



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Hertfordshire County Council Fostering Service**

County Hall  
Hertford  
Hertfordshire  
SG13 8DP

24th November 2004

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Hertfordshire County Council Fostering Service

**Address**

County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DP

**Local Authority Manager**

Karen Devereux

**Tel No:**

01992 555555

**Address**

County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DP

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

2004

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		21.24.28/2/05 4/3/05 11/3/05 plus home visits (70 Hours)	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		Various	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Marian Byrne	117477
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Angela Dalton	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	Claire Farrier	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>	Sheila Knopp	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not applicable	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		Not required	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Karen Devereux	

**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 Hertfordshire County Council Fostering Service. 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 report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.**

Hertfordshire Family Placement Service provides a service responsive to the needs of children who require a family placement. It aims to recruit sufficient carers to offer placement choice; aims to provide a placement that meets cultural, religious and racial background, where possible to provide local placements to maintain family networks.

The service operates from four premises within the county quadrants and provides respite care, short-term placements and kinship as well as long-term placements.

## **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 Hertfordshire County Council Children, Schools and Families Family Placement Team (Fostering Service). The requirement left at the last inspection was met. One requirement was left following this inspection. Since the last inspection a new manager has been appointed. She is an experienced manager with a background in the management of children's services. She has the appropriate qualifications including an NVQ 5 in management. Staff spoken with during this inspection were positive about the manner in which they are managed. The family placement team adheres to the comprehensive County Council policies and procedures – copies have been provided of the relevant documents.

The Family Placement Service operates from four premises within the county quadrants and provides respite care, short-term placements, kinship as well as long-term placements. All offices were visited as part of the inspection process and staff were interviewed informally within each office base. The accommodation of the teams is currently under review. A random examination of staff files was conducted as part of this inspection - staff recruitment records are maintained in the Children, School and Families personnel department at County Hall.

Young people were consulted as part of the inspection process through a group meeting, individual visits to their placements and inspection questionnaires. All the children who are in a fostering placement and all foster carers were sent a questionnaire. Of the 840 (approx) children's questionnaire sent out 96 were returned. All confirmed that they were satisfied with their placement. All stated that they were given choices and could contribute to how they lived their lives and all stated that they were given opportunities to wear clothes of their choice. This was confirmed on visits to children. Most confirmed that they were aware of their placement plan and educational plan. Where applicable, they were working towards a leaving care plan. All young people confirmed that they were able to participate in their review if they so chose. All had taken part with the p.c. generated programme 'viewpoint'.

Foster carers were consulted as part of this inspection through a Foster Carers Support Group, individual visits and inspection questionnaires, of the 400 (approx) questionnaires sent out 81 were returned. All confirmed that they were aware of the young person's care plan. Most were positive about the recruitment process although some stated it had taken far longer than anticipated. All confirmed that they had received a thorough assessment, induction, training and on-going supervision from the family placement worker.

This was a positive inspection. There was co-operation from all staff concerned and a positive commitment to the inspection process



## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

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.

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 Marian Byrne Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Regulation Manager Robert Kittle 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	
1	5, 7 & 20 Schedule 1 (3) (6)		<p>The Registered Manager must ensure that two references are completed for all staff prior to commencing their designated post within the fostering service.</p> <p>The Registered manager must ensure that the age of a member of staff is clearly known to ensure the completion of a full work history</p>	Henceforth and ongoing

### 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

\* 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	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NA
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	24/11/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	102

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Statement of Purpose is appropriate for the service provided and meets this standard and regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations. Children who are fostered get a 'filofax' type document detailing the Children's Guide to fostering. This includes information about the fostering service as well as information on independent bodies such as 'Voice of the Child in Care' and the Commission (CSCI). The Head of Fostering in the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that The Statement of Purpose is disseminated in team meetings as part of the Departments communication strategy. There are plans to include it in the Foster Carers handbook.	
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## 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?	3
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The Service Manager at the time of the inspection is a qualified social worker with eight years experience as a practising social worker, specialising in Looked After Children. She receives internal management training to support her in her role. She has been head of the Family Placement team since July 2004. She completed her NVQ 5 in October 2004. She was a foster carer herself for two years. Staff spoken with, confirmed that the Manager works in an open and transparent manner and is very approachable and supportive. In her absence delegated authority reverts to Head of Looked After Children - her line manager.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Manager of the Service has extensive experience having been a practising childcare social worker in the Local Authority for 10 years - specialising in looking after children- prior to her appointment to a management post and subsequently to Head of Family Placement. She was recruited by Hertfordshire's County Council and has been subject to Local Authority security checks.



## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

### Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a Service Quality Management team within the Children, Schools and Families Directorate of the County Council, which is responsible for ensuring quality performance in all areas of Child Care. This policy is under review at the moment.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

### Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Service Manager stated she had a clear job description a copy of which was on her personnel file. In her absence responsibility lies with her line manager unless the absence is for a prolonged period when a team manager would be designated to 'act up' into the post. Family Placement Team staff stated during the inspection that there were clear lines of accountability within the service and were able to demonstrate what these were.

## 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

All prospective foster homes are visited prior to approval. Health and Safety risk assessments are completed and action taken to minimise identified risks all homes are reviewed annually this was confirmed by foster carers visited as part of the inspection. Files inspected also contained details of Health and Safety checks. Homes visited by the inspectors met the requirements of this standard in so far as they were comfortable, warm, and of a good standard of cleanliness. Children reported that they were pleased with their rooms and were involved in re-decoration of their rooms. The Children seen in foster homes appeared to be well cared for and were well presented. Some of the older children showed good insight into their situation and expressed the gratitude and they felt towards their foster carers. Others were of the opinion that their foster carers did not get enough financial recognition for the wonderful work they do. In all the homes visited there was a relaxed atmosphere and the children were able to give their opinions clearly. The foster carers did not hesitate in allowing private access to the children. The Family Placement Handbook provided to foster carers includes Health and Safety guidance.

### Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Efforts are made to match children appropriately culturally and with regard to ethnic background where practicable. Comprehensive information for foster carers is provided in the handbook 'What Carers Need to Know'. Hertfordshire County Council's Equal Opportunities Policy 'Putting People First', is adhered to by the Family Placement Service. Interpreters and access to translation services are available. Where placements are unable to meet the young person's cultural or religious needs plans are put in place to address this in other ways e.g. some young people who are asylum seekers are taken to meet others of their own community. Currently there are a number of children being fostered out of County, plans are in progress to have these children, where appropriate, returned to foster carers in Hertfordshire. This is driven by the appropriateness of the placements and by the high cost of funding out of County placements.

**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?**

3

Except in the case of emergency placements care is taken to match young people taking into account the young person's care plan. Foster placement agreements were found on all files examined as part of the inspection. When visiting foster carers, foster carers who had difficulty supporting the child stated that they were given support. In one case where the placement was particularly difficult, in, an effort to prevent the placement failing the care of the child was shared with one other set of foster carers.

**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

Hertfordshire's Strategy for Looked After Children ( 2004/2005 – 2006/2007) includes the planning framework 'Outcomes for Children' proposed developments and strategy targets use 'Hardiker' levels of need to identify children at risk. The outcomes for children focuses on, being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.

Information regarding abuse is available in the Family Placement Service Handbook 'What Carers Need to Know'. Training for foster carers includes caring for children who have been abused, managing behaviour and recognising signs of abuse. These are also regularly covered in supervision with foster carers. The service requires foster carers to give an undertaking that they will not use corporal punishment. Young people are provided with 'Kidscape' leaflets on bullying. The Children, Schools and Families directorate is currently developing an anti-bullying policy that will include the Foster Care services. A clear missing persons procedure is included in the handbook 'What Carers Need to Know', although this is currently under review. Hertfordshire County Council Area Child Protection Committee set out clear procedures for investigating allegations regarding abuse including abuse within the foster home.

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

0

%

**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 Policy Statement on looked after Children states that a decision to look after a child is made where it is established that support to a family network cannot ensure adequate safety and wellbeing of the child. The policy further states that HCC will promote encourage and facilitate contact between Looked After Children their families of origin and others who have played an important part in their lives. Contact arrangements were seen to be included in the LAC care plan. Children spoken with confirmed that contact with their family of origin is maintained, or not maintained if it is their wish or in their best interests. The policy statement regarding contact with the families of origin that is in accordance with the Children Act 1989 that is adhered to by the Family Placement Service. There is also copious information included in the handbook 'What Carers Need to Know'.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

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

3

The department uses a computerised system called 'Viewpoint' to obtain anonymous information from young people to enable service planning. This can also act as a facilitator for the young people prior to their review. The Service Manager stated that they consult also with young people through the Children's' Participation Group and changes have been made as a result of this group. The difficulty in obtaining the children's views was highlighted in the questionnaire from the children which indicated that they wanted to be regarded as ordinary children and did not want to participate in any activity that sets them apart. They were particularly keen not to be labelled the 'f children' (foster children). Staff were aware of this and act in a manner that is as sensitive as possible. An example being that the service developed an information 'filofax' after feedback from the group, which contains useful guidance and contacts for young people in care, including advocacy services, brief legal notes, information on education, health and employment plus much more. The young people are invited to participate in their annual reviews and this confirmed by young people interviewed during the inspection. All young people visited knew how to make a complaint.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

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

3

The information provided as part of the inspection process included extensive information for both young people and foster carers on promoting health and social development. This is also included in the initial training programme for foster carers and is included in the handbook 'What Carers Need to Know'.

**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

Personal Educational Plans (PEP) are the responsibility of the placing social worker. However, all young people and foster carers interviewed stated that they had a copy. Foster carers would discuss in supervision with their Supervising Social workers any educational issues. Foster carers interviewed as part of the inspection process all appeared to have a keen interest in the educational progress of the young people in their care e.g. attending parent's evenings etc. A number of the young people stated on their questionnaire that foster carers assisted them with their homework. One foster carer spoken with was aware of the schools in the area which one would best meet the needs of the child she was caring for, she made contact with the school and ensured, in association with allied professionals, that the child was accepted by the school. The child has high needs and the foster carer works in close association with the school.

**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

Young people and foster carers interviewed confirmed that where appropriate they had 'Leaving Care' Plans. Some of the young people approaching the age at which they may be leaving care stated that their foster carers were instrumental in helping them to gain the skills needed to live independently. The foster carer's of one 'child' who is now 18 years of age informed the inspectors that there were plans in place to support him through higher education. Written information is also included in the 'filofax' and limited information is also included in the handbook 'What Carers Need to Know'.

## 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

Personnel records of Family Placement Service staff are maintained centrally by Children, Schools and Families', Personnel Department at County Hall. A random selection was examined and seen to comply with schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations with the exception of supplying two written references prior to taking up their post. This applied to staff who were currently working with HCC. The application form used by HCC does not have information of the applicant's age. This makes it impossible to ensure that a full work history has been supplied. Information regarding the number of staff who have left is not available. HCC has staff dedicated to CRB clearance records which were stored in an appropriate manner. All staff records inspected showed that staff were appropriately qualified.

Total number of staff of the agency:

80

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

0

### 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

HCC has an established core of well-trained and experienced staff. There is a low turnover of staff and currently there is one short-term vacancy. Those spoke with were very positive about working with fostering. All were positive about the manner they were managed and supported. Line managers regularly accompany staff on their visits to foster cares and all reported that they received regular supervision as required by the County Council Supervision Policy and Procedure. Records inspected supported this. Foster carers spoken with were positive about the support they get from their social worker and the office generally if their social worker is not available. There were clear lines of accountability within the service. All social work staff with the Fostering Service were at the time of the inspection undergoing interviews to promote them to Level 4 social workers. This process is new to the department and is seen as part of valuing staff.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b> The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There are sufficient appropriately qualified staff in the family placements teams, this was also verified by the majority of inspection questionnaires returned. There are clear County Council personnel policies and procedures in place covering supervision, training etc. Foster carer recruitment is on-going and there are clear policies and procedures for guidance. There are four recruitment campaigns each year and there is a dedicated budget to cover publicity and marketing. In the past year the campaign has been very successful in so far as the teams surpassed their recruitment targets. Part of the assessment process includes an information/training programme 'Skills to Foster'. Carers spoke positively about this and the information it gave them prior to the assessment procedure. All files examined during the inspection contained the assessment and approval information. The appropriate references and checks were also found to be maintained on foster carer files inspected during the inspection.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b> The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Out of hours support is available from the duty social work team. All files examined contained supervision and appraisal records. Foster carers confirmed that they receive regular supervision from the family placement team support worker. A Health and Safety policy is in place. Files examined during the inspection contained copies of health and safety risk assessments. Foster carers confirmed that they had received advice regarding health and safety and had made appropriate alterations to their homes to meet any risk assessments. A clear whistle blowing policy is in place. Foster carers and staff interviewed during the inspection confirmed they were aware of the policy and felt that they would be supported if they had to use it.</p> <p>The inspector spoke with one foster carer who had the child removed from her care. She made a formal complaint. The inspector followed the paper audit on this and found that the Complaints policy had been followed.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b> There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There are clear departmental guidelines covering staff induction and training. There is an annual departmental training programme available for all staff to access. All foster carers have access to training and a training programme is available. 'Choosing to Foster', must be completed by all carers, (with the exception of kinship carers) prior to approval. Approved foster carers attend the 'Skills to Foster' course to give potential carers 'first hand advice and experience'. The pre-inspection questionnaire included a spread sheet detailing the training carried out throughout the year. NVQ training is also available for carers. All foster carers visited during the inspection had accessed some training since approval. Training records were seen to be maintained on the foster carer's file examined as part of the inspection process. Staff spoken with during the inspection were aware of the training on offer by the</p>		

department and stated that they were encouraged to attend.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

All staff spoken with throughout the inspection stated that they had regular supervision throughout the year. All offices visited as part of the inspection has copies of the departmental policies and procedures for staff to access as required. Supervision and appraisals are conducted in line with the departmental policy. All staff spoken with said that their line managers were supportive, open and approachable.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**

**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

Clear policies and procedures are in place to meet this standard. The inspectors attended a foster carers support group as part of the inspection process. All there confirmed that they felt supported by the family placement support worker and that the support groups were very useful. Very positive feedback was received regarding the supervising family placement workers. However, a recurring theme through visits and questionnaires is the lack of support some foster carers have received from the named social worker for the young person. In the main, they confirmed that this was improving. The Management of the Family Placement Team informed the inspectors that the Department was addressing this on two fronts - a number of staff have been seconded to study for a Social Work qualification ( approx 30 per year) temporary staff have been recruited from abroad to fill vacancies until the people who have been seconded have qualified



**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

Formal supervision on a monthly basis is provided to all foster carers. Files examined during the inspection indicated records are maintained of supervision sessions. All files examined during the inspection contained copies of the Foster Care Agreement. All carers stated that they were aware of the complaints procedure and the procedure for investigating any allegations. There are clear Child Protection Procedures in place. One foster carer training session attended by the Inspector involved an established experienced foster as part of the training team. The session was carried out in a clear concise informative and relaxed manner.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

3

The family placement service adheres to the County Council Equal Opportunities Guidance – ‘Putting People First’. Files examined during the inspection indicated that where two adults in one household are approved as carers, training had been provided. The pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that safe caring is addressed through supervision, care plans and all new carers are provided with the Fostering Network Safe Caring book. All foster carers spoken to during the inspection were aware of the principles of safe caring. The training plan for the year included courses on money, child protection, understanding behaviour, development, supervision, therapeutic crises Intervention and self harm.

## 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
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Case files in the Family Placement Team are very dependent upon the information passed from the young person's social worker. However, all files examined contained the information required. All foster carers visited as part of the inspection stated that they had been given the relevant information for the young people placed with them. Some foster carers stated that they did not have enough information on the child in their care but further stated that it is not always possible to know details of the child until they had lived in the foster home for some time. Some of the young people visited as part of the inspection shared their photograph albums and other memorabilia their foster carer had helped them complete. Carers confirmed that they keep journals or diaries for the young people in their care. The Foster carers of one child was due to attend a meeting on the future care of one of the children in their care and would be using the diary to facilitate a good understanding of the child. Foster carers confirmed they were aware of the department's confidentiality policy.

### 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
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Separate records were available for inspection for employed staff – see Standard 15. Records are maintained separately for foster carers, young people, complaints and allegations within the family placement teams. Records were securely maintained. There is a clear access to Health and Safety procedure within HCC, as well as a policy and procedure for management of confidential information.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			841
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			X
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	X	<b>Maximum £</b>	X

## 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

All offices visited as part of the inspection were suitable for their purpose, fully equipped with IT, storage, lockable space, and were secure. Every office had access to private space for confidential interviews and meetings as well as larger accommodation for carers and young people group meetings. Most offices were accessible for people with reduced mobility, in as much as where offices were on upper floors team managers stated that private space was available on the ground floor. The accommodation of the Fostering teams is currently under review.

## 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?
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	0
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This standard was not inspected.

### 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?
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	0
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This standard was not inspected.

**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

Policies on payments for foster carers and kinship carers are in place. All foster carers spoken to during the inspection were aware of the expenses/allowances and stated that they were paid on time. Some comments were made on the financial requirements on foster carers. This particularly applies to foster carers who taking emergency placements. Expenditure can include school uniform and a full wardrobe of clothes for the child. While the expenditure is always refunded it was felt that more recognition of this outlay was needed.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

There are two fostering panels in Hertfordshire, operating in the East and West of the County.

Membership of the panels is in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations and there are procedures governing its operation.

Discussion with the chairperson of one panel revealed that there are processes in place to manage disagreement about decisions, but that consensus is usually achieved. Panel members have access to specialist expertise.

The process of approval is thorough and rigorous and feedback to carers and assessors is detailed and clearly sets out the terms on which approval is given. At the panel the Inspectors attended, all panel members were very actively involved in the discussions.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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A Shared Care Scheme provides short breaks to disabled children. Carers are recruited and supervised by staff working within this team. Policies and procedures are in place. There are no formal schemes for short-term breaks for children who are not disabled. There are a small number of carers who can provide respite breaks to support packages to ongoing foster 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?
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There are approximately 80 kinship placements within Hertfordshire. There is a kinship policy and procedure in place. Training and supervision are available to all kinship carers. It has been reported that a survey of kinship carers indicated little interest in a kinship support group, however there is a Kinship Support group that meets quarterly in North and East Herts and HCC Fostering is looking to set up another Kinship Support group in the South/West to support Kinship carers in these areas. Wherever possible a kinship placement is sought in the first instance for placements. Please note that kinship placements were not examined as part of this inspection process.	
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**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 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The providers response is available on request from the Hertfordshire Area Office.

**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

**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 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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

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.

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