



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Wokingham District Council Fostering Services**

PO Box 154  
Shute End  
Wokingham  
RG40 1WN

13th September 2004

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

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

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Wokingham District Council Fostering Services

**Address**

PO Box 154, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WN

**Local Authority Manager**

Maeve Coupe

**Tel No:**

0118 974 6750

**Address**

PO Box 154, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WN

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

07/11/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		13th September 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Lucy Martin	098269
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Sandra Sullivan	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Maeve Coupe - Manager	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

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

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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
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**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Wokingham District Council Fostering Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Wokingham District Council Fostering Services provide substitute family care to meet the needs of Wokingham children and young people who are unable to live within their families of origin on a temporary/short term basis or longer term basis. The service also supports children within their families of origin when this can be achieved by regular periods of family-based care. To this end the service recruits, trains and supervises a range of foster 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 was an announced inspection which took place the week commencing 13 September 2004. Questionnaires were sent to all foster carers, foster children and placing authorities prior to the inspection. A sample of foster children and foster carers were seen in the foster homes as part of the inspection. The management and members of staff of the fostering service were interviewed as well as the social workers of the children in the sample. Two groups of foster children were met as well as a group of foster carers. Files of foster carers were seen as well as foster children and other documentation.

There has been a good response to the requirements made at the last inspection and the Fostering Team continues to be well managed. Developments since the last inspection include the appointment of a Recruitment Officer and a Support Worker. There were seen to be improvement in the format of the Annual Reviews for foster carers and the development of a more independent Reviewing Officer. The Annual Report on the Fostering Service continues to be an excellent piece of work. Foster Placement agreements have been developed and were seen to be working well.

The Fostering Panel was directly observed on this inspection and some further work is needed to ensure that there is a clarity of roles. It was noted that further training sessions for the Panel were being arranged. There is also a need to ensure that there are safe caring guidelines in place for each foster placement and that there is clarity regarding the procedure to be followed when an allegation is made.

Foster carers spoken with were appreciative of the support received from the staff. All or nearly all of the Standards have been met and there are no areas of major shortfall. Some requirements and recommendations are made, and some advice given in the text of the report to underpin the good practice seen.

### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

#### **This standard was met.**

The fostering service has a detailed statement of purpose which covers all the required areas. The children's guide remains up to date and it was positive to hear that the short-break scheme for disabled children is intending to produce their own guide.

### **Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)**

#### **1 of these 2 standards was met.**

The Manager has a substantial amount of child care experience and has worked in the field of Family Placement for over five years. She has been Team Manager of Fostering since July 2001. The standard is not fully met as the Manager needs to obtain a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management by 2005. A Certificate in Management Studies course is being started at the end of September 2004.

### **Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

#### **1 of these 2 standards was met.**

There are clear roles for Managers regarding monitoring and the Manager continues to produce an Annual Report which is an excellent piece of work. Since the last inspection exit interviews have been offered to foster carers who have resigned. The Family Placement Team has two Managers – one leads on fostering and the other on adoption and permanence. Both work part time and one will usually be available if the other is not. It was found on this inspection that there are some gaps and overlaps in the two Managers roles. This has already been acted upon by the Children's Services Manager and there is a fresh look being given to areas of responsibility, accountability and communication.

### **Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)**

#### **8 of these 9 standards were met.**

It was a requirement made at the last inspection that the use of health and safety checklists are developed. This has happened and significant work has been undertaken into developing and implementing the health and safety checklist. It was an unmet requirement at the last inspection that the fostering service develop its practice in the consideration of a child/young person's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. This has now been met with the development of the foster placement agreements which clearly identify issues relating to identity/religion and culture and how any identified gaps are to be addressed. It was an unmet requirement at the last inspection to develop the use of foster placement agreements. Foster placement agreements are now in place and were said to be working well. Matching factors and gaps are detailed on the agreement.

The foster carers files seen did not contain safe caring guidelines. It is acknowledged that there is a working party looking at risk assessments, but it is expected that each foster carers will have safe caring guidelines in place and these will be reviewed at each placement to reflect the needs of the young person placed. It is a requirement that these are developed. There was uncertainty regarding the child protection procedures to be followed for a young person in foster care although there was evidence that action had been taken. It is a requirement that there is a written procedure regarding the action to be taken if an allegation is made about the behaviour of a foster carer towards a foster child.

Discussion with foster carers, children placed in foster care, with link workers and social workers all provided evidence that the fostering service encourages young people to maintain and develop family contacts. There continue to be good arrangements in place to ensure that young people's opinions are heard. There are regular meetings facilitated by the Children's Rights Officer for all Looked After Children which include young people in foster



care. Foster carers spoken with were clear about their roles in promoting the health of the children in their care and taking them to health appointments. Appointments are recorded and included in the new monthly report completed by foster carers. There are clear expectations regarding helping foster carers meet the young person's educational needs and this has included providing fostered young people with computers. There were clear plans being made into adulthood for all the tracked young people.

### **Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15-23)**

#### **6 of these 9 standards were met.**

The sample of four personnel files seen provided good evidence that robust recruitment checks are carried out when appointing new staff. However, there were issues brought up with the personnel department which were raised at the time of the last inspection. These matters are the subject of a requirement of this report.

The fostering service has a clear management structure in place with clear lines of accountability. Since the last inspection a recruitment officer has been appointed and a fostering support worker. It is essential that the service develops a strategy to recruit more foster carers as there is an ageing and shrinking pool of carers. There were examples found when a placement had been made outside the agreed approval range. It is a requirement that there are clear processes in place which are followed when changes to foster carers approval are sought.

There was evidence of sound employment practices for staff with regular supervision and annual appraisals. Team members have opportunities to take part in a wide range of internal and external training courses, as well as post qualifying training. All the foster carers have link workers and foster carers spoken with, both individually and as a group, all said that they felt well supported by them. There was a clear understanding of their role. The system for the annual review of foster carers has been improved since the last inspection. The reports seen showed that the quality of the recording is good and the format comprehensive. There is an expectation that all foster carers will attend at least three training courses per year and there is a financial incentive operating to encourage training. Some foster carers are undertaking NVQ training and three foster carers have successfully completed courses this year. The standard is not fully met as there is no training profile for foster carers held on file. It should be possible to see all the training courses attended by foster carers over the years contained in one record.

### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

#### **1 of these 2 standards was met.**

It was a requirement made at the last inspection that guidance is provided to foster carers on recording, including what needs to be recorded and the way it should be recorded. It was found that this requirement has been met. A system of monthly reporting by foster carers had been set up which is positive and was seen to be working well. Separate files are maintained for foster carers and young people. Those seen were generally in good order and more recent files were sectioned with a clear index. There is a need to ensure that there is a record of all the young people placed with foster carers, including dates, maintained in the foster carers file.

The Manager was aware of all the complaints made in the last year and it was clear that action had been taken. However, there is still a need to ensure that there is a separate record or log maintained which records brief details of allegations and complaints and which indicates where further information can be found.

### **Fitness of Premises for Use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)**

**This standard was met.**

There is sufficient space in the office and there are efficient administrative and IT systems in place.

### **Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)**

**2 of these 3 standards are not applicable to local authority fostering services. The standard applicable was not met.**

There is a written policy on foster carer allowances which had recently been updated. Foster carers confirmed that payments are made promptly. It is a recommendation that some areas regarding payments are in need of further clarification.

### **Fostering Panels (Standard 30)**

**This standard was not met.**

The panel was directly observed on this inspection and it was evident that there was a problem with clarity regarding the roles within the panel. The chair is the Children's Services Manager with responsibility for the Referral and Assessment Team and the Family Support Team. This could give rise to a potential conflict of interest as these teams are those requiring foster placements.

### **Short-term Breaks (Standard 31)**

**This standard was met.**

There is a short-break scheme which is aimed at children with a disability and which is managed within the Children's Disability Team. It is a long-standing scheme which works well, is well organised with clear processes in place. The carers are approved by the Fostering Panel and there is good use of joint working with another Berkshire unitary.

### **Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

**This standard was met.**

The kinship carers are assessed and supported in the same way as any other carers and there are plans to bring kinship carers into the annual reviewing system.

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

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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



## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	12	FS9	Safe caring guidelines are developed.	17/12/04
2	12	FS9	A written procedure is developed regarding the actions to be taken if an allegation is made about the behaviour of a foster carer towards a foster child.	17/12/04
3	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The personnel issues raised in Standard 15 of this report are addressed.	17/12/04
4	28(3) 29(4)(b)	FS17	There are clear procedures in place which are followed when changes to foster carers approval are sought.	17/02/05
5	26	FS30	The working of the fostering panel is reviewed.	17/2/05

### 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	FS5	The areas of responsibility, communication and accountability are reviewed in relation to the fostering and the adoption Managers role.

2	FS23	There are training profiles for foster carers held on file.
3	FS25	Separate records are kept which bring together data on allegations and on complaints.
4	FS29	Areas outlined in Standard 29 regarding payments to foster carers are clarified.

\* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• 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	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	13/09/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	96

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service has a detailed statement of purpose which covers all the required areas. It is in need of updating to reflect recent changes and to be formally approved by the elected members.

The children's guide remains up to date and it was positive to hear that the short-break scheme for disabled children is intending to produce their own guide.

## 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?

2

The Manager has a substantial amount of child care experience and has worked in the field of Family Placement for over five years. She has been Team Manager of Fostering since July 2001.

The standard is not fully met as the Manager needs to obtain a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management by 2005. A Certificate in Management Studies course is being started at the end of September 2004.

There was continuing evidence that the Manager exercises effective leadership of the team and all the staff and foster carers spoken with, without exception, said that they felt well supported by the Manager.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The sample of four personnel records seen provided good evidence of recent police checks (CRB disclosures) carried out, as well as other checks and references (see comments in Standard 15).

The personnel file of the Manager was seen and contained confirmation of references and employment history. There was no evidence that a police check had been carried out since 1997 but the Children's Services Manager confirmed that a recent CRB check had been undertaken for the Fostering Panel. Advice was given that this information is detailed in the personnel file.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

**Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

4

There are clear roles for Managers regarding monitoring and the Manager continues to produce an Annual Report. This is an excellent document which looks back over the year, provides information about current trends and practices and considers areas that require further work.

Since the last inspection exit interviews have been offered to foster carers who have resigned.

Local authority fostering services are not statutorily required to notify the CSCI of any of the circumstances listed below.

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

X

**Death of a child placed with foster parents.**

X

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

X

**Serious illness or accident of a child.**

X

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

X

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

X

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

X

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

X

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

X

**Number of complaints made to CSCI 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?****2**

The Manager has a clear job description and reports to one of the two Heads of Children's Services. The Family Placement Team has two Managers – one leads on fostering and the other on adoption and permanence. Both work part time and will usually be available if the other is not.

It was found on this inspection that there are some gaps and overlaps in the two Managers roles. This has already been acted upon by the Children's Services Manager and there is a fresh look being given to areas of responsibility, accountability and communication.

## 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

It was a requirement made at the last inspection that the use of health and safety checklists are developed. This has happened and significant work has been undertaken into developing and implementing the health and safety checklist. It is intended that this will be undertaken annually at the time of the annual review of foster carers. Advice was given that the storage of medication is highlighted on the form and there are clear timescales for action to be taken.

All the four homes of foster carers seen were warm and adequately furnished and decorated. All the young people in the foster homes seen had their own bedrooms.

### Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It was an unmet requirement at the last inspection that the fostering service develop its practice in the consideration of a child/young person's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. This has now been met with the development of the foster placement agreements which clearly identify issues relating to identity/religion and culture and how any identified gaps are to be addressed.

The fostering service supports few cross cultural placements and none were tracked on this inspection. There was evidence of a foster carers home being specially adapted so that a disable young person can be appropriately cared for.

<b>Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>It was an unmet requirement at the last inspection to develop the use of foster placement agreements. As mentioned in Standard 7, foster placement agreements are now in place and were said to be working well. Matching factors and gaps are detailed on the agreement.</p> <p>There was good written evidence from one of the four young people tracked, of the matching considerations taken into account and of the discussions held. Advice was given that the age of the foster carers is taken into consideration when a placement is made.</p>		

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b>		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>Training for foster carers includes caring for a child who has been abused and on recognising signs of abuse. There is also mandatory training for all foster carers on behaviour management.</p> <p>The foster carers files seen did not contain safe caring guidelines. It is acknowledged that there is a working party looking at risk assessments, but it is expected that each foster carers will have safe caring guidelines in place and these will be reviewed at each placement to reflect the needs of the young person placed. It is a requirement that these are developed.</p> <p>In discussions with the Manager it was clear that some incidents have taken place in the last year which could be construed as child protection concerns. There was uncertainty regarding the procedures to be followed for a young person in foster care although there was evidence that action had been taken. It is a requirement that there is a written procedure regarding the action to be taken if an allegation is made about the behaviour of a foster carer towards a foster child. This should include consultation with the child protection co-ordinator.</p> <p>All the foster children placed by Wokingham received a questionnaire. Only a small number of responses were received and none of the young people identified bullying as a problem.</p>		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	X	%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

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

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

3

Discussion with foster carers, children placed in foster care, with link workers and social workers all provided evidence that the fostering service encourages young people to maintain and develop family contacts. Current contact arrangements generally appeared to be working well and contact is now included in the foster placement agreements.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

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

3

There continue to be good arrangements in place to ensure that young people's opinions are heard. There are regular meetings facilitated by the Children's Rights Officer for all Looked After Children which include young people in foster care.

The inspectors had meetings with two groups of young people in foster placements. All were clear about what to do if they had concerns or complaints.

**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

There continues to be a Nurse employed to work with Looked After Children and a new Clinical Psychologist has recently been appointed. Foster carers are given training in first aid and a recent training course covered areas around drug and alcohol misuse. Foster carers spoken with were clear about their roles in promoting the health of the children in their care and taking them to health appointments. Appointments are recorded and included in the new monthly report completed by foster carers.

The authority is a pathfinder children's trust which includes health.

One of the tracked young people had recently been transferred to the Children's Disability Team with a view to him receiving more specialised input.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

There is an integrated children and young people services department which includes a joint department with education. All of the young people tracked who were of school age were attending school. The education arrangements are included in the foster placement agreements.

There are clear expectations regarding helping foster carers meet the young person's educational needs and this has included providing fostered young people with computers.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Written guidelines regarding leaving care are still being produced but there is an addendum added to the foster placement agreement for older young people. This includes the recommended monetary allowances given to young people regarding clothing and transport.

There were clear plans being made into adulthood for all the tracked young people.



## Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The sample of four personnel files seen provided good evidence that robust recruitment checks are carried out when appointing new staff. Updated CRB checks have been carried out for existing staff and are routinely obtained for new staff. References and medical checks are routinely sought and were seen on file.

The following issues were raised with the personnel department which were raised at the time of the last inspection. There is no automatic procedure to ensure that recent photographs of applicants are obtained as the personnel files should contain one. The reference request form sent out does not specifically ask all referees to state any known reason why the person should not be employed to work with children and that there should be no mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the applicant. There is no procedure to ensure that written references are followed up by telephone. These matters are the subject of a requirement of this inspection.

The police and medical checks of foster carers are checked at the time of their annual reviews. There were some police checks that had not been renewed for over three years. The Manager was already looking at systems to record when police and medical checks had last been renewed.

All staff have an appropriate qualification to work with children and young people and those staff involved in the assessment and approval of foster carers have the experience to do so.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

15

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

0

**Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**

**Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.**

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

The fostering service has a clear management structure in place with clear lines of accountability. It is a Family Placement Team with functions split between fostering and adoption. There are five members of the team that undertake fostering work and three staff act as link workers to foster carers. Some members of the team undertake adoption work as well as fostering. As stated in standard 5, there are some discussions needed as to whether the team is organised in the best way to deliver the best possible service to foster carers and young people. This matter is in hand.

All staff have up to date job descriptions and there are fostering policies and procedures accessible. Good levels of administrative support are 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 family placement team is fully staffed. All those staff undertaking fostering tasks work part-time except for one member of staff and the fostering support worker. All the team is female. Since the last inspection a recruitment officer and a fostering support worker have been appointed.

It is essential that the service develops a strategy to recruit more foster carers as there is an ageing and shrinking pool of carers.

There are clear assessment processes for prospective foster carers and those carers for the short break scheme and the supported lodgings scheme. The foster panel has identified a piece of work to look at the assessment processes for 15 year olds going into placements to take 16's and over. This is necessary as there have been occasions when 15 year olds have been placed in supported lodgings whose carers have not gone through the same assessment process as foster carers.

There were other examples found when a placement had been made outside the agreed approval range. One foster carer approved to take a named young person had taken in two young people on respite. Neither of these placements had gone to panel for approval. It is a requirement that there are clear processes in place which are followed when changes to foster carers approval are sought. Also see comments made in Standard 30.

**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

There was evidence of sound employment practices for staff with regular supervision and annual appraisals. Likewise, the same systems were in place for carers and support out of office hours by the Emergency Duty Team. This was an area being considered for change at the last inspection and is still to be decided.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

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

3

Team members have opportunities to take part in a wide range of internal and external training courses, as well as post qualifying training. Training and development needs are covered at supervision and at annual appraisals.

Joint training events with both fostering staff and foster carers take place as well as with other staff of the local authority. Fostering staff attend training for foster carers provided by external trainers.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

3

Regular supervision sessions are held and annual appraisals take place. Weekly staff meetings are held and minutes taken. Advice was given that the newly appointed recruitment officer attends the team 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?****3**

All the foster carers have link workers and foster carers spoken with, both individually and as a group, all said that they felt well supported by them. There was a clear understanding of their role.

The system for the annual review of foster carers has been improved since the last inspection. The reports seen showed that the quality of the recording is good and the format comprehensive. The kinship carers are being brought into the review process. Reviews are being brought to the foster panel.

The fostering reviewing officer is moving teams at the end of September to make the role more independent and to bring them into the same team as the LAC reviewing officers. This is commendable.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)****The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Foster care agreements are in place and there was evidence on the foster carers files that regular contact with the link worker takes place. There have been some unannounced visits made to foster carers and this is an area considered at the annual review.

The foster carers handbook which has been updated, has still not been issued to foster carers but is currently at the printers. It is anticipated that all carers will have a copy by December 2004.

Foster carers spoken with were aware of the process should an allegation be made against them. Standard 22.9 includes the provision of independent support to foster carers during an investigation. Those foster carers spoken with who had been subject to an allegation said they would have valued independent support. Advice was given that this area is considered.

There are clear systems in place regarding the removal of foster carers from the register and one de-registration is in process.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

2

Pre-approval training routinely takes place and the next training is planned for October 2004. The 'skills to foster' pack is being used.

An annual training programme for foster carers is produced and the 2004-5 programme includes training on issues such as assertiveness, drug and alcohol misuse, recording, first aid, promoting resilience, a question time session, attachment issues and contact. Two session times are offered on each course, either during the day or in the evening.

There is an expectation that all foster carers will attend at least three training courses per year and there is a financial incentive operating to encourage training. Some foster carers are undertaking NVQ training and three foster carers have successfully completed courses this year. Training and development needs are included in the annual review.

The standard is not fully met as there is no training profile for foster carers held on file. It should be possible to see all the training courses attended by foster carers over the years contained in one record. The Manager indicated that this work was going to be implemented and it is a recommendation of this report that it is carried out.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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It was a requirement made at the last inspection that guidance is provided to foster carers on recording, including what needs to be recorded and the way it should be recorded. It was found that this requirement has been met. Work has been also undertaken by the Family Placement team and the Looked After Children team clarifying recording practices. Training has been undertaken by foster carers and a further session is planned to take place in October 2004. A system of monthly reporting by foster carers had been set up which is positive and was seen to be working well.

Foster carers were varied as to whether there had been sufficient information given to them about the child being placed. All were clear about the plans for the future. The fostering service is working hard to ensure that significant life events of the young people are recorded.

### 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
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Separate files are maintained for foster carers and young people. Those seen were generally in good order and more recent files were sectioned with a clear index. There is a need to ensure that there is a record of all the young people placed with foster carers, including dates, maintained in the foster carers file.

The Manager was aware of all the complaints made in the last year and it was clear that action had been taken. This was also the case for allegations and information was seen on foster carers files. However, there is still a need to ensure that there is a separate record or log maintained which records brief details of allegations and complaints and which indicates where further information can be found.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			35
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			49
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			45
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			3
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			5
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	82.39	<b>Maximum £</b>	506.87

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The fostering team work in an open plan office which is shared with the Looked After Children's team, Family Support team and the Referral and Assessment team. The only children's team not situated in the building is the Disabled Children's team. There is sufficient space in the office and there are efficient administrative and IT systems in place.



## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not applicable to local authority fostering services.

### 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?

9

Not applicable to local authority fostering services.

**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

There is a written policy on foster carer allowances which had recently been updated. Foster carers confirmed that payments are made promptly.

It was clear that there have been occasions when respite carers have been paid a significantly different amount to pay for the same child as the long term foster carers. One respite carer did not receive information about the allowance payable until after the placement ended. There does not appear to be a clear understanding of contract care. It is a recommendation that these areas are clarified.

## 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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The fostering panel also makes decisions regarding the approval of carers for the short break scheme and supported lodgings. There are three independent panel members including a foster carer for a neighbouring authority and a care leaver. The panel has written policies and procedures and panel members include experts in health and education.	
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The panel was directly observed on this inspection and it was evident that there was a problem with clarity regarding the roles within the panel. The chair is the Children's Services Manager with responsibility for the Referral and Assessment Team and the Family Support Team. This could give rise to a potential conflict of interest as these teams are those requiring foster placements.	
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## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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There is a short-break scheme which is aimed at children with a disability and which is managed within the Children's Disability Team. The Team Manager is vice-chair of the Fostering Panel and at present the scheme has approximately 9 carers.

It is a long-standing scheme which works well, is well organised with clear processes in place. The carers are approved by the Fostering Panel and there is good use of joint working with another Berkshire unitary.

## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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One of the young people tracked on this inspection is in a family placement. The kinship carers are assessed and supported in the same way as any other carers and there are plans to bring kinship carers into the annual reviewing system.
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The kinship care policy which was due to be finished last year is still in development.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 13 – 17 September 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

**Public reports**

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



**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I, Maeve Coupe of Wokingham Fostering 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, Maeve Coupe of Wokingham Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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