



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Derby City Council - Fostering Service

Derby City Social Services

Middleton House

27 St Marys Gate

Derby

DE1 3NS

27th –31st October 2003

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service

YES

Name of Authority

Derby City Fostering Service

Address

Derby City Social Services, Middleton House, 27 St Marys Gate, Derby, DE1 3NS

Local Authority Manager

Pending

Tel No:

01332 717777

Address

Derby City Social Services, Middleton House, 27 St Marys Gate, Derby, DE1 3NS

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		27th –31 October 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visits		9am-5pm	
Name of Inspector	1	Jenny Thornton	074480
Name of Inspector	2	Nancy Bradley	
Name of Inspector (Locum)	3	Bridget Betts	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Derby City - 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.

Derby City fostering service has been established since 1997. The service is part of Derby City Council Social Service Department and as such is governed by the policies and procedures, which apply to Derby City Council. The fostering service provides the following services for children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years in the derby city areas:

- ❖ Time limited placements which include emergency and bridging placements
- ❖ Link Care which offers short term breaks for children with a disability who live with their family.
- ❖ Respite care which offers short term breaks for children cared for by other foster carers
- ❖ Long term placements where adoption is not feasible
- ❖ Project placements which apply to children with emotional and behavioural problems who require carers with additional skills
- ❖ Children First which applies to children with a significant disability. These placements tend to be long term.

Appropriate matching is identified as a crucial part of the service in providing placements to a range of children and young people.

A total of 244 children and young people were placed with the service at the time of the inspection. The service currently has 180 approved foster carers. The fostering service recruits, registers, and provides ongoing support to new and existing carers. A team of qualified social workers support the carers.

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 is the first inspection since the Care Standards Act 2000 and National Minimum Standards came into force, and provides a baseline for where Derby City Local Authority Fostering Service is in regards to the new legislation and standards.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The service had recently drawn up its Statement of Purpose, which clearly set out the aims of the service and contained the required information. A working group has been convened to compile a draft Children's Guide, which will be sent out to children/young people for their views about the document.

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

Senior staff managing the service have the appropriate skills and expertise. The service manager showed exceptional leadership of the staff and the running of the service. The service requires two full time service managers, and has been operating with only one manager since March 2003. The Local Authority has made concerted efforts to recruit a second manager. The Inspectors have since been informed that a 2nd manager has been appointed, who will take up post in February 2004.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

The fostering policies and procedures were awaiting final approval. Procedures for monitoring the performance and quality of the service were in place, although these require strengthening. The Local Authority produces an annual business plan. There have been some delays in carrying out essential changes to the fostering service. The outcome of the Best Value Review on Children's Services is a plan to modernise the fostering service. The manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and shortfalls of the fostering service, and is committed to developing the service. Staff work well together as a team, and are managed in a way that delivers an efficient service within the current resource constraints. Investment in I.T. equipment is needed to assist communications and service delivery.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

The service was making commendable efforts to best meet the needs of children and young people requiring placement. However placement choice for children and young people was very limited, affecting matching between children and carers.

Carers who the Inspectors met showed a commitment to meeting the needs and welfare of

children and young people. Children and young people in foster care felt cared for, and supported in maintaining contact with their families. However not all children and young people had an allocated social worker, and were receiving required statutory reviews.

A number of questionnaires received from children and young people indicated that their opinions and views are not always sought on matters affecting them. The Local Authority was improving ways of consulting with children and young people. However there have been delays in setting up an advocacy service for children and young people.

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

Staff working for the fostering service, are suitable to work with children and young people. The service has an established staff team with considerable experience of childcare and fostering issues. However the team had 2.5 social worker vacancies. Staff were receiving monthly supervision.

The service does not have a sufficient range of carers to meet the current demand for placements. This has resulted in increased use of exemptions to foster carer's approval, and placements with Independent Fostering Agencies. The service has a clear recruitment strategy and is working hard to recruit additional carers, but this was short of the target set for the year. The Local Authority planned to increase the level of allowances paid to foster carers to assist recruitment. Social workers within the fostering team provide an out of hours support service to carers.

The majority of carers were satisfied with the level of support they receive during the working day and out of hours. Staff and carers had attended varying levels of training. Both the preparation and post approval-training programmes for carers require development.

Records (Standards 24-25)

A new format for files was being introduced which will assist communications and access to information. The majority of carers and children's files examined were well set out and contained a good level of information. Aspects of record keeping required attention. The manager was committed to addressing this.

The majority of records examined were handwritten. The handwriting on some children's file was very difficult to read. The recording of essential information by foster carers varied. This highlighted the need for further training for carers on the importance of record keeping.

Fitness of premises (Standard 26)

The office building is shared facilities with the adoption team and children's disability team. The offices used by the fostering service were considered adequate for the purpose, but was not well maintained and entirely secure. The equipment and facilities available to staff were basic.

The office had limited storage and not all-confidential information was kept securely at the end of the working day. Additional storage facilities have been ordered/delivered.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

The Local Authority has a dedicated finance team who had responsibility for managing the financial viability of the service. The budget is administered in line with the Authority 's financial procedures. The fostering budget was overspent due to the high demand for placements.

Fostering allowances were generally paid promptly. However a number of carers reported having experienced some delays in receiving payments due to administrative delays by a child's social worker. Staff and carers expressed concerns that the fostering allowances did not cover the full cost of caring for children and young people. The Local Authority planned to increase the fostering allowances.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

The service has established it's own Fostering Panel. The panel members appeared to work effectively and to maintain an appropriate level of independence. However the composition of the independent panel members did not include, a foster carer with at least 2 years experience from another agency, or expertise in education and child health.

The policies and procedures of the Fostering Panel were awaiting final approval. These did not cover all functions of the fostering panel.

All foster carers reviews, exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at the Panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

Discussions with staff, children and returned questionnaires indicated that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met. The service needs to develop policies and procedures relating to short-term breaks for children and young people.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

The relationship and position of family and friends as carers is taken into consideration when assessing family and friends as carers. The service needs to develop policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers.

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 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 failures 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:

A children's Guide was not available.

Several staff personnel files did not provide evidence of a full employment history and relevant qualifications.

The Fostering policies and procedures had yet to be approved and not all required policies and procedures were provided.

Procedures for monitoring the performance and quality of the service required strengthening.

Policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel required developing.

The fostering panel did not have the required composition of independent members

Systems for recording and monitoring concerns, allegations and complaints required developing.

A suitable complaints guide for children and young people was not available.

A Whistle Blowing policy for staff and carers was not evident

Not all foster carers had received all essential information about a child's health needs, or signed consent from a child's parent/representative for a child to receive emergency

treatment.

Not all children and young people had an up-to-date plan of care/pathway plan, which showed how their needs were being met.

The service did not have sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff to fully meet the needs of the service.

The service did not have a sufficient numbers of suitable foster carers to meet the needs of children placed

An induction programme was not available for new staff working in the service.

Training programmes did not fully meet the needs of staff and carers. An appraisal system was not in place.

Security to aspects of the building was poor. Not all-confidential information was kept securely.

Policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel required developing. The fostering panel did not have the required composition of independent members.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the 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	
Comments		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The Local Authority must produce a written Children's Guide, in a suitable format for children and young people. Children and young people must receive a copy of the Guide.	30 September 2004
2	21	FS3	Personnel files of all staff working in the service must provide evidence of a full employment history and any relevant qualifications.	30 September 2004
3	42	FS4	The Local Authority must provide all policies and procedures as required in Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Regulations. The fostering policies and procedures must be approved and put into operation. Procedures for monitoring the performance and quality of the service must be strengthened.	30 September 2004
4	42	FS4	The Local Authority must further strengthen procedures at local level for recording and monitoring concerns and complaints about the service.	31 May 2004
5	12	FS9	The service must provide an anti-bullying policy and procedure. Staff and carers must be made aware of this.	30 September 2004
6	12	FS9	Staff and carers must receive further training on safe caring, anti-bullying and all child protection.	30 September 2004

7	42	FS11	The Local Authority must produce an appropriate complaints procedure for children and young people, and ensure that children and young people are made aware of this.	31 May 2004
8	17	FS12	The Local Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed consent is obtained from a child's parent/representative for a child to receive emergency treatment. Carers must receive a copy of this. 	31 May 2004
9	17	FS12	The Local Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster carers receive essential information on placement about a child's health needs. 	31 May 2004
10	17	FS12	All carers must receive training on communicable diseases, health and hygiene and First Aid.	30 September 2004
11	16	FS13	The Local Authority must provide a policy on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> School attendance Arrangements for children not attending full time education 	30 September 2004
12	34	FS14	The service must put procedures in place to ensure that: <p>All children and young people have an up-to-date plan of care/pathway plan, which clearly shows how their needs are being met.</p>	31 May 2004
13	34	FS14	The Local Authority must provide: <p>A policy and procedure on preparing young people for independence and semi-independent living</p>	30 September 2004

14	19	FS17	The Local Authority must provide sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of the service.	30 September 2004
15	33	FS17	The Local Authority must provide sufficient numbers of suitable foster carers to meet children's needs.	30 September 2004
16	42	FS18	Staff and carers must be made aware of the Local Authority's Whistle Blowing policy.	30 September 2004
17	21	FS19	The Local Authority must provide an appropriate induction programme for new staff working in the fostering service.	30 September 2004
18	21	FS19	All staff working in the fostering service must receive appropriate training and appraisal.	30 September 2004
19	17	FS23	The service must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further develop the pre-approval training programme for potential new foster carers. 2. Provide a post-approval training programme for foster carers 	30 September 2004
20	23	FS25	The Local Authority must provide adequate security for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The premises <p>The keeping of confidential information.</p>	31 May 2004
21	26	FS30	The service must provide comprehensive policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel.	30 September 2004
22	24	FS30	The independent fostering panel members must include a foster carer from another agency with two years experience.	30 September 2004

23	42	FS31	The service must provide policies and procedures relating to short-term breaks for children and young people.	30 September 2004
24	42	FS32	The service must provide policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers.	30 September 2004

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	FS4	Employment procedures should require new staff and foster carers to declare any possible conflicts of interest.
2	FS4	The Local Authority should develop: A standard format for the recording of notifiable events to the Commission. Systems for recording and monitoring notifiable events at area level
4	FS6	Foster carer's files should clearly show that staff have completed a health and safety risk assessment of the carer's home.
5	FS6	Foster carer's files should clearly show that they have received training on health and safety issues and their responsibilities.
6	FS7	The pre-approval training programme for potential foster carers should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All aspects of disability and sexuality ▪ The importance of enhancing children's' confidence and self worth
7	FS8	Carers and children's files should contain detailed matching considerations.

8	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should demonstrate that cultural and linguistic needs of the child had been assessed as part of the matching process.
9	FS9	Foster carers should produce a written policy on safe caring in their home. Children in placement should be made aware of this.
10	FS9	The Local Authority should provide an information booklet on safe-caring and protecting children. Carers and children should receive a copy of this.
11	FS10	Written information issued to carers on fostering allowances should state whether carers are entitled to claim travelling allowance, when using their own transport for contact arrangements.
12	FS9	Children should be made aware that they are able to raise concerns or complaints with the National Care Standards Commission and other independent Agencies.
13	FS11	The Local Authority should ensure that children and young people are consulted on matters affecting their daily lives.
14	FS12	All children's files should contain a full and current health needs assessment.
15	FS15	The Human Resource team should undertake telephone enquiries in addition to obtaining written references for potential new staff.
16	FS16	Put procedures in place to ensure that new staff are informed of all essential policies and procedures.
17	FS17	Establish monitoring procedures to ensure that foster carers are recruited within set timescales.
18	FS17	The service managers should look to further strengthen the assessment of potential foster carers
19	FS18FS18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All staff should use the standard format sheet to record visits to foster carer's. 2. Visit sheets should clearly show the purpose of each visit and a summary of issues discussed. Carers should receive a copy.
20	FS18FS18	The service should provide a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers and children.

21	FS18FS18	The Local Authority should establish an appropriate appraisal system for carers
22	FS19	The Local Authority should establish a more effective approach to training to enhance individual skills and keep staff updated on professional and legal issues.
23	FS19	The Local Authority should improve access to relevant training courses for staff
24	FS19	The Local Authority should increase opportunities for staff and carers to attend joint training
25	FS21	The fostering service should form a clear written strategy for working with and supporting carers, including arrangements for training, supervision, and out of hour's support.
26	FS21	The service should endeavour to include items from carers and children in the newsletter.
27	FS22	All foster carers should be issued with a current Foster Carer Agreement.
28	FS23	Staff and established foster carers should develop a joint training role in the pre-approval training programme for new carers.
29	FS23	The Local Authority should establish a more effective training approach to enhance carer's skills and knowledge.
30	FS23	The Local Authority should improve access to relevant training courses for foster carers.
31	FS23	The training section in carer's files should be completed and kept updated.
32	FS24	All written information in children's file should be legible and in a format which is easily read.
33	FS24	Children's immunisation status should be kept on the child and carer's file.
34	FS24	The Local Authority should provide a clear policy on what information foster carers are expected to record and share with relevant persons.
35	FS24	The Local Authority should provide a standard format for foster carers to record essential information about children in their care.
36	FS24	The Local Authority should provide carers with relevant information and necessary training to assist carers in life story work with children in their care.

37	FS24	The service should continue to take appropriate action to ensure that all children have an allocated social worker and are receiving the required statutory reviews.
38	FS25	The Local Authority should implement a policy where by children; parents and carers have access to their records.
39	FS26	The Local Authority should review office equipment needs within the fostering service.
40	FS26	The Local Authority should establish robust I.T systems throughout the fostering service.
41	FS29	The Local Authority should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the weekly fostering allowances in line with allowances recommended by Fostering Network. 2. Review the allowance allocated for a child or young person at Christmas.
42	FS29	Fostering allowances issued to carers should clearly set out any additional expenses carers may be entitled to claim.
43	FS30	The independent members of the fostering Panel should include expertise in education and in child health.
44	FS30	Fostering Panel members should receive further training on National Minimum Standards and the Regulations.
45	FS30	Panel members should develop an information booklet for prospective foster carers about the functions and membership of the fostering panel.

* 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	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social service s	NA
• Child protection officer	YES
• 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	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• 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	NO
Date of Inspection	27/10/03
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	125

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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The service had recently drawn up its Statement of Purpose. The Inspectors found that it provided a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and services it provides. The Statement of Purpose was concise, clearly set out and contained the required information. The majority of staff interviewed were aware of the Statement of Purpose.

At the time of the inspection a Children's Guide was not available. A working group has been convened to compile a draft Children's Guide. This was in the early stages of development. Other Agencies were being consulted as to the content and format of the Children's Guide. The manager confirmed that the draft Guide would be sent out to children/young people for their views about the document. The completed Guide would be issued to all children/young people.

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 Assistant Director for Children's Services has overall responsibility for the fostering and adoption services. The group manager for fostering and adoption reports to the Assistant Director. Derby City fostering service requires two full time service managers. Lynda Stone was appointed as development service manager in February 2003. However due to unforeseen circumstances, the service has been operating with only one manager since March 2003. The Local Authority has made concerted efforts to recruit a second service manager. The Inspectors have since been informed that a 2nd manager has been appointed, who is due to take up post in February 2004.

Throughout the inspection the current service manager demonstrated exceptional management skills. The manager has extensive knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering, and has an appropriate social work and childcare qualification. The manager has previously completed a management course although this is not an approved qualification.

The findings throughout the inspection showed there were very heavy demands and pressures on the service to meet the high need for placements. The service manager showed exceptional organisation and leadership skills of the staff and the running of the service. Her skills and commitment ensures that the service is professionally managed.

The Inspectors observed effective communications within the team. All staff were aware of the planned inspection.

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

A sample of personnel files examined showed that Derby City Social Services recruitment and selection procedures were adhered to when employing new staff. The procedures promote that appropriate staff are employed and safeguard children's welfare. The Human Resources team based at Social Services office are responsible for carrying out all the required checks and references in relation to new staff. The Resource team are in the process of re-organising staff personnel files to assist access to information.

Personnel files examined showed that required checks and information had been obtained for all staff, with the exception of long service staff. A full employment history and documentary evidence of relevant qualifications was not available on several long service staff's files.

The service manager was clear about the information required in respect of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations, and her responsibility to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded.

Management of e 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 team focuses specifically on fostering. Fostering procedures have been drafted. These were awaiting final approval and formatting. Financial procedures are in place. These required ratification by the Local Authority .

The Inspectors found that procedures for monitoring the performance and quality of the service were in place, although these required developing and strengthening. Staffing vacancies within the team and lack of information technology have restricted monitoring of the service.

Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in job descriptions, and understood by staff. Clear lines of managerial accountability and support were in place.

Staff interviewed and records examined showed that staff receive regular recorded supervision, which is supportive and reflective in managing caseloads.

The Local Authority produces an annual business plan. Senior managers reported that there have been some delays in implementing essential changes to the fostering service. Various reasons were given for this. Elected members have approved the Local Authority 's Best Value review of Children's Services. The outcome of this is a plan to modernise the fostering service. An initial development day was planned for the 1 December 2003, of which 20% of the working group were foster carers.

The Local Authority had a written complaints policy and procedure. The Inspectors found that systems within the team for recording, investigating and responding to concerns, allegations and complaints received about the fostering service were not robust. The service manager planned to improve the systems.

The service manager informs the Commission in writing of relevant notifiable events. This is not completed on a standard format. Systems for the recording and monitoring of notifications at local level require developing.

The Inspectors were informed that staff and carers were asked to declare any possible conflicts of interests. However employment procedures did not require new staff to declare possible conflicts of interest. The manager planned to include in the new Foster Care Agreement, reference to the need for carers to declare any possible conflict of interests.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	6
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	0
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	0
Serious illness or accident of a child.	0
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	0
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	0
Serious incident relating to a foster child-involving calling the police to a foster home.	1
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	1
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	2
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0

Standard 5 (5.1-5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The findings throughout the inspection showed that the fostering service is well managed within the constraints of current resources and finances. The service manager and staff were aware of their roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability. The service has carried a 2nd service manager vacancy for some time. Due to pressures on the current service manager, senior social workers within the team have taken on additional duties and responsibilities, to which they were receiving remuneration.</p> <p>The Inspectors found that staff worked well together as a team and felt well supported by the service manager. Overall staff considered that morale was good. However staffing vacancies and limited resources affects staff morale at times.</p> <p>All staff were clear about the arrangements in place when the manager is absent from the service. Staff reported that this worked well.</p>		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1-6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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As part of the assessment for new foster carers, social workers are required to carry out a written risk assessment of the carer's home, to ensure it is safe and meets the needs of children and young people. Files of carer's, who had been approved some time ago, did not contain a health and safety risk assessment of their home. The inspection findings showed that foster carers provide a safe and nurturing environment. The fostering service's draft policies make clear that children should not be expected to share a bedroom without their agreement. Carers who the Inspectors met were aware of this. However the Inspectors found that due to the demand on the service, placements did not always reflect the child's assessed need or preference to share a bedroom. Where this was the case, a risk assessment had been undertaken and procedures put in place to safeguard the children in placement.

Interviews with carers and staff and records examined maintained that where a foster carer provides transport, the service had carried out appropriate checks to ensure the transport is safe and suitable for the child's needs.

Staff and carers reported that the pre-approval training for foster carers covers health and safety issues. However the training programme and handouts provided did not clearly show this. The draft Carers handbook provides guidance on their health and safety responsibilities.

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

The findings throughout the inspection showed that the service aims to promote diversity and equality within the resources available. Records showed that the matching process takes into account a child's cultural, religious, language, and disability needs, where possible.

Pre-approval training for foster carers includes reference to the need to promote diversity and respect other cultures and religions. Staff and carers reported that the pre-approval training enables carers to support children to deal with discrimination. However the training programme did not cover disability and sexuality. Staff had identified the need to update the pre-approval training programme to address this shortfall.

Carers showed a commitment to enhancing children's confidence and self worth. However the carers' pre-approval training needs to be more robust when addressing these issues.

Staff informed the Inspectors that the service has acquired funding to buy items of equipment for children with a disability. The Inspectors found one example where there had been a considerable shortfall and delay in obtaining essential equipment for link foster carers, who were caring for children with a physical disability.

Staff and carers reported that children and young people are encouraged to pursue their interests and hobbies. Returned children's questionnaires confirmed this. Staff interviews highlighted that the service is working closely with "the Gatsby Project as a means of supporting individual interests and hobbies.

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 importance of matching is stressed in the fostering services draft policies and procedures. The service gives importance to ensuring that a child or young person is carefully matched with a carer. However staff reported that constraints on resources, high demand for placements and limited information from children's social worker affects the matching process. The service does not have a sufficient range of carers to meet the current demand for placements, and to ensure effective matching of children to carers. The service was working hard to recruit additional carers, but this was short of the target set for the year. This has resulted in increased use of placements within Independent Fostering Agencies over the last year. The service manager reported that Independent Agencies are required to provide evidence of matching considerations.

Not all children and carers' files examined contained detailed matching considerations. Two children's files did not contain a current care plan. The Foster Placement Agreement covered the child's racial, ethnic and religious needs, but did not demonstrate that cultural and linguistic needs had been assessed as part of the matching process.

Discussions with carers and records examined maintained that children and carers are given the opportunity to meet and get to know each other prior to making a decision about the placement. However this practice is not always possible in unplanned placements. Both staff and carers confirmed this.

Standard 9 (9.1-9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The service works to Derby City Child Protection Policy and Procedures. The draft carer's handbook made clear carers role and responsibilities to protect children from abuse, and included a summary of the child protection procedures. The manager informed the Inspectors that the pre-approval training for carers covers child protection. The pre-approval training programme mainly focused on sexual abuse. Carers confirmed that they had received training on this.

The pre-approval programme included training on safe care for prospective carers. However discussions with staff highlighted that the training programme does not fully address the issues on safe caring. The manager had identified the need for further training for staff and carers, on safe caring, anti-bullying and all aspects of child protection. Staff confirmed that carers do not currently provide a written policy on safe caring in their home. The service did not provide an information booklet on safe-caring and protecting children. The manager planned to develop this.

Carers' who met with the Inspectors were aware of the vulnerability of children in care in relation to bullying. An anti-bullying policy has yet to be developed and included in the carers' handbook.

Returned children's questionnaires indicated that they felt safe in their foster home.

The draft carer's manual makes clear to foster carers that use of corporal punishment is not acceptable and outlines acceptable methods of discipline and managing behaviour. A number of returned questionnaires from children and young people indicated that they were not aware of how to make a complaint, or contact the National Care Standards Commission or other independent Agencies. The Inspectors found that the service did not have an appropriate complaints procedure for children. The manager planned to develop this.

Not all staff and carers interviewed were aware of a Whistle Blowing policy.

A procedure on what to do in the event of a child or young person going missing from a carer's home had been drafted. The manager planned to issue a copy of the procedure to all carers and include this information in the Foster Carer's handbook.

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

100

%

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**

Discussions with children and carers and returned questionnaires confirmed that children are encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships, where there are no contact restrictions. Care plans examined clearly set out contact arrangements for the child/young person. To facilitate contact arrangements to take place the Local Authority has appointed several contact workers.

Carers' responsibility for supporting a child/young person to maintain contact with their family members and other significant persons is clearly set out in the Placement Agreements and the draft Foster Carer Handbook. Staff and carers who the Inspectors met showed a clear commitment to maintaining links with the child's family and friends.

Several carers raised the issue of financial support when using their own transport for a child's contact with their family. Carers felt there was an unfair system in operation, as the Local Authority did not routinely reimburse carers who used their own transport for a child's contact arrangements. However where carers did not have/or use their own transport for contact meetings, the Local Authority paid the transport and escort costs. Written information issued to carers on fostering allowances did not state whether carers could claim travelling allowance when using their own transport for contact arrangements.

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**

The Inspectors found that carers were clear as to their role and responsibilities in ensuring that children and young people's views are heard and acted upon. The draft carers' handbook clearly states the need to ensure that children's opinions and those of their families are sought over issues.

The Local Authority undergoes an annual consultation exercise, which includes asking children and young people about their views on the service. A recent Best Value review involved consultation with young children who have previously been accommodated in foster care. This highlighted that the majority of children see themselves as being part of the foster carer's family.

The Inspectors were informed that young people are encouraged to express their views on the service they receive through activities organised by the children's participation officer for the KICK group (Kids in Care in Kontrol).

A recent consultation exercise with children has resulting in the provision of a number of

computers been provided for children to use in their foster homes.

Interviews highlighted that the service was further developing ways of consulting with children and young people on matters affecting them. In particular the service has identified that it does not actively obtain the views and feelings of children with communication difficulties. The service intends to address this shortfall.

A working party has been convened to compile a draft children's guide. This will be sent out to young people, parents and carers to obtain their views about the document.

A number of returned questionnaires from children and carers indicated that children's social workers do not always consult with them on matters affecting their daily life and future.

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
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The draft carer's handbook and the foster carer Agreement makes clear carers responsibilities for promoting children's health needs. Carers who met the Inspectors gave examples of how they were helping to promote the child's health. Children and carers files examined maintained that children's health care needs were being met.

The manager reported that a child's health assessment is completed on initial referral and annually. This is verified by their G.P. However not all children's files contained a full or current health needs assessment.

Some carers reported not having received all essential information about a child's health needs on placement. Several carers stated that they had to request information about children's health needs from the child's social worker.

The draft foster carer's handbook contained clear guidelines for dispensing medicine to children and young people.

Not all Foster Placement Agreements examined contained signed consent from the child's parent/representative for the child to receive emergency treatment. Not all foster carers interviewed had received this information.

Carers and staff reported shortfalls in accessing prompt psychological support and expertise, where required. The Local Authority had identified this shortfall and was looking to allocate additional resources.

Discussions with carers and staff highlighted that not all carers had received training on communicable diseases, health and hygiene and First Aid. Staff were looking to address

this training need.

Staff informed the Inspectors that they had formed good links with other health professionals.

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

The Inspectors found that the service and carers gives priority to meeting the educational needs of children or young people in foster care. Carers were clear as to their role and responsibility in supporting a child or young persons educational needs. The draft carers' handbook states what is expected from the carers in relation to children's' educational needs. Discussions with carers and children and returned questionnaires maintained that carers help a child to complete their homework, and were in close contact with the child's school.

Where possible children were placed in close proximity to their own home and school. All children with the exception of 2 placed with foster carers were attending school. A policy had not been approved as to children who were not in full time education. Staff and carers reported that children not attending school places additional pressure on carers and the service. The Inspectors found that staff within the fostering team were supportive and creative in their approach, to providing an alternative structure for children who were not in full time education.

The service has close links with the Gatsby project, which promotes educational and leisure services, and the Read on Write Away project, which promotes reading for children looked after.

Foster placement agreements set out a child's educational needs. However placement agreements and information on fostering allowances did not clearly set out where financial responsibility lies for all aspects of a children's clothing and additional school costs such as trips and equipment.

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

The Inspectors found that the service did not have policies and procedures in place for preparing young people for adult living.

Staff and carers were aware of their role in supporting young people to prepare for adult living. The draft carer's handbook provided guidance on what is expected of carers in terms of preparing young children for independent or semi-independent living. Carers showed a commitment to helping children and young people develop daily living skills to gain independence. Carers gave examples on how this was being achieved. However one young person's file examined did not contain a current pathway plan, preparing the person for independent living. The need to update the care plan had been identified by the child's social worker.

It was reported that initial training for foster carers covers preparation for adulthood. However the pre-approval programme did not clearly demonstrate this.

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?

3

The Inspectors found that the Local Authority has a thorough recruitment and selection procedure for appointing staff, which follows good practice and safeguards children and young people. Files showed that the Human Resource team did not undertake telephone enquiries in addition to obtaining written references.

Records showed that all social workers have substantial childcare knowledge and experience. The findings throughout the inspection showed that staff working for the fostering service, are suitable to work with children and young people. Staff confirmed that they had a written contract and terms and conditions of service.

Total number of staff of the Service :

16

Number of staff who have left the Service 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?

2

The Inspectors found that the team of staff work well together, and are managed in a way that delivers an efficient fostering service within the current resource constraints. Due to pressures on the current service manager, senior social workers within the team have taken on additional duties and responsibilities, to which they were receiving remuneration.

The manager had established a number of procedures to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads. The manager had identified the need to put in place further systems to monitor and track the efficiency of the service and placements.

The Inspectors found that the current resources, I.T system and office equipment restricts aspects of the service delivery. An example of this is that the majority of social workers did not have direct access to a computer or e-mail. Staff considered that there was an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support. However administrative time could be more effectively utilised if a robust I.T. system was in place.

The manager is committed to ensuring all staff receives monthly supervision. Discussions with staff and records examined confirmed that all staff were receiving monthly supervision and felt well supported. Supervision records were detailed; employees received a copy.

It was reported that new staff were informed all pertinent policies and procedures. However systems were not in place to demonstrate that staff had received this information. A staff handbook was not available.

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 service has an established staff team with considerable experience of childcare and fostering issues. However at the time of the inspection the service had a second manager and 2.5 established social worker vacancies. The Local Authority was endeavouring to recruit to these posts.

The Inspectors found that there is a clearly defined assessment process for prospective foster carers. However policies and procedures for the assessment of foster carers had yet to be approved. The standard of assessment completed on carers files reviewed was detailed. The manager acknowledges areas where assessments could be further strengthened. Assessments examined supported that necessary checks had been carried out to ensure that applicants are suitable people to work with children and young people. Certain files did not contain evidence of a current satisfactory CRB (Criminal Record Bureau). This was being addressed through carers' annual reviews. The Inspectors found that the timescale for approving new foster carers varied and could be improved. The service manager was putting performance procedures in place to monitor the approval process.

Staff confirmed that a good percentage of experienced and long-standing carers from a range of backgrounds. However the findings throughout the inspection highlighted that the service did not have a sufficient number of suitable carers to enable choice of placement and meet the demands on the service. This has resulted in increased requests for exemptions to carer's approval, and the need to place a number of children with independent fostering agencies. The service had identified the need to recruit additional carers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, to meet the needs of children requiring placement. The Inspectors found that the service had a clear recruitment strategy. This was effectively led by the marketing/recruitment officer. The service was endeavouring to address the shortfall of carers through the recruitment strategy and ongoing recruitment campaign. Various initiatives had been introduced to recruit additional carers. However due to a number of factors the service were experiencing difficulties in recruiting sufficient skilled carers, to meet the needs of children and young people.

The Local Authority is determined to remain the major provider of fostering services in Derby, but faces considerable challenges to recruit, retain and support carers. The Local Authority is addressing the need to modernise the fostering service. Some additional funding had been allocated from 'Quality Protects' to assist improvements to the service.

Standard 18 (18.1-18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspectors found that the fostering service works to agreed employment policies and procedures as set down by Derby City Council Social Service. Interviews with staff and files examined supported that the service adheres to current employment practice.

Staff interviewed informed the Inspectors that the service manager provides a good level of support. All staff were receiving monthly supervision.

Carers interviewed and returned questionnaires confirmed that carers generally felt well supported by their family placement worker. However a small number of carers reported not having received sufficient support during all placements. Various reasons were given for this. An appropriate appraisal system for carers was not in place.

Carers files examined did not clearly show the purpose of all support visits and a summary of issues discussed. The service manager had introduced a format for recording supervision meetings with carers. However not all staff were using this format.

The service has established an out of hours support service for carers; social workers in the fostering team provide this cover. It was reported that the out of hour's service was working well. A number of carers confirmed that they had accessed this and found it beneficial to using Social Service's out of hour's duty system. The manager reported that all carers had been made aware of the out of hours service through the carer's quarterly newsletter.

The manager confirmed that the service registers all foster carers on approval with 'Fostering Network'. The Manager was looking to strengthen procedures to ensure that all-new foster carers are notified when registered with Fostering Network. Foster carers who the Inspectors met confirmed that they were registered with 'Fostering Network.'

The draft carers' handbook contained information about indemnity insurance cover arising from allegations against carers.

The service did not provide a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers and children. The manager had identified the need to develop this.

Staff and carers questioned were aware of their rights and responsibilities to report any concerns they may have about the service. However a whistle blowing policy for staff and carers was not evident.

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?**

1

Staff reported that they had received a period of induction training. However the fostering service did not have a formal induction programme in place.

Discussions with staff and records examined showed that all staff had attended some training. However a staff training and development policy had yet to be developed. The Local Authority had a training programme. However staff reported that this did not fully meet their needs, and did not take into account the diverse training needs of the fostering team. The service manager had identified this shortfall and was endeavouring to improve access to training. Some staff reported difficulties in accessing certain internal courses such as PQ Levels 1 and 2 training. In addition current staff vacancies did not always enable staff to attend training courses.

Staff reported that individual training needs are discussed within supervision, although a formal appraisal system was not in place. The manager planned to develop an appraisal system.

Staff confirmed that systems were in place to keep them informed of relevant changes in legislation and practice relevant to their work.

Staff and carers reported some opportunities to attend joint training. The Manager planned to further develop opportunities for joint training.

Standard 20 (20.1-20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The service works to the Local Authority 's policy on staff supervision. Staff confirmed that they receive monthly supervision. Staff supervision records were well structured, clear and concise. The Local Authority does not carry out annual appraisals.

The manager showed a committed to ensuring that all staff receives regular supervision. Staff informed the Inspectors that that they felt well supported by their manager and colleagues.

Records showed that weekly team meetings are held. Minutes of team meetings were clear and concise. Staff interviewed confirmed that they have the opportunity to attend and contribute to the team meetings, although work patterns restrict certain part time staff from attending the meetings.

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**

Staff working in the service showed a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for working with and supporting carers. However the service did not have a clear written strategy for working with and supporting carers, including arrangements for training, supervision, out of hour's support and reviews.

Carers who the Inspectors met were clear as to the role of the supporting social worker. The majority of carers reported that they had formed good relationships with their support worker.

Staff interviews and records examined maintained that staff working in the fostering team endeavour to work in partnership with the children's social worker. However certain issues affect communication and good working relations. The service manager was fully aware, and was endeavouring to address the issues.

A carers support group is established and regular meetings are held. However for various reasons this is not well attended by carers. The carers group and marketing officer organise a number of social events, to which staff, children, young people and carers are invited to attend.

Staff and carers confirmed that the service provides a regular newsletter. This does not usually include items from carers and children.

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**

The majority of carers interviewed and returned questionnaires maintained that carers feel well supported by the service. However not all carers felt fully valued in their work and appropriately reimbursed for the work they undertake.

The draft foster carers' handbook gives clear information about the level of support, training, visits, supervision and reviews. Carers interviewed and returned questionnaires confirmed that they are allocated a social worker to provide ongoing support. However certain carers were not receiving regular supervisory visits; this mainly related to carers providing respite care. The supervision format was not being used by all staff not all files included a copy of supervision notes, and some staff appeared unclear about the purpose and nature of supervision. Carers reported that they did not always receive a summary of support visits.

Carers confirmed that they are encouraged to attend training and develop their skills. Returned questionnaires showed that carers had attended various levels of training.

The draft carers handbook contained a good level of information, and is clearly set out in a

form that will allow new and updated information to be easily added. The manager informed the Inspectors that she planned to include additional information, policies and procedures in the handbook.

The manager confirmed that the Foster Carer Agreement had recently been updated. The Inspectors found that the Foster Carer Agreement was clear and concise and included information listed in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations. However not all carers files examined contained a signed copy of the new Agreement. This was being addressed through carer's reviews.

The service kept a manual log of any allegations against carers. The service manager planned to update this system.

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?

1

The service has a pre-approval training programme for carers. Prospective carers are required to complete this. The Inspectors found that where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, the service encourages both carers to complete the training. However in some circumstances this has not always been achieved.

Staff working in the service delivered the pre-approval training. The Inspectors observed one of the training sessions provided for a new group of prospective carers. The training session was well-presented and delivered and encouraged carer's participation.

The pre-approval training programme consists of 4 sessions, which cover attachment, child development, managing difficult behaviour, child abuse and keeping safe. Carers interviewed and returned questionnaires confirmed that carers had attended pre-approval training. Staff planned to update and review the pre-approval training programme to accommodate the different fostering roles. The Inspectors found that the pre-approval training programme did not cover all essential key areas, or reflect the level of training provided. Handouts provided to carers required developing. New carer's are given the opportunity to meet and benefit from the knowledge of established carers on the pre-approval training programme. However more emphasis could be given to experienced carers' participation in the pre-approval training.

The service did not have a post-approval training programme in place for foster carers. The Inspectors found that although the service encourages carers to attend ongoing training, the level of training attended by carers varied considerably. A number of carers had completed National Vocational Qualification Level 3 training.

The Inspectors found that carers' ongoing training and development needs were not routinely evaluated and linked through the annual review process. The training section in carers' files had not been completed in the majority of cases.

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?
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The service follows the Local Authority's written policy on case records. The majority of files examined on inspection were well set out and information was easily accessible. The manager was introducing a new format for files, which will further aid communication and access to information.

The Inspectors examined six carers and children's files. Records examined were detailed and provided a good level of information about carer's and children, although not all children's files clearly showed their legal status. The majority of records on files were handwritten. The handwriting on some children's file was very difficult to read. Children case tracked on this inspection had an allocated social worker, with the exception of one young person receiving respite care. Records showed that the children were receiving statutory reviews with the exception of one young person. One child's care plan required up dating to take account of change of placement. One young person's file did not contain a current pathway plan, preparing the person for independent living. The child's social worker had identified the need to update the care plan.

Children's files mostly showed that regular health reviews had taken place, although not all files seen contained a full or current health needs assessment, and the child's immunisation status.

The service manager reported that new carers are informed at pre-approval training of the requirement to keep appropriate records on children in their care. However this was not evident in the training programme. The Inspectors were informed that all carers had been provided with a suitable secure box to store information relating to children in their care. However not all carers who the Inspectors met were keeping appropriate records of children in their care. The level of information recorded by carers varied. The service did not have a clear policy as to what information recorded by carers about children in their care, or what happened to such information when a child left their care. Carers did not use a standard format to record information about children in their care. Not all carers kept separate records for children in their care.

Carers files examined contained a copy of exemption notices were appropriate

Standard 25 (25.1-25.13)			
The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.			
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2	
<p>The Inspectors found that the administration team had established good systems to ensure the service is well run. Checks carried out supported that all required information is kept.</p> <p>The draft foster carer manual referred to carers' rights to access their records. However a policy and procedure for children, parents and carers to access their records was not evident.</p> <p>The manager had prioritised the need to provide separate files for carer's and children.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the service:	245		
Number of placements made by the service in the last 12 months:	X		
Number of placements made by the service which ended in the past 12 months:	X		
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	16		
Number of foster carers who resigned/de-registered during the last 12 months:	17		
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	71.58	Maximum £	246.42

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

The office building is shared facilities with the adoption team and children's disability team. Discussions with staff and a tour of the premises maintained that the offices used by the fostering service are adequate for the purpose. The Local Authority was looking to relocate the children's disability team in the near future. This will provide more office space for the fostering service.

The service manager confirmed that the premises were alarmed out of hours and connected to the local police station. The Inspectors noted that security to aspects of the building during office hours appeared poor. This mainly related to the windows and side entrance door.

The Inspectors found that the office building was not well maintained. In addition the facilities and equipment available to staff were basic. Some of the office furniture including desks and chairs were well worn and did not fully accommodate the working environment. Only administration staff and managers had direct access to computers and e-mail. The social worker team shared one computer, which was situated on the duty desk. Staff interviewed reported that limited access to computers hinders access to essential information and communication with other professionals

There was a policy and procedure on keeping confidential information and records. However the Inspectors found that not all records and confidential information were kept securely. The workplace contained some lockable storage areas. However this was limited, and it was not evident from discussions with staff that all lockable areas containing confidential information were routinely locked at the end of the working day. Desks contained a lockable storage area, however staff reported that keys were not available for the majority of storage areas. The service manager confirmed that additional lockable storage facilities have been ordered/delivered and agreed to urgently review security of confidential information.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering service is 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?	0
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This standard was not fully assessed on this inspection. The Local Authority's accounting and financial procedures were not examined on this inspection.

The Inspectors were informed that the Local Authority had a dedicated finance team who had responsibility for managing the financial viability of the service. The budget is administered in line with the Local Authority's financial procedures.

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?	0
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This standard was not fully assessed on this inspection. The Inspectors did not fully examine the Local Authority's accounting and financial procedures.

The Local Authority has a finance team and expertise to manage the finances and payments to foster carers. The service manager confirmed that the Local Authority produces an annual business plan and that the accounts are regularly audited.

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?

2

The service has a policy and procedures for foster carer payments and expenses; this required approval. The Local Authority has a team of staff who administer the payments and allowances to carers. The Inspectors found that the finance team had established good systems for ensuring the tracking of, and prompt payment of allowances to carers. Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires maintained that payments are generally paid promptly. However several carers reported having experienced delays in payments due to administrative delays by a child's social worker. In some circumstances carers had experienced excessive delays in receiving their fostering payments.

Staff confirmed that new foster carers are issued with information about allowances and how payments are made. Information on allowances is clearly set out, however it does not detail additional expenses, which carers may be entitled to claim. Not all carers who the Inspectors met were clear about what additional payments they may be entitled to claim.

The weekly fostering allowances were considerably below allowances recommended by National Fostering Network. Staff and carers expressed concerns about the current allowances paid by the Local Authority. Carers reported that the standard allowances and expenses did not cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them. In addition the payment allocated for a child or young person at Christmas did not fully meet today's cost of Christmas. The Local Authority planned to increase the fostering allowances.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1-30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The service has its own fostering panel. The Inspectors attended a fostering panel. The panel members appeared to work effectively and to maintain an appropriate level of independence. The Assistant Director of Children's Services is the 'decision maker'. He does not attend the fostering panel.

The Inspectors found that written policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel had been drafted. These do not provide sufficient detail on the various functions of the fostering panel. The procedures did not cover the decision-making process when all members of the panel are not in agreement. A procedure for despatching and securing panel minutes and confidential reports to panel members was required. The Inspectors found that the above information was routinely sent by the standard inland mail system. The Inspectors discussed with the managers the need to ensure confidentiality of reports sent out to panel members.

The fostering service had still to appoint two independent panel members, including a foster carer with at least 2 years experience from another agency. The Inspectors found that the independent panel members did not have expertise in education and child health.

The fostering panel had an independent chairperson, who reported that some training had been provided for the panel members in relation to the current standards and regulations. The need for further training was identified. The service manager reported that a satisfactory criminal record bureau check had been obtained for all panel members.

Currently prospective foster carers do not receive written information about the role and membership of the fostering panel. The service manager intends to develop an information booklet for prospective foster carers, in consultation with panel members.

Foster carers are invited to attend their annual review at panel. However it is not policy that prospective new carers can attend panel at their initial approval, although they can attend the subsequent panel meeting.

Reports presented to the fostering panel relating to foster carer's annual reviews, included a

summary of training attended over the last year. However the Inspectors found that carer's ongoing training and development needs were not routinely evaluated and linked through the annual review process.

Discussions with panel members and previous panel minutes confirmed that annual reviews of all carers, requests for deferment of annual reviews, all exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

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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The service provides short-break care for children and young people living at home with their family. Short break care offers children a change of environment and different life experiences, whilst giving families a break. Carers and staff were clear that the child's birth parents remain the main carers for their child, and retain all legal responsibilities. Discussions with staff, children and returned questionnaires indicated that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met. The service needs to develop specific policies and procedures relating to short-term breaks for children.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1-32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Discussions with staff and files examined showed that the service acknowledges the particular relationship and position of family and friends as carers. This is taken into consideration when assessing family and friends as carers. Staff largely assess and approve family and friends as carers applying the same assessment procedures as other carers.

Family and friends approved as carers are encouraged to attend pre-approval training. Feedback from carers maintained that support provided to family and friends approved as carers, was comparable to the support other carers received.

The service needs to develop specific policies and procedures relating to family and friends as carers.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

D.1 Responsible Local Authority Manager 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 of Derby City Fostering Service conducted on 27-31 October 2003 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

 YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

 YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

 YES

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

 NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

 NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all 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.