marshall

Date of first registration

Not yet registered

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NA

Date of last inspection

11/3/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th December 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		08:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	2	Chris Tucker	074724
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. 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		Isobel Marshall (Manager)	

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of Foster Care Associates North West. 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 NCSC 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.

Foster Care Associates (FCA) is a national organisation providing family placement to children/young people “looked after” by local authorities. FCA North West head office is located in Didsbury, South Manchester. One of two Assistant Directors, of FCA, North West is also the manager of the Service and is based at the Didsbury Office. During the inspection the inspectors were told that the assistant director would be taking up a new post of Director early in 2004 and that she would continue to manage the Service. As well as the Director and with the Assistant Directors, the Team Manager (1), Family Placement Workers (4) Administrators, (3) Therapists, (3, this includes a trainee therapist) and Resource Workers (3) are also based in the Manchester office.

The Fostering Service provides short-term, long-term, emergency, bridging placements, assessment placements as well as parent and child placements for “children/young people looked after” by a range of local authorities. In addition there is a resource service, which is established to provide additional packages of support to children/young people. This ranged from educational programmes intended to support a child/young person in school to supervising contact between a child and their birth parents.

The Service recruits, assesses, approves and support foster carers. It also operates a fostering panel.

The Manchester office is one of a number of offices that falls within Foster Care North West. Inspections of the other offices, which are located in Cockermouth, Chorley, Liverpool and Wirral, will be undertaken separately. Therefore this inspection focuses on the Manchester office.

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, there is a requirement for independent fostering agencies to be registered. FCA has submitted a registration application, which at the time of the inspection was still in process.

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 inspection is the second inspection to be undertaken with regard this agency since the National Care Standards Commission was established. The inspectors were able to meet with a group of Family Placement Workers, Resource Workers, Therapists, Administrative and Education staff. All staff members spoken to demonstrated sound knowledge with clear awareness and understanding of the legislative framework, which underpins their work.

The inspectors also met with a group of foster carers as well as visiting foster carers in their home to meet with them and the children/young people. All the children/young people who spoke to the inspectors said they were happy and well supported both by the carers and the staff from the agency. The foster carers were complimentary about the support and assistance they receive from the agency.

This inspection demonstrated, as before, that the fostering service provides a good support to children/young people and to the foster carers.

Statement of Purpose

There was a Statement of Purpose, which addressed all the elements specified in Schedule 1 of the regulations. This document had been further developed since the last inspection.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service. 2 of the 2 standard were met .

The Service manager had a number of years experience in family placement and childcare practice and held a Diploma in Social Work and Social Administration awards as well as a Degree in English and Philosophy. At the time of the inspection, the overall assessment made by the inspectors was that the service was being appropriately managed.

Management of the Fostering Service. 2 of the 2 standards were met.

Appropriate processes and systems were in place to monitor the activity of the Service. This including obtaining the views of the foster carers and children/young people about the service provided. The fostering panel assisted in the process of monitoring.

Securing and Promoting Welfare 7 of the 9 standards were met

A full and detailed assessment is carried out to ascertain carer's suitability to foster. The Service was committed to recruiting carers from varied backgrounds. Those children/young

people in trans-racial placements were not disadvantaged with every effort made to support the carers. The carers spoken to during the inspection confirmed this. Training in Child Protection was made available for staff and carers. Since the last inspection, a system of collating information about allegations made had been introduced. An anti-bullying and missing from home procedures were in place and some revision to the missing from home procedures had taken place. Appropriate arrangements were in place for contact to be maintained. Overall children/young people's welfare was being promoted with adequate safeguards in place at the time of the inspection.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Carers **8 of the 9 standards were met**

There was a good system in place for recruiting staff and carers. The same recruitment standards extended to the appointment of the independent assessors. However, some concerns were highlighted to the manager with regard the recruitment procedures in respect of a particular member of staff. Induction procedures were in place. Staff members interviewed confirmed the level of support and supervision that they received. As stated earlier, foster carers spoke highly of the Service, its staff and the support they receive. They were given appropriate training to assist them. Some carers said that they were encouraged to undertake the NVQ Level 3 training, some had already received this award.

Records **2 of the 2 standards were met**

The service maintained files on carers, children/young people and staff. A register of foster carers was maintained and the register was found to contain relevant and sufficient information. The records were securely maintained.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering service

This standard was met. The premises were found to be adequate for the purposes of the service.

Financial Requirements **3 of the 3 standards were met**

Appropriate financial systems were in place. Foster carers said that they received their payment promptly and regularly. They had no complaints about this aspect of the Service.

Fostering Panels **This standard was met**

The inspectors were able to observe a Fostering Panel. The membership of the panel met the regulations although as noted at the previous inspection the panel had too many members.

**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:

This does not apply to FCA as they are not a local authority fostering service.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

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.
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No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission 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	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Lolly Warren

Signature _____

Second Inspector Chris Tucker

Signature _____

Locality Manager Mike Short

Signature _____

Date 26th January 2004

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 and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The information contained in the Statement of Purpose relating to complaints must be further expanded.	29.2.04
2	34	FS8	The Foster Placement Agreements must cover the matters listed in Schedule 6 and the formats used for the Agreements must be fully completed.	29.2.04
3	21(4)	FS11	Family Placement Workers must receive training with respect to investigating complaints.	31.3.04
4	18	FS11	The system for investigating complaints must be reviewed.	29.2.04
5	21	FS15	The Agency must ensure that at all time the recruitment procedures are fully completed for all staff.	29.2.04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS2	The manager should complete the NVQ Level 4 Management Award or an equivalent.
2	FS6	The 'Safe Care' policy should be clarified and reviewed.
3	FS11	A format for recording complaints should be developed.
4	FS15	The taking of interview notes should be reviewed.

* 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	11
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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)	NO
• 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	NO

Date of Inspection	8/12/03
Time of Inspection	10.15AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	100

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>At the last inspection, a requirement was made that the Service developed the Statement of Purpose to meet the essential requirements. It was encouraging to note the Statement of Purpose had been developed and addressed all the issues specified in Schedule 1 of the regulations. The aims and objectives of the Service were clearly defined in the document as well as information regarding all the services and support provided. As noted on the previous inspection the Service is committed to recruiting foster carers from diverse backgrounds and this is clearly detailed in the Statement of Purpose.</p> <p>Whilst the Statement of Purpose met all the requirements there was a need for the information with regards complaints to be expanded. This relates to the numbers of complaints made and a brief summary of the nature and outcome of the complaints.</p> <p>Written information about the Service was available to children/young people in a 'File of Facts' which constituted the Service's Children's Guide. There was also a leaflet designed for the younger children. Both these documents contained information about the National Care Standards Commission.</p>		

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
<p>At the last inspection, discussions had taken place with the Director who at the time was also the manager of the Service regarding their ability to manage the Service effectively given their area of responsibility as a Director within the organisation. As a result the organisation has put forward the name of another senior manager to be registered as the manager of the Service. At the time of the inspection the application in respect of the manager was in process.</p> <p>The current manager holds the Diploma in Social Work and Social Administration in addition to a degree in English and Philosophy. The manager does not hold a management qualification although information submitted prior to the inspection the manager has indicated that she had completed a two day in-house management training. However, the manager must obtain a management qualification to NVQ Level 4 or an equivalent by 2005.</p> <p>During the inspection the inspectors discussed the management of the Service with the manager and Principal Social Worker. Both demonstrated a clear understanding of the management structures, which existed within the organisation at a national as well as a local level. There were clear line of responsibility and accountability, which were known and understood by the members of the staff team interviewed during the inspection. The inspectors were also encouraged to note that the newest member of staff had an awareness of the structures and lines of accountability.</p> <p>As found on the previous inspection, the foster carers interviewed both as a group and individually told the inspectors that the Service was effectively and efficiently managed. Those foster carers who returned the foster carer's questionnaire confirmed this impression.</p>		

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?****4**

The existing manager is an experienced child-care worker with over ten years experience of residential and family placement work. She demonstrated a sound knowledge of the issues regarding protection and safeguarding and promoting children/young people's welfare. This has also been evidenced in the contacts made to the NCSV by the manager relating to various childcare matters and notifications received.

Appropriate checks have been taken up in respect of the manager by the National Care Standards Commission including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau and appropriate references. During the course of the inspection the staff personnel file held by the organisation in respect of the manager was examined and found to contain all necessary information.

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
<p>From discussions with members of staff, the manager and foster carers, the Service had to place appropriate procedures and processes for monitoring and controlling its activities. This included the foster carers support group meetings, which were attended by the Family Placement Workers. The manager told the inspectors that the foster carers were very vocal and not afraid of raising issues and concerns where necessary about the service. The foster carers the inspectors met during the course of the inspection confirmed this information. The Service had also developed additional systems to elicit the views of all foster carers about the Service such as the use of questionnaires. In addition, foster carers told the inspectors that the Service was proactive in obtaining the views of the children/young people.</p> <p>Regular meetings with Family Placement Workers and administrative staff also took place. The fostering panel undertook a monitoring function in relation to the progress and quality of assessments. There was a reviewing officer who was responsible for ensuring that the assessments contained appropriate information.</p> <p>Family Placement Workers told the inspectors that they were able to measure the performance of the Service against other Services operated by FCA. They said that the Director and manager ensured that they are kept up to date with information and current developments in fostering. They also considered the policies and procedures established by the organisation to be an integral part to how the Service operates. It should be noted that since the last inspection, a number of the policies and procedures have been developed further with a system for reviewing the documents in place.</p> <p>Regular staff supervision took place when managers were able to assess the level of support and work taking place with the foster carers as well as a means of ensuring workers were undertaking, and had a clear understanding of, their tasks.</p> <p>Clear administrative procedures were in place. The administrative element of the Service from observation and examination of records was organised with appropriate systems in place for checking the progress of assessments of carers, for recording placement, where vacancy exists as well as appropriate systems for ensuring payments are made to carers.</p> <p>Other monitoring processes evidenced during the inspection included the team and Service managers making regular checks of the files. The team manager said that she audited a random selection of files to check the information and to ensure that information on the files is maintained up to date.</p> <p>Systems were in place to monitor the matters specified in Schedule 7 and notify the National Care Standards Commission of those specified in Schedule 8. It is worthy of note that the</p>		

administration manager was also aware of this need. The National Care Standards Commission had received a number of notifications during the year.

From the evidence provide the inspectors concluded that the Service was well managed.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	10
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	X
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	X
Serious illness or accident of a child.	4
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	X
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	X
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	1
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	1
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	4
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:	X
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?	3
<p>The job description in place relating to the role and responsibilities of the manager was appropriate. This document was accompanied by the person specification. As stated earlier in this report all the staff members interviewed which included the Family Placement Workers, Resource Workers and Administrative Staff were aware of the lines of accountability and responsibilities. The manager discussed in detail with the inspectors how the management of the Service was organised.</p> <p>The Deputy Director would deputise in the absence of the manager. He is a qualified teacher specialising in children with learning disabilities and special needs. He has years of experience as a Head Teacher of schools for such young people; he holds a joint honours degree in Management & Assessment and Diploma in Language and Learning Special Needs.</p>		

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
<p>A detailed assessment was undertaken before foster carers are approved for placement. The assessments took account of whether the foster carers home is suitable to provide a safe secure and nurturing environment for the children/young people to be placed there. A health and safety check of the foster carer's home is carried out as well as being part of the foster carer's annual review. Health and safety training was also provided for carers with detailed health and safety procedures located in the Foster Carers Handbook.</p> <p>A 'Safe Caring' policy was also available in the handbook. The document detailed information with regards to foster carers responsibility to ensure children/young people are safe, and address issues such as babysitting, car journeys, in that cars should be roadworthy, insured and fitted with appropriate car seats.</p> <p>Each carer was expected to draw up a safe care policy for their home and foster carers spoken to confirmed that these were in place. From examination of this policy found on the foster carer's file examined they appeared to contain a standard statement which indicated that foster carer's would not enter a bedroom without a the child giving permission. However, the inspectors discussed with the team and Service managers about the practicality of this with regard the need to protect children/young people particularly in the event of an emergency. It was suggested that this aspect of the policy should be reviewed.</p> <p>As part of the monitoring that takes place relating to foster carers, at least two unannounced visits to the foster care's home would be made in addition to all the other planned support systems.</p> <p>The foster carers were aware of the National Care Standards Commission and information with regard the Commission was contained in the in the Foster Care Agreement.</p>		

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?****2**

As noted at the last inspection FCA is committed to providing a service and workforce that reflected the diverse communities of the North West. The needs of the children/young people in respect of their cultural, religious, language, and disability needs etc was of a high priority. This is one of the main aims as noted in the Statement of Purpose. From information seen and discussions with members of staff, the manager and foster carers there was evidence to indicate that training was offered to assist and support foster carer's and staff's understanding of the issues and needs of children/young people from different backgrounds. The documentation used in the assessment process was found to include a section on discrimination and the carer's own experience and their awareness of anti-discriminatory issues. However, during observation of the panel and examination of the papers presented, the inspectors had cause to draw to the attention of the senior managers the need for the issue of ethnicity to be clarified or further training on the subject offered to the social work staff.

Equality of opportunity and placement policies relating to meeting the racial and cultural needs of children/young people were available.

Evidence was available to indicate that FCA was proactive in recruiting foster carers from Black and other ethnic minority groups. The manager told the inspectors that the person responsible for recruitment has a programme in place for the year and that this includes targeting the Black and other ethnic minority press. The manger said that local authorities have approached the Service with regard placing children/young people with refugee status.

The inspectors were able to meet two Black carers during the inspection and they spoke highly of the support that they received from the Family Placement Workers as well as the support of the foster carers group. The inspectors also spoke with a foster carer who discussed the support they received from the agency to assist them in looking after children/young people with special needs.

Foster carers were recruited via 'word of mouth', local and national press as well as community promotions.

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**

Policies and guidance was available with regards to placements. The policy emphasises the need to ensure that appropriate matching takes place in order to ensure that the children/young person's racial background, ethnicity, religious and cultural needs, and language and disability were taken into account.

There was written information to suggest that although a child's ethnicity was an important consideration in the matching process, this would not in itself be the only consideration as the assessed needs of the child would be a priority.

The Foster Care Agreement, which had been reviewed since the last inspection, was noted to detail information on placements taking account of children/young people's cultural, racial origin, linguistic and religious background in the matching process.

The Foster Placement Agreement has also been redrafted and although the format contains all the matters listed in Schedule 6, not all agreements found on the files examined were seen to be completed or were completed with factual information about, for example, the GP's address rather than identified health needs.

During the discussions with the Family Placement Workers they described the process involved in matching. They told the inspectors that in order to deliver a good service it was important that they obtained relevant and up to date information from placing authorities. They said that they had a good knowledge of the carers and had to consider such issues as the skills and competence of the carer as well as the carer's family dynamics.

The staff members told the inspectors that when matching they would consider other matters such as the age and number of children/young people already placed. They said that before a trans-racial placement could be made it would be discussed with the manager. They would take into account the support that would be required by the carer to facilitate the placement. The inspectors were told that where a placement was made with a predominately white foster carer they had to ensure that the foster carer had an understanding of the needs of Black and ethnic minority children/young people as well as whether the carer could offer culturally sensitive service.

During the inspection, the inspectors visited a white foster family who were looking after a mixed parentage sibling group. The foster carers demonstrated an understanding of the need to ensure that the children maintained contact with their birth family.

Foster carers told the inspectors that they participated on diversity training and were able to explore the issues around trans-racial placement. The Family Placement Workers told the inspectors that the foster carers had requested further training in this area.

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**

The foster carer's interviewed told the inspectors that it was expected by the agency that they attend Child Protection training. They said this was included in their induction and updated as and when necessary. They told the inspectors that the training they received addressed issues such as understanding of abuse, caring for children who have suffered abuse, disclosure and recording of information. Family Placement Workers had also participated in this training.

As stated earlier in this report, each carer is required to produce a 'Safe Care' policy for their home and monitoring of this forms part of the annual review. The foster carers who spoke with the inspectors said that anyone visiting the home would be expected to follow the safe care policy. The foster carers demonstrated their understanding of Child Protection matters and any concerns that they would discuss with the staff. They were aware of the procedures should an allegation be made against them as well as the reporting procedures.

Written Child Protection procedures were in place in addition to a 'Whistle Blowing' policy, which was available in the Foster Carer's Handbook. At the last inspection a requirement was made that the Child Protection Procedures be revised to include information relating to peer abuse and child prostitution/exploitation. It was encouraging to note that this matter had been addressed. It was also worthy of note that the Foster Care Agreement identifies carer's responsibility and the expectation that they will comply with the policies and procedures issued by FCA relating to protection and for notifying the Service of any known or suspected involvement of a child/young person in prostitution.

Since the last inspection, the Service had established a system for collating information on instances of allegations of abuse and of their outcomes. The inspectors were able to examine the records. The National Care Standards Commission has been notified of incidents that have occurred during the year.

The foster carers spoken to were aware of the Service's stance on corporal punishment and restraint. The Foster Care Agreement makes it clear that corporal punishment was not acceptable. They also had knowledge of the vulnerability of children/young people who are subject to bullying. A anti-bullying and missing from home policies were in place and the suggestions made at the last inspection for a review of these documents had been taken on board.

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

Foster carer's interviewed told the inspectors that they considered contact to be very important for the children/young people they looked after. The foster carer's experience of contact varied. Some said that they take the child to the contact location or have the contact at their home. The foster carers raised no particular concerns relating to contact arrangements.

Written guidance was available to staff around promoting contact. Resource workers were used to facilitate contact by taking children/young people to the contact or supervising the contact for the local authority, for which a report would be written and sent to the respective social worker.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Foster carer's spoken to say that the views of children/young people were sought as part of the review process. This included the children/young people completing a questionnaire. This was confirmed by some of the children/young people spoken with during the inspection. Foster carers said that the children/young people were also supported by their own social worker who consulted with the children. They also receive visits from the Family Placement Worker on a regular basis. The inspectors were told that foster carers and staff were encouraged to keep contact with families

Of the 14 children/young people's questionnaires returned, 46% reported that the foster carer, their social worker and the Family Placement Workers sought their views and opinions. Some of the children/young people listed the sort of things they were asked to give an opinion on. This ranged from decorating of their bedrooms, holidays, food, clothing. They were also asked their opinion of the fostering agency. One young person reported that following a discussion the foster carer changed the venue of their holiday, which they considered to have been 'brilliant'.

Foster carers met said their opinions were sought and that they felt that the staff listened to their views. This was also confirmed in the responses received from the foster carer's questionnaires.

Children/young people who spoke with the inspectors during the inspection appeared to be aware of what to do if they had any concerns or complaints. Some were aware of the complaints procedure and where they could locate this information. Of the 14 children/young people's questionnaires returned 78% were aware of the complaints procedure and how to make a complaint and 22% said they were not aware of the complaint's procedure. It was encouraging to note that 57% were aware that they could contact the National Care Standards Commission.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that the leaflets to parents, carers, and children/young people must be amended to include the address of the National Care Standards Commission and that a central record of complaints must be maintained. These matters have been addressed.

The inspectors were able to examine the complaints records. The records of the investigation into the complaints logged was not sufficiently detailed in setting out how each point of the complaint raised had been dealt with. Further to this, details of the outcome of the investigations or a letter to the complainant advising them of the outcome were not apparent in the records. A young person had made one particular complaint. It was difficult from the records to assess whether the complaint had been investigated and of the decisions made and of the outcome. During the inspection feedback the manager was advised of the need to review the systems for recording and investigating complaints and that it would be beneficial if a specific format on which to record the complaint could be developed. The inspectors also suggested some training for staff but the manager reassured them that this was not necessary but that the recordings did not accurately reflect the practice. However, during the discussions with Family Placement Workers they told the inspectors that they had not had any training on how to conduct investigations into complaints. They said that they would use their knowledge and experience when undertaking this task. The manager must review this issue.

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

Detailed information was contained in the Foster Carer's Handbook concerning personal health and development. The information was detailed and covered a range of issues. The policy detailed a foster carer's responsibility and they are expected to familiarise themselves with the written information made available. In addition, the Foster Care Agreement made it clear that the foster carers must ensure that children/young people are taken to GP and for appointments.

Additional support would be made available to the children/young people if it were required. The Service could also provide therapeutic input if this was necessary. The therapists were qualified and accredited and received external clinical support and supervision. The inspectors were able to meet with two therapists. They told the inspectors that they worked with both children/young people and carer's using the assessment model, which included parenting assessments. They said that all agencies and individual involved with the child would attend meetings to discuss and plan the work to be undertaken. They gave examples of the work with particular children/young people and the outcomes for the child. The inspectors were told that foster carers received training input on therapeutic approaches and how therapy works.

Some of the foster carers told the inspectors that this service was very beneficial to the children/young people.

Appropriate arrangements and processes were in place to ensure that consent is obtained from the placing authority for a child to receive medical treatment. Foster carers' training

covered sexual health and development, health and hygiene and first aid.

The Resource Manager was responsible for providing support staff (Resource Workers) to assist children/young people. This included arranging outings, activities and holidays. The Resource workers can also provide a babysitting service to assist the carers. The support workers met spoke enthusiastically about the work they do and the relationships developed with the carer's and children/young people.

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?

4

The Service had appropriate education policies and procedures in place as well as information available to foster carers in the Foster Carers Handbook.

Education features prominently within the Service. There was a team of education liaison officers who were qualified teachers with experience of special needs education. Resource Workers were also available to support children/young people in school and in the home. The inspectors were informed that these were not specialist education workers. However, plans were in place at the time of the inspection, to appoint specific education support workers with the aim of putting a worker in school to support the children/young people when and where necessary.

At the time of the inspection, there was evidence to indicate that 98% of the children/young people placed by the agency were in school. Those not in schools were being supported. In addition, the inspectors were told that when a child is excluded from school the agency would offer the necessary support as well as close working with the social exclusion unit.

There was an expectation that carers will support the children/young people in their education. This could be with homework, attending parent's evenings and educational reviews. Foster carers were also expected to report to the Service any concerns they had regarding the school placement. The Foster Care Agreement made it clear that the foster carer is responsible for transporting and escorting children/young people to school.

The inspectors were able to examine a sample of the children/young peoples education files. There was evidence on the files to indicate that the Service had appropriate systems in place for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and attendance of the children/young people in education. Records were available to detail the number of children/young people on Statement of Educational Needs (SEN) and those in mainstream education. Copies of the 'SEN's' were found on the files examined.

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**

A document 'Preparing Young People for Adult Living' was available. This detailed the role of the Service and foster carers in establishing an environment that facilitated this transition for young people. Information was also contained in the Foster Carer's Handbook although there was no requirement in the Foster Care Agreement that carers should help to prepare young people for independence.

During the discussions with the Family Placement Workers they told the inspectors that there was an expectation that foster carers would assist young people in preparing them to move on. The inspectors met one foster carer and the young person they cared for. They talked about the preparation work-taking place. The young person explained that they were happy with the plans in place for them to move on to a unit for young people that included a continuation of their education.

The inspectors were told that FCA was looking at developing their Leaving Care Service. With this in mind they had had a meeting with a group of young people. In addition the agency had identified a course that young people preparing to move on could access.

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

Appropriate recruitment procedures were in place relating to the recruitment of carers and staff. Job descriptions were available as well as an equal opportunity policy. At the last inspection, the inspectors were told that the organisation was looking to recruit more workers from minority backgrounds. Since that inspection one such worker had been appointed to the team. Recruitment of staff was centrally managed but decisions about short-listing, interviews etc were completed at the North West office. The manager would be involved in the recruitment of Family Placement Workers.

All newly appointed staff would participate in induction training. The newest Family Placement Worker described the induction process and what was involved. The worker said that the induction was structured and that they did not feel rushed but were given the opportunity to settle in. All new staff were subject to six months probationary period. The staff members spoken to said that they had the opportunity during the probationary period to address any difficulties they might have.

The Family Placement Workers were qualified social workers. They were responsible for supervising, supporting and undertaking the annual review of carers as well as having involvement in the training of carers. As indicated throughout the report the inspectors had the opportunity to meet a group of these workers. It was clear from the discussions held that they demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of their role and of the legislation that underpins their work.

A sample of staff personal files relating to staff working in all the FCA North West offices were made available for inspection. Overall the files were found to be in order with necessary references and Criminal Records Bureau checks. However, the references noted on one particular staff member's file were inadequate. It was noted that no references had been obtained from the two Local Authorities that the worker had previously worked for. The appointment process in respect of this worker was unclear, no recruitment documents relating to their position, as support worker prior to taking up post of Family Placement Worker was present. In addition, no application form was noted on the file. This was drawn to the manager's attention for action.

The issue of interview notes was also discussed with the manager. This related to the inconsistencies in the level of recording. Some records were detailed whilst others gave very

little information.

Total number of staff of the agency:	17	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	X
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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
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Appropriate management structures were in place, with clear lines of accountability. Supervision of workers was undertaken by the senior principal social worker (Team manager) on a monthly basis. She told the inspectors that as well as the more formal structured supervision the workers also had informal supervision and that they operated an open door policy. Family Placement Workers told the inspectors that they had access to all the managers who they could discuss concerns with. The Service manager was responsible for supervising the team manager. Staff members spoken to including administrative staff said that they received a good level of support from their managers and that managers were flexible in their approach. All the staff members said that they considered FCA to be good and fair employers and that the service was effectively managed.

Appropriate arrangements were also in place for the supervision and supporting of administrative staff. The administrative team consisted of a Placement Manager who was responsible for liaising with local authorities and carers, arranging payments etc. There was also an Office Manager. From the evidence seen and observations made this team was well organised with appropriate systems in place for tracking placements and ensuring all tasks were completed. The team were aware of their areas of responsibilities but would also be able to take over from each other if necessary. This was demonstrated during the inspection.

Adequate systems were in place for monitoring the work undertaken by staff with the team manager having access to files, which she periodically checks. The staff team appear to work closely and covered for each other where necessary. It was noted that both the team and Service managers carried a small caseload. Foster carer's interviewed commented that it was good that the Service manager maintained a hands on approach.

Staff members interviewed was aware of the grievance and disciplinary procedures and copies of all the Service Policies and Procedures were made available to them.

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?****3**

Foster carers' assessment of the service provided was positive. They said the service appeared to them to be adequately staffed and that they had experienced no problems when they needed to speak to a member of staff. 11 foster carers responded to the foster carer's questionnaire, on the question of whether the service is adequately staffed they all responded saying it was. From the discussions with the service manager and team managers there appeared to appropriate systems in place as well as contingency to resolve any shortfall in staffing.

All the staff had a social work qualification in addition to their degrees. They all had lengthy experience of childcare. This included the newest member of staff interviewed.

Policies and procedures were in place relating to the recruitment and retention of foster carers. As stated earlier in this report, the Service uses a number of methods to recruit foster carers such as advertising in local and national press, community links, word of mouth etc. They have been able to recruit carers from a range of backgrounds in order to be able to offer and meet the needs of different children/young people and the demands of the local authorities.

The assessment of carers is carried out using the BAAF form F. Independent assessors who are subjected to the same recruitment processes carry out the assessments. Part of the management structure included a Reviewing Officer and a Panel Manager. The Panel Manager allocated the assessors. The Reviewing Manager vets the form F's to ensure that any gaps in the information collated regarding the foster carer were addressed before the assessment document was sent to panel members. Discussions with the Panel Chair, observation of the panel, as well as discussions with the staff members indicated that good systems were in place to ensure that careful vetting of prospective carers is undertaken.

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**

A range of policies were in place intending to support the Service and the staff. These included 'Whistle Blowing, Grievance, Disciplinary, Harassment and Anti-Discriminatory policies and procedures, Supervision and Appraisal.

The staff said they had access to independent counselling as well as the employee and carer's forum including a Black workers support group. In addition, administrative staff is also supported via the Admin Conference, which takes place yearly. The workers considered their employers to be fair and competent.

The Service operated an out of hour's service, which was supported by senior managers and workers on a rota basis. Foster carers spoken to said this was very useful and valued resource as it ensured that when problems presented themselves after 6 pm they were able to speak to someone. Visits could also be arranged out of hours if felt to be necessary. The Foster Care Agreement set out the Public Liability Insurance cover for foster carers and

children/young people placed.

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

During the discussions with members of staff they told the inspectors that their employers ensured that they attended training courses that they identified. The Family Placement Workers said that as qualified social workers it was difficult for them to find suitable training courses to keep up to date with their practice. However, they confirmed that the organisation was currently looking at the possibility of the qualified staff undertaking the Post Qualification Award training. They also had access to NVQ training and were responsible for facilitating foster carer's training.

The inspectors were able to examine the training schedule designed for the year with regards to both carers and staff members. The staff had participated on a number of training courses. These included Child Protection, Management of Behaviour etc.

As stated earlier all newly appointed staff participated in structured induction training.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All staff providing support to foster carers received one to one supervision including the administrative staff. The staff members spoken to during the inspection confirm the level of support they received. As stated previously, team meetings took place on a regular basis and staff meetings and senior management meetings took place to ensure that managers were kept abreast of development, any gaps in the service as well as monitoring performance and practice and to ensure tasks were being undertaken as agreed.

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

Written procedures were in place, which set out the strategies for working with foster carers. It detailed the level of supervision provided, the aim of the supervision, the fact that unannounced visits should take a place. The Foster Care Agreement set out the support the foster carer could expect to receive from the service.

Foster carers spoken to during the inspection, were aware of the difference between the role and responsibilities of the staff provided by the service and that of the local authority social worker. Foster carers were complimentary about the level of support made available to them by the agency as well as the support and assistance made available to the children/young people. Some commented that the Family Placement Workers were 'very nice and kind'.

In their response to the questionnaires some children/young people commented about the

help and support they received from their foster carer to settle and not feel 'different'. They could also name and identify the Family Placement Workers who visited the foster home. Foster carers said they were able to participate in the child's review.

Foster carers were able to take holidays with their own families and some interviewed described the process involved and the arrangements made for the foster child when they took a holiday.

As previously stated foster carers were very positive about the level of support provided.

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

The foster carers, in their response to the questionnaire, commented positively about the support and supervision that they receive.

The Foster Care Agreement addresses all the matters set out in Schedule 5 of Regulation 28(5)(b). Information relating to supervision made available to the foster carers was detailed in the Agreement.

A detailed and comprehensive Foster Carer's Handbook was available to all the carers, which contained all policies, procedures and guidance needed to assist the carer.

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

Foster carers spoken to and those responding to the questionnaires indicated that they were able to participate in training. This training began prior to them becoming approved. When approved they said that the training offered was of a good quality. One carer met told the inspectors that they enjoyed and rated the training offered. They had completed the NVQ Level 3 Award in Caring for Children and Young People. Foster carers said that they had to attend at least 4 training sessions throughout the year.

Some of the training included Child Protection, Health Development, Attachment and Child Development, Managing violence and Aggression, Cultural and Race Awareness and Caring for Children who have been Abused.

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

Files seen overall contained the Looked After Children (LAC) documents.

The files contained the necessary information and foster carers were aware of the circumstances leading up to the placement of a child with themselves and the objective of the placement. Foster carers spoke of keeping mementos etc for the child they were caring for.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Separate records in relation to staff and carers were being maintained. Improvements were noted in the way information was held on the files. Family placement staff did their own filing.

There was evidence on the files to indicate that necessary checks were undertaken on the carers and members of their family where necessary.

There is information to indicate that reviews were taking place. As a result of examination of review reports to the panel the inspectors have suggested that the front sheet of the document should state that it is a review that was being considered. It was also suggested that the review report should detail the number of bedrooms available so that information can be matched against any increased in placement.

A register was maintained of foster carers, which contained the information required by the regulations.

Records were securely maintained and the premises was alarmed.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			45
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			32
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			20
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:			2
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	×	Maximum £	×

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
<p>The premises were found to appropriate for the purposes of the Service. FCA North West is based in a large detached property that had sufficient space to enable to Service to carry out its function. This included space for therapy and education work and adequate space for the administrative and Family Placement staff.</p> <p>Foster carers commented that children enjoyed visiting the office and felt welcomed.</p> <p>The inspectors understand that the organisation was considering relocating the Manchester office.</p>		

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

FCA is a national organisation. From the information seen and discussions with the manager the service appeared at the time of the inspection to be viable. The overall financial responsibility is situated in the central office in Bromsgrove. However, there was information to suggest that the manager had responsibility at a local level.

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

Financial procedures were available. Appropriate systems were in place to monitor the operation of the service to ensure that it is financially viable.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster carers told the inspectors that they received their payment on time. They said they could not fault the systems in place and had no concern about the way in which payments were organised.

Appropriate administrative/computer system was in place and the administrative team had access to training to assist them in their work.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Procedures were in place relating to the legal framework in which the foster panel is established. It detailed information about membership of the panel. All panel members are CRB checked and have to declare any conflict of interests. There were also processes for decision-making, refusal and approval. It was also worthy of note that job description were also available as well as written agreement between the Fostering Service and panel members setting out the expectations.</p> <p>Composition of the panel was as specified in the regulations, however, as noted at the last inspection, it was noted the panel was over numbers. The manager was aware of the need to address this.</p> <p>There was an independent chairperson for the panel. The chair was interviewed during the inspection and discussed those changes that had taken place since the last inspection. The chair was clear about their role and the process for decision-making and was aware of the processes involved should a concern arise from a panel meeting.</p> <p>Training was also available to panel members.</p>		

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?	
Not a service offered by FCA.		

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard does not applied to FCA.		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 8th December 2003 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 NCSC in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 23 February 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Mr Martin Cockburn of Foster Care Associates Limited 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 Mr Martin Cockburn of Foster Care Associates Limited 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.