



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Surrey County Council Fostering Service

Childrens Services

Beaufort House

Mayford Green

Woking

Surrey

GU22 0PG

2nd to 27th February 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

Surrey County Council Fostering Service

Address

Childrens Services, Beaufort House, Mayford Green,
Woking, Surrey, GU22 0PG

Local Authority Manager

Ms Annie MacIver

Tel No:

01483 728022

Address

Childrens Services, Beaufort House, Mayford Green,
Woking, Surrey, GU22 0PG

Fax No:

01483 776326

Email Address

annie.maciver@surreycc.gov.
uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

N/A

Tel No

N/A

Address

N/A

Fax No

N/A

Email Address

N/A

Registered Number of IFA

N/A

Name of Registered Provider

N/A

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

N/A

Date of first registration

N/A

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

3-26.3.03

Date of Inspection Visit		2nd February 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr M Hill	075660
Name of Inspector	2	Ms A McLaird	
Name of Inspector	3	Ms C Wood	
Name of Inspector	4	Mr R Blades	
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.		N/A	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms A Maclver	

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 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 Surrey 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 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.

This report relates to the second inspection of the Surrey Fostering Service by the NCSC under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The inspection was used to review progress made following the requirements from the last inspection.

Local Authority Fostering Service managers do not have to register with the NCSC, nor do Local Authority Fostering Services themselves have to register with the NCSC as providers. Regulation 10(2) requires Local Authority Fostering Services managers to meet the same fitness criteria that an Independent Agency manager has to meet.

Surrey County Council Fostering Service is a Local Authority Fostering service operated by the Social Services Department. It manages all the following in house fostering functions from temporary placements (emergency, short term, assessment and bridging placements) through to long term permanent foster care placements, placements for a named child/young person only, specialist carers, specialist plus carers and lodgings plus carers.

At the time of the inspection the staff organising short term breaks to children with disabilities (family link) were being managed by the Children's Disability teams of Surrey County Council Children's Services. These arrangements are to be reviewed in the near future.

The Fostering Service has three fostering teams. The West Team is based in Heritage House in Chertsey, the East Team is based in the Omnibus Building in Reigate, and the Family Finding and Recruitment Team is based in Chertsey.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

The inspection team acknowledge that the Fostering Service has made good progress with the requirements from the previous inspection. Significant financial investment has been made in the service, enabling the recruitment of additional fostering service staff and foster carers. Foster carer allowances have been increased with the aim of improving recruitment and retention of staff and carers. These strategies are aimed to reduce the extent to which carers accommodate children beyond the number of places for which they are approved and facilitate better matching of children to appropriate carers.

The aim during the last year has also been to raise the profile of fostering and affirm the work of foster carers and the fostering teams. Funding has been set aside for the appointments of Training and Development officers (1.5 whole time equivalent) and a Development Manager to work alongside the Fostering Service Manager. These initiatives are aimed at driving through shortfalls in training and other outstanding matters. A Project Manager and Assistant have been employed to implement the new recruitment strategy and develop the presentation of promotional material and other documentation. These initiatives reflect the sound management of the service during the past year.

A number of requirements have been carried forward from the last inspection, which are either being addressed or are subject to an action plan, setting out how these are to be met.

Discussions and file entries provided evidence of a good approach to securing and promoting the welfare of children placed with foster carers. The current shortage of carers means that the desired matching process for children requiring short-term foster placements cannot always be achieved. It is hoped that developments outlined above will remedy this shortfall in the future. Plans are in place to further develop the necessary training for foster carers.

The 'Attachment Project' is a positive multi agency initiative in partnership with academic institutions aimed at building the stability of long term placements, through developing understanding and knowledge about issues of attachment between carers and foster children.

There is a need to develop a clear framework for the assessment, support and training of family carers in order that a similar level of investment is made in the stability of such placements as in non-kinship arrangements.

Staff members within the service were found to be well-motivated and reported receiving good training and support from line managers. Where some requirements have been made in relation to staff recruitment these relate to further fine tuning the established procedures.

Discussions took place with foster carers either during visits to their homes or events organised by the service. Carers were generally positive about the staff of the agency and felt that their roles were valued. Support groups attended by inspectors were seen to be very positive, both for carers and their children.

Panels were observed to be working well, considered to be well chaired and administered with improvements having taken place to the serving of papers. Members were well prepared, knowledgeable and professional. Complex assessments had been carried out on applicants for approval as foster carers. There is a need for an independent person to be appointed to chair the permanency panel. The Agency Decision Maker demonstrated having a good strategic overview of the service.

A number of requirements and recommendations have been made and are detailed in the main body of the report.

Appreciation is expressed to the staff of the fostering service, foster children/young people, foster carers and all personnel involved, for their willing and thoughtful co-operation during the preparation of the inspection visit and the inspection itself.

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:

YES

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:

As detailed in the main body of this inspection report, please refer to particular Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31 and 32.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	5,7,20 Schedules 1 & 7	2, 3 & 15	That appropriate checks are carried out on all staff employed to work for the Fostering Service as detailed below:	With effect from 5.03.03
4	20 Schedule 1	15	Two written references are obtained by the Fostering service before employment commences, one of who must be the current or previous employer, and that telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references.	Immediate effect 5.3.03
5	20 Schedule 1	15	A full employment history must be obtained together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment.	Immediate effect 5.3.03
6	20 Schedule 1	3	Positive proof of identity including a recent photograph must be obtained and kept on file.	Immediate effect 5.3.03
7	20	3	Satisfactory medical information must be obtained on all new employees and kept on file.	Immediate effect 5.3.03

12	21	15	That a formal induction programme is drawn up and implemented for all staff new to the fostering service. Staff must sign and date each section on completion.	To be agreed
14	3	1	That copies of the Statement of Purpose and the Children's guide be circulated to all staff of the fostering service, foster carers, foster children as appropriate, and other stakeholders of the fostering service.	To be agreed
15	21	15	That updated Child Protection training is provided to staff and foster carers as appropriate.	To be agreed
19	3 & 11	1	That details of the NCSC Surrey Area office are referred to in the Children's Guide and in the complaints procedure as an alternative agency for complaints to be made to by foster carers, foster children/young people and other stakeholders of the fostering service.	To be agreed
20	34 & 38	8	That the role of the fostering service in exceeding "the usual foster limit" is examined and reviewed.	To be agreed
21c	35	8 & 11	That children/young people are provided with consistent social work input.	To be agreed
23	34	8	That all foster carers sign the foster carers agreement.	To be agreed
24	42 & 43 Schedules 7 & 8	9	That the Child Protection procedure is extended to include notification to the NCSC, Surrey Area office of any instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster carers.	Immediate effect 5.3.03
25	20 & 17	9	That further work is carried out with staff and foster carers to ensure all policies and procedures are known and made clear to them.	To be agreed
26	11	9, 24	That foster carers are clear regarding records required to be maintained by them and these records are regularly checked.	To be agreed
27	17	9	That out of office hours support provided to foster carers is reviewed and improved.	To be agreed

29	17	14	That foster carers receive the necessary information, training and support in order to provide appropriate opportunities and effective support and guidance to the young people in their care.	To be agreed
31	22 Schedule 2	16	That the fostering service complies with the details required to be maintained in the register of each child placed and with the details required to be maintained in the record of details of each foster carer.	To be agreed
37	17	23	That the draft training profiles are implemented and clear records of the training undertaken by foster carers is made available.	To be agreed
39	11	11	That foster children/young people are always consulted, age appropriately, and their views and wishes obtained prior to a review	To be agreed
40	18,12, 42 Schedule 7	25	Records of allegations and complaints must provide clear details of the investigation carried out, the conclusion reached and the action taken.	To be agreed

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	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Mr M Hill, Ms C Wood	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Ms A McLaird, Mr R Blades	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Mrs SA Floyd	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 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	5,7,20 Schedules 1 & 7	2, 3 & 15	That appropriate checks are carried out on all staff employed to work for the Fostering Service as detailed below:	Immediate effect 27.02.04
2	20 Schedule 1	15	Two written references are obtained by the Fostering service before employment commences, one of who must be the current or previous employer, and that telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
3	20 Schedule 1	15	A full employment history must be obtained together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
4	20 Schedule 1	3	Positive proof of identity including a recent photograph must be obtained and kept on file.	Immediate effect 27.02.04

5	20	3	Satisfactory medical information must be obtained on all new employees and kept on file.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
6	21	15	That a formal induction programme is drawn up and implemented for all staff new to the fostering service. Staff must sign and date each section on completion.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
7	34 & 38	8	That the role of the fostering service in exceeding "the usual foster limit" is examined and reviewed.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
8	34	8	That all foster carers sign the foster carers agreement.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
9	3	1	That copies of the Statement of Purpose and the Children's guide be circulated to all staff of the fostering service, foster carers, foster children as appropriate, and other stakeholders of the fostering service.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
10	21	15	That updated Child Protection training is provided to staff and foster carers as appropriate.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
11	3 & 11	1	That details of the NCSC Surrey Area office are referred to in the Children's Guide and in the complaints procedure as an alternative agency for complaints to be made to by foster carers, foster children/young people and other stakeholders of the fostering service.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
12	42 & 43 Schedules 7 & 8	9	That the Child Protection procedure is extended to include notification to the NCSC, Surrey Area office of any instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster carers.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
13	20 & 17	9	That further work is carried out with staff and foster carers to ensure all policies and procedures are known and made clear to them.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
14	11	9, 24	That foster carers are clear regarding records required to be maintained by them and these records are regularly checked.	Immediate effect 27.02.04

15	17	9	That out of office hours support provided to foster carers is reviewed and improved.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
16	17	14	That foster carers receive the necessary information, training and support in order to provide appropriate opportunities and effective support and guidance to the young people in their care.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
17	22 Schedule 2	16	That the fostering service complies with the details required to be maintained in the register of each child placed and with the details required to be maintained in the record of details of each foster carer.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
18	17	23	That the draft training profiles are implemented and clear records of the training undertaken by foster carers is made available.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
19	11	11	That foster children/young people are always consulted, age appropriately, and their views and wishes obtained prior to a review	Immediate effect 27.02.04
20	18,12, 42 Schedule 7	25	Records of allegations and complaints must provide clear details of the investigation carried out, the conclusion reached and the action taken.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
21	3	1	That details of the facilities and services provided by each team within the service are included in the Statement of Purpose along with any missing items from standard 1.4.	31.5.04
22	35	8 & 11	That children/young people are provided with consistent social work input.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
23	20	3	That fuller checks are carried out on existing staff members applying for promotion to senior positions within the service to include for example references from the candidate's line manager and other professional colleagues.	Immediate effect 27.2.04
24	43	4	That notifications are made to NCSC according to Regulation 43(1) and schedule 8 (serious complaint, calling of Police, instigation of CP enquiry).	Immediate effect 27.2.04

25	30, 32	4, 24	That regular file audits are undertaken in all teams to assist the monitoring of necessary actions in relation to placements, where such audits are not occurring.	31.5.04
26	29	6	That health and safety checks are formalised in terms of the completion of the paperwork that the service intends should be completed.	Ongoing in annual reviews. 31.5.04
27	11, 33	7	That the fostering team continues recruitment initiatives in relation to increasing the cultural and ethnic diversity of placements for children.	Immediate effect 27.2.04
28	12	9	That senior staff review criteria for making referrals to the child protection teams and clarify these with staff where necessary.	Immediate effect 27.2.04
29	12	9	That outcomes and decision making in relation to concerns/ allegations are recorded in detail on the files of children placed and foster carers.	Immediate effect 27.2.04
30		9	That the 'Missing child' procedure including contact details for the Emergency Duty Team is reproduced in full detail in the newly produced Handbook for Foster Carers.	31.5.04
31	20	15	That further work is done to organise staff files, some which were found to be in a poor state of organisation.	Immediate effect 27.2.04
32	20	15	That clarification is sought with the CRB of the timescale for which original Criminal Records Bureau forms and Police checks can be retained on file before being destroyed.	31.5.04
33	17	21, 32	That a review is carried out of the particular challenges of supporting carers where geographical remoteness or other factors limit the amount of support that can be accessed by carers.	31.5.04
34	11	21	That a review is carried out of the operation of respite breaks and a policy/procedure developed to ensure that the needs of all parties are addressed e.g. the respective needs of the foster child, receiving foster home and the established foster carers.	31.5.04

35	3	31	That the intended review of the management structure and operation of the Family Link service, which historically has been part of the Children's Disability service is embarked upon and completed.	31.5.04
36	24	30	An independent person is required to be appointed to chair the permanency panel.	31.05.04

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	11	That the information in the children's pack is adapted to make it more specific to the needs of children of different ages.
2	17	That the adequacy of the establishment of agency social workers is periodically reviewed in each of the fostering teams given the extent of perceptions of shortage of staff by foster carers.
3	30	That any consultants' recommendations made to members of the fostering service during the course of an assessment are formalised in writing.

* 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	35
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• 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	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	02/02/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	280

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?
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Elected members have approved the Statement of Purpose (SOP).

The previous inspection required a statement about reference to the number of placements being made in an emergency. The Statement of Purpose had been revised in October 2003 and refers to the circumstances in which emergency placements may be made and steps to ensure that an appropriate placement is made within six weeks. A significant number of placing officers reported that they had not been sent a copy of the SOP. Please see the requirement that the Statement of Purpose is sent to all interested parties, including placing officers. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

The Family Finding and Recruitment Team was found to have a supplementary service plan. This was found to provide useful specific information about the structure and functions of the team and could helpfully be replicated by other teams for inclusion in the SOP. Please see the requirement.

The child pack was found to contain much colourful and informative information about the service including telephone help line information. This is understood to be being circulated at the present time. At a meeting at SCRIPT, children were given the opportunity to make comments upon this information and expressed a need to make the information more specific to the needs of children of different ages.

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

The fostering service manager has extensive child care experience and possesses an MA in Organisational Consultancy in addition to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and a Diploma in Advanced Social Work (Children and Families). The manager has managed the Fostering Service for the last three years and previously was a social work team manager for three years. Surrey County Council Children's Service's has appropriate support teams to ensure that the financial and budgetary management of the service is monitored effectively.

There has been significant investment in the service, including improvements to fostering allowances via extra funding. There has been an appointment of a Project Manager and assistant to manage aspects of recruitment and publicity material.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Staff members applying for promotion to senior positions were reported not to be subject to fresh references to gauge suitability for the new post. The recruitment papers for a number of senior staff were viewed and found not to include references in all instances. Please see the requirement to carry out fuller checks on existing staff members applying for promotion to senior positions within the service to include for example references from the candidate's line manager and other professional colleagues. This was a recommendation in the previous inspection report.

Newly appointed staff were found to be subject to recruitment checks. In one instance there was no evidence on file that a significant gap in employment history had been adequately explored. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

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?

2

The two Assistant Team managers for the Family Finding and Recruitment team were interviewed and confirmed there being full arrangements for the supervision of staff in the team. The team manager supervises senior staff. Guidance is provided to staff about cases, assessment work, duty queries and initial visits. Training and personal development opportunities are available and post-qualifying training targets are set for qualified social workers, including the childcare award. The multi-agency 'Attachment Project' was being set up at the time of the inspection with the aim of supporting permanent placements. Group supervision meetings provide support to sessional workers.

A more formal system was under consideration for checking fostering files during supervision in order to ensure that satisfactory records are being kept.

The East and West teams were found to have an audit sheet to assist the monitoring of necessary actions in relation to placements. Please see the requirement that regular file audits are undertaken in all teams to assist the monitoring of necessary actions in relation to placements.

Three Foster Panels were attended in order to observe the decision making process in relation to the approval of carers, annual reviews and the making of specific recommendations to the agency decision maker in relation to proposed and existing placements of children and young people. These were found to be impressive in terms of the preparation carried out prior to the panels including report preparation, document reading and the discussion leading to the making of recommendations.

The fostering service acknowledged that as yet they had not developed the system for notifying events such as child protection concerns to the NCSC as required by the regulations. Please see the requirement that notifications are made to NCSC according to Regulation 43(1) and schedule 8. (Serious complaint, calling of Police, instigation of CP enquiry). This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	0
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	0
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	1
Serious illness or accident of a child.	0
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	0
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	1
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	0
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	0
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	0
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:	1
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	1

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a clear management structure with explicit lines of responsibility, characteristic of an established local authority management arrangement. Surrey County Council has a policy of providing all employees with well-defined job descriptions. The fostering service is a discrete service within the County Childrens' Services with a senior officer dedicated to overall management.</p> <p>Interviews with the team managers established that they were clear about their duties and responsibilities, the level of delegation and the lines of accountability. Discussions with staff demonstrated that they understood their manager's role and the lines of accountability within the organisation. There are contractual agreements in place outlining conditions of service.</p> <p>The post of Service Development Manager has been created to assist the Fostering Services Manager with setting the direction for future developments in policy and service provision and addressing inspection requirements and recommendations.</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?	2
<p>The Fostering Network's health and safety checklist was reported to be used on assessment of carers and at annual reviews, but was found not to be consistently documented on files. The Family Finding and Recruitment team check foster homes as part of routine visits, rather than making a formal annual inspection.</p> <p>Please see the requirement that health and safety checks are formalised in terms of the completion of the paperwork that the service intends should be completed.</p> <p>The current initiatives for recruiting a diverse range of foster carers with a variety of skills and experience should provide the fostering service with an increase in numbers and choice of foster home for young people.</p> <p>Eight foster carer homes were visited during this inspection, which were generally found to be comfortable, well equipped, warm and nurturing.</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
<p>At the last inspection, the fostering management estimated that only 2% of approved foster carers come from disabled and ethnic minority groups. A child/young person's ethnic origin, class, language and religion are considered important factors in the matching process, in order to promote continuity and provide an environment familiar and sympathetic to the child/young person. The fostering service had already set up a recruitment project, the main aim of which had been to recruit sufficient foster carers to ensure increased placement choice available to the children and young people referred to the service.</p> <p>The Family Finding and Recruitment team acknowledged their difficulty so far in recruiting sufficient numbers of carers from under represented groups. Specific placements had been sought for Asian/Muslim children and children of Afro/Caribbean and USA heritage. Appropriate publications had been used to advertise for carers meeting particular criteria.</p> <p>The senior staff interviewed stated that pre-conceptions about backgrounds of foster carers have been challenged in day-to-day practice in order to reduce restricted thinking about the potential contributions of carers from different economic and cultural backgrounds. The Project Manager taking forward recruitment initiatives was found to be promoting the recruitment of a culturally diverse range of carers in order to be able to meet the needs of children and young people. The recent training placement of a student from an ethnic</p>		

minority was reported to have been positive, as has the recruitment of an Asian staff member. The fostering service aims to use the knowledge of staff from different cultures to inform good practice.

The service provides a family link service that sets out to provide short breaks to the families of disabled children. Discussions took place with the family link coordinators in both East and West Surrey who expressed the benefits of sharing the same office accommodation as the social workers for disabled children.

Please see the requirement that the fostering teams continue recruitment initiatives in relation to increasing the cultural and ethnic diversity of placements for children. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

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

The East and West teams demonstrated their commitment to achieving a good level of matching in placements. However, shortages in available placements and the number of emergency placements mean that good matching is not always achieved. The Statement of Purpose states that children will be moved on within 6 weeks of initial placement if the first placement is not appropriate.

The 'Attachment Project' is a positive multi agency initiative in partnership with academic institutions aimed at building the stability of long term placements, through developing understanding and knowledge about issues of attachment and their relevance to relationships between carers and foster children. The project has been in the planning phase during the last year and is about to come to fruition with the establishment of a working team in identified premises.

It is of continuing concern that a significant number of foster carers are regularly operating for long periods of time with more than three children ("the usual fostering limit"), who are not necessarily siblings with respect to each other. The manager of the service acknowledged this continued difficulty and how the strategy of recruitment and retention initiatives may help. Please refer to The Children Act 1989 Part VIII, 63 (12) Schedule 7, which relates to, "Limits on Number of Foster Children". This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

Children are not introduced to potential long-term placements until the agency decision maker has approved the placement. A review meeting is held in the middle of the introductory period.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

A sample of files was viewed including situations where allegations had been made against foster carers. In some instances senior strategy meetings had taken place and follow up action determined, with risk assessments carried out. The fostering team had actively sought investigation and expressed concern about delays in the process in one instance. Foster carer agreements on file detailed ongoing support. Supervision records on file confirmed plans as agreed by the senior strategy meeting.

In the case of one file viewed the fostering team had made the decision that allegations against a foster carer did not cross the child protection threshold and an issue had recently arisen about how a carer might best deal with a potential allegation against her partner. In discussion with the Team Manager it was agreed that advice should be taken from the Child Protection team in order to discuss how any future potential or actual allegations should be dealt with due to the acknowledged likelihood of allegations being made. Good practice was considered to have taken place in relation to documenting decisions made in supervision meetings and putting safe caring guidelines in place. It was possible to cross reference information contained in the respective files of the carers and child.

Please see the requirement that senior staff review criteria for making referrals to the child protection teams and clarify these with staff where necessary and that carers are provided with guidelines about how to respond to an actual or potential allegation against a family member by consulting the Fostering team before notifying the subject of the allegation. Please also see the recommendation that the outcomes of low-level concerns/child protection issues are recorded on files. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

The new Foster Carers handbook covers safe caring guidelines and the management of behaviour without recourse to corporal punishment; these are also covered in the Choosing to Foster course for prospective foster carers. A 'Missing Child' procedure is present in the Children's Services handbook, including contact details for the Emergency Duty Team and key staff; and was not identified in the newly produced Handbook for Foster Carers. Foster carers visited or met at support/training sessions reported being able to contact managers out of office hours should this be needed. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

Good priority was found to be given to the training of staff of the agency, including attendance on child protection courses. Training and development staff were being appointed/starting work at the time of the inspection with the aim of further developing training for foster carers in particular.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

Agency staff reported that they work together with the foster child's social worker to produce a risk assessment about contact with family and friends in order to consider risks and safeguards.

In some instances staff reported that the fostering service have overseen contact arrangements initially. Written records of contact are generally made by the child's social worker, with a copy placed on the fostering file.

In common with the inspection last year, foster carers were found to be positive about their part in facilitating contact between the young person and their family/friends. Placement agreements showed that consideration is given to contact arrangements and to the child's/young person's view of such arrangements. The files showed foster carers' recording of contact visits and requests for help and support when difficulties arise. There was evidence on file of risk assessments being carried out in relation to contact carried out away from the foster home. Questionnaires this year indicated that foster carers facilitate contact by the making of visits to parents, take photographs of children for the birth family, encourage telephone contact and offering their own home for visits.

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**

Family Finding staff explained that the Viewpoint computer system enables placed children to make their views known and that further ways are being sought for representing the child's view at the carer's annual review. Carers were being invited to write their comments at annual review about support/needs and asked to sign the summation of visits to the home.

Meetings involving staff of SCRIPT were being used to seek children's views and involve fostered children in fostering developments. A SCRIPT meeting was attended, involving ten children in foster care, aimed primarily at getting their feedback on the information packs that are given out to children. At the time of this meeting the packs were found not to have been widely distributed, as had been the intention of the fostering service in their action plan following the last inspection. Children expressed the view that the packs needed to be more age specific, although on the whole they felt that they were a good idea.

The Children's pack included information about how to make complaints, including how to contact the children's rights director at the NCSC. A significant number of placing officers stated in questionnaires that they had not been informed how to make complaints about the service.

The action plan following the last inspection refers to a number of Surrey County Council initiatives, which have supported the work of the fostering team in promoting effective communication. The action plan acknowledges that further work is necessary in fully

consulting foster children.

Childrens' questionnaires stated good levels of consultation with children's about their views of their foster carers. In one instance a foster carer file recorded that that the carer(s) made arrangements to relocate to another part of the United Kingdom without notification to the fostering team, resulting in little if any consultation with the children.

Children's questionnaires revealed that more needs to be done to publicise the complaints procedure and the details of the National Care Standards Commission/Commission for Social Care Inspection. This was a Requirement in the previous inspection report.

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

One team reported that information is provided to carers covering HIV/Aids awareness, first aid and sexual health to assist carers to educate young people in placement. Staff recognised a need for foster carers to be given more rigorous training.

Records kept by the Family Link coordinators indicated that a lot of matching takes place related to the health needs of link children. Files were found to contain medication information. Special health/medication training has been provided to carers in the east and west of the county for specific children.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Teams reported that there is a scheme to provide computers for foster children to assist childrens' educational attainment. Regular school liaison was confirmed on children's files. The educational network is used to discuss Personal Education Plans and Individual Education Plans. Multi professional teams (MPT) help access particular educational advice including advocacy. Liaison was reported to be easier for children in Surrey placements but Surrey County Council Education Services were reported to provide valuable assistance in making contacts with education authorities outside the county.

It was positive to see a representative of the Surrey County Council Corporate Parent Steering Group attending the Foster Care Executive to give a presentation about how foster carers can support the educational needs of foster children.

Educational matters formed part of foster carers core training. It was understood that the fostering and education services do everything possible to keep children in their own

schools, with moves only being made where there would be long journeys involved or where long term placements are made away from the school area.

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?

2

One worker spoke of not yet having encountered young people moving into independence but was aware of the leaving care team in Surrey and the use of Pathway Planning as a well-known approach.

It was very positive to see the imminent use of a flat next door to one foster home being refurbished to enable the further development of independence skills for two young adults. Discussions at support groups demonstrated the knowledge and experience of carers in promoting independence. Placing agency questionnaires received as part of this inspection overwhelmingly stated that the fostering team works well in relation to plans agreed for young people in review meetings.

The Deputy Head of Children's Services explained that the service previously used lodgings carers but that a number of difficulties and dilemmas arose in their use. It was reported that a contract is currently being negotiated with Emmaus in order to achieve 8 independent placements and a range of support/supervision. Good links were reported being in existence with local housing agencies.

Please see the requirement carried forward from the last report, to further develop training for carers related to young people, which is a need acknowledged by the fostering service.

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

There was assessed to be an improvement in the information contained in staff files since the last inspection, with some files sampled having a pocket at the front of the file that contained Criminal Record Bureau checks, references and training certificates. CRB checks had been carried out for staff in all teams. However, most of the files did not contain all the required information. Examples included there being only one reference for a senior manager dated 1990 from a friend and many files had no photographic proof of identity. One file in particular contained none of the relevant recruitment information. No medical information was found on any file. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

There was no evidence on one file that the employment history of one candidate had been followed up in order to explore a long gap in employment history. Generally, shortfalls of this kind related to longer serving staff who had been promoted internally, rather than new appointments from outside. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

Please see the requirement that further work is done to organise existing staff files and to ensure that full recruitment checks are carried out on all staff joining the fostering service.

A sample of foster carer records indicated that all required checks and references had been obtained. Please see the recommendation to check the timescale for retaining full CRB forms and Police checks on file, as it is understood that this information should not be held beyond 6 months.

Total number of staff of the agency:

65

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

6

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**

The Fostering Service was found to have a clear management structure and lines of accountability. The service was organised into teams according to specific areas of responsibility and geography.

The individual caseloads of agency staff were allocated according to a weighting system in order to manage the demands of individual workloads. There had been some increase in administrative and practitioner posts since the last inspection. Pressure arising from increased numbers of carer assessments resulting from recruitment efforts were partly being managed by the use of sessional workers to carry out assessments.

Some staff reported enjoying generally good relationships with children's social workers and stated that effort is put into the relationships e.g. promote mutual understanding and overcome preconceptions. Where carers expressed concerns about working relationships these tended to relate to the perceived difficulty of partner teams to provide a sufficient level of service due to shortages of staff. Issues of this kind were being addressed through an interface group, which meets regular with partner teams.

The Fostering Manager and team managers reported a number of steps being taken to modernise the service e.g. through exploring alternative ways of providing support to carers through initiatives such as employing Assistant Social Workers to support fragile placements.

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?****2**

The West team is known to have increased by two full-time posts, a Social Worker and Assistant Social Worker. The East has added 3 posts, two Social Workers and one Assistant Social Worker. However, a large number of carers' questionnaires generally referred to a perceived lack of fostering staff although these comments were not reflected in there being criticisms of the quality of support available. In practical terms some evidence of work pressure was observed to be present for a full time duty social worker, who also carried half a caseload of placements.

A good turn out of enquirers was present at a recruitment evening held in a large hotel at Cobham. Couples spoken to said that they had received good information, with some recognising the need for a one to one meeting with social workers to get more in depth information. There were many 'younger' couples, which was positive in terms of achieving a balanced spectrum of ages. One couple spoken with had responded to a recent advertising campaign on the radio, while another had got the telephone number from yellow pages and were not aware of the recruitment campaign.

Please see the recommendation to keep under review the adequacy of the establishments of agency social workers in each of the teams given the extent of perceptions of shortage of staff; and the requirement to continue the recruitment of foster carers with the aim of

complying with statutory guidance setting the maximum number of children who can be accommodated by each foster home.

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

Staff spoken with expressed great commitment to the work of the fostering service and confidence in their management.

A countywide review is being conducted of out of hours support, albeit that carers currently can contact managers directly for support.

A whistle blowing policy is present.

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?

2

Staff reported good access to outside training such as that provided by the Tavistock Institute. One Assistant Team Manager has recently finished a practice teaching course illustrating the services' commitment to students. Post qualifying training and training towards the Child Care Award were in place. Staff were receiving general Surrey County Council induction and there was an Annual appraisal scheme in operation.

Given the acknowledgement of deficits in the training of foster carers in particular, please see the requirement that all staff and foster carers receive comprehensive induction and ongoing training to meet the needs of this standard and standard 23, as intended through the appointment of the training and development managers (1.5 whole time equivalent.) This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

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

Staff confirmed that supervision was taking place generally on a monthly basis. Newer staff received more frequent supervision and managers were reported to operate an open door policy to providing advice when needed. Appraisals occurred annually.

Many positive comments were received from the staff in the main fostering teams about perceptions of good teamwork, where there were regular team meetings in which to discuss referrals, issues, training, etc. Staff had received training in Form F and other areas of practice.

The new foster care allowances had made an impact on morale and had a good effect, felt to be benefiting carer recruitment.

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?****2**

Much use was being made of support groups of various kinds by carers and the service was found to be looking at new ways of support. A 'buddy scheme' was in the early stages of development, with the aim overall to create a network of carers that may also be able to provide care in an emergency. At a support meeting for newly approved carers it was evident that the fostering service was exploring ways of differentiating the needs of carers depending on experience, so as to avoid the problems of carers requiring very different kinds of support being part of the same group.

As discussed elsewhere a review is to be carried out on a countywide basis to explore the nature of 'out of hours' support to carers at times that the fostering offices are closed.

Periodic holiday activity sessions have taken place in which the children of foster carers have met for recreational activities, and one such group during the February half term (Pyrford) was found to provide a good quality of activities for a large group of children in the age range 5-13 years. Additionally sessions have been arranged for teenager groups of foster carer children. Inspectors considered that holiday activity of this kind conveys a sense that the services of foster carers and their families are valued by fostering teams.

Generally, foster carer files viewed provided evidence that annual reviews were being completed in a timely fashion.

In one instance a visit by the inspection team to a foster home outside Surrey found a couple reporting difficulties in the level of support being received from the team. Details were passed to management immediately and a fostering social worker visited the family three days later. The foster carers reported having requested a respite break over a number of months without plans being made by the fostering service and that there had been funding issues.

Other records indicated that in one instance a foster family had taken the children to live in Scotland at very short notice. Recordings on the files indicated that the children were initially very unhappy living away from friends and family.

Please see the requirement to review the particular challenges of supporting carers where

geographical remoteness or other factors limit the amount of support that can be accessed by carers.

Provision can be made for short breaks to be provided to children in foster care where these are in the interests of the child and/or foster carers. Staff were not aware of any formal procedures for setting these up. Each child can have 3 weeks respite care per year. Discussion with one foster placement made reference to the issue of foster children having been known to have had short breaks with other foster carers during previous placements, while the remainder of the family had a major holiday.

Please see the requirement that a review is carried out of the operation of these arrangements and a policy/procedure developed to ensure that the needs of all parties are addressed e.g. the respective needs of the foster child, receiving foster home and the established foster carers. In discussion with the Head of Fostering this requirement was agreed to be necessary.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Staff reported that the internally produced Fostering OK magazine is enjoyed by carers and is a vehicle for providing information on payments of allowances and the new fostering Strategy.

The action plan following the last inspection acknowledges that the training of carers will be a primary focus of the new training and development staff (1.5 whole time equivalent). The newly produced foster carers handbook was ready for circulation during the period of the inspection.

The action plan also refers to action taken to encourage the signing of the foster carer agreement by foster carers. Please see the requirement that this work continues.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A preparation course for new carers entitled 'Choosing to Foster' ran for 6 weeks at the time of the inspection. The final session was attended by an inspector and covered a number of issues including children's rights, fostering and the law, promoting contact, sexual abuse, safe care, allegations and the male role in fostering. Feedback from this group was very positive, most participants rating the course as good or very good. A long-term foster carer had attended all the meetings to give advice.

The course had covered promoting contact with the parents of children, children's rights, fostering and the law, sexual abuse and possible allegations against foster carers. Both male and female carers and a foster child gave input during the course.

A spreadsheet detailed training received by Family Link carers, including child protection for 8 carers (22/9/03). A social evening took place for 20 carers/family members on 19.1.04.

The training staff being employed are to address the overall training needs of foster carers.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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On the whole files viewed in the main offices contained good recordings. Foster carer files included relevant information e.g. chronologies of past life events, LAC forms, planning agreements, panel decisions taken over several years and details of meetings at schools to monitor welfare of pupils.

A visit took place to foster carers who reported that they were not currently keeping written records of the children placed, as fostering workers had not recently asked to see these or explain their importance. This was a requirement in the previous inspection report.

Discussions with the Deputy Head of Children's Services and the Fostering Services Manager referred to current and intended audit activities to formally monitor the completion of file records. Inspectors confirmed that some examples were seen during the inspection of managers using the audit tool.

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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Managers and staff were aware of the records that the service was required to maintain. Records were found to be kept securely in the fostering teams visited during the inspection.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		383
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		376
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		306
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		53
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		20
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	141.47	Maximum £ 322.28

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?

2

Generally premises used by the service were considered to be adequate for their purpose.

The Family Finding and Recruitment Team reported there being insufficient room in their current premises, with no large or small meeting room. Meetings have had to be held in the Runnymede Centre next door. Difficulty has been experienced in finding space for supervision meetings. These problems were acknowledged by the senior managers who reported a forthcoming move to Epsom Town Hall in approximately December 2004 as part of a county wide review of buildings.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency operates according to the financial procedures of Surrey County Council. Relevant regulations and guidelines are understood to be conformed with, eg., those covering tax and national insurance.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The financial processes/systems of the agency are understood to be in keeping with standard local authority practice.

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

The scheme of allowances paid to foster carers has been substantially increased during the past year and is posted on the Surrey County Council Fostering Services website. This initiative was understood to represent a key part of the service's strategy for recruitment and retention of foster carers. Foster carers voiced appreciation for these developments.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Generally inspectors were impressed by the conduct of three panels observed during the inspection. Reports to panel were found to be comprehensive and to reflect a detailed approach to exploring areas of difficulty where these existed. A psychotherapist had been consulted in relation to a complex approval. All members of foster panels are provided with an information pack, which includes a protocol for the role of the panel. The main Chairperson reported that panel members have received periodic training opportunities.

Although panel membership did not include expertise in child health at the time of the inspection, managers reported that advice on health issues was sought when needed. Managers intended to continue to explore this input.

Under arrangements at the time of the inspection, the Fostering Services Manager was chairing the Permanency Panel. There is a need for an independent person to be appointed to chair the permanency panel. Please see the recommendation to formalise in writing any consultants' recommendations made to members of the fostering service during the course of an assessment.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The local authority operates a Family Link service to support disabled children and their families. Senior Management acknowledged the challenge represented by the need to review the management structure and operation of the Family Link service, which historically has been part of the Children's Disability service. A review is imminent by an independent consultant and is to be carried out with a methodology that has been determined for completion in May 2004, when recommendations are due to be given to the fostering leadership.

Coordinators demonstrated a knowledgeable and thorough approach to assessment and support and reported highly valuing their links and shared location with the disability teams. The team provided a valuable information pack to family link carers including a carers' manual, set of manual handling guidelines and 'safe and sound' guidelines on providing short term breaks for disabled children with families.

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?	2
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One carer in Hampshire reported that the placement had been well supported by the fostering team e.g. through good access to training.

In contrast, standard 21 above refers to a foster home outside Surrey where the couple providing a kinship placement reported difficulties in the level of support being received from the team. The foster carers reported requesting a respite break for a number of months without success and referred to problems with funding.

A new kinship policy is in place which follows the framework for the assessment, support and training of family carers developed for use in non-kinship arrangements. This action is welcomed.

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 2^{nd-27th} February, 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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 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:

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 _____ 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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