



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

The Cottage
Avonvale Road
Redfield
Bristol
BS5 9RH

1st March 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

Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

Address

The Cottage, Avonvale Road, Redfield, Bristol, BS5 9RH

Local Authority Manager

Christine Teller

Tel No:

0117 9548604

Address

The Cottage, Avonvale Road, Redfield, Bristol, BS5 9RH

Fax No:

0117 9412103

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?

NO

Date of last inspection

24/03/03

Date of Inspection Visit		1st March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sam Chisholm	102696
Name of Inspector	2	Jacqueline Sullivan	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Christine Teller	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
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Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's Comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's Agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Bristol Social Services 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

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.

Bristol City Council social services were established on 1st April 1996 as part of the local Government reorganisation. The council provides social services throughout the city. The fostering services team is part of the children's services division and is based at Avonvale Road, in the area of the city known as Redfield.

The fostering service team undertake the following range of services:

- Fostering services
- Adoption services
- Step-parent adoption service
- General Registry Office (Section 51 Counselling) service
- Birth parent counselling service
- Administration of letter box scheme
- Fostering services panel
- Adoption services panel

The council also provides a family link service for disabled children. This service is managed separately to the fostering service but was also included as part of this inspection.

The placement provision within the fostering service is currently arranged as follows:

- Mainstream Carers, who may care for children and young people on a short or long term (permanence) basis.
- Fostering Plus Carers, who provide a range of placements for children with complex needs. These carers have demonstrated experience of caring for or working with children and have considerable skills and understanding of children/young people's needs. As well as the allowance paid for each child in placement these carers are paid an additional weekly fee for each child in placement.

The fostering service is divided into three teams with designated responsibilities:

1. Recruitment, assessment, short term support and training
2. Duty/placement request and referral, short term and emergency placements
3. Long term placements, adoption assessments and placements

Each team is managed separately, but all are located within the same building.

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).

Brief Introduction

Overall the family placement and family link services had made good progress towards meeting the standards and regulations. The staff and managers were positive and pro-active towards improving the services they provide and aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

The inspection this year was over a much shorter period than the previous one and this is reflected in the degree of inspection that was carried out on this occasion. It is anticipated that the next inspection will be of longer duration and therefore more comprehensive.

Particular issues are detailed below.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard required some minor alterations to the statements of purpose and the children's guides.

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

1 of 2 standards assessed were met
Gaps in staff records required amendment.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

0 of 2 standards assessed were met
The service needs to ensure that the Commission is informed of all notifiable events.
Managers need to be supplied with accurate job descriptions.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

9 of 9 standards assessed were met

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

8 of 9 standards assessed were met
Staff need to be supplied with accurate job descriptions.
It was recommended that the new telephone system and foster carer respite arrangements be reviewed.

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

Fitness of premises for use as fostering services (Standard 26)

This standard was assessed as met

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 of 3 standards assessed were met

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was not assessed on this occasion due to current re-structuring of the panel. It will be fully assessed at the next inspection.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was assessed as met

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was not assessed at this inspection due to this service not yet falling within the Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

remit of the fostering service. It will be fully assessed at the next inspection.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	21	FS16	Provide staff and managers with accurate job descriptions.	30/09/04

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		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Sam Chisholm</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Jacqueline Sullivan</u>	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	<u>Michael Miles</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>13th July 2004</u>		

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	Amend statements of purpose and children's guides as detailed in standard 1 of this report.	30/09/04
2	Schedules 2 & 3	FS3	Ensure that staff records comply with the schedules detailed in standard 3 of this report.	30/09/04
3	.21	FS20FS5	Provide managers and staff with accurate job descriptions.	30/09/04
4	Schedule 5	FS9	Update foster care agreement as detailed in standard 9 of this report.	30/09/04
5	43 and schedule 8	FS4	Make notifications as detailed in standard 4 of this report.	01/03/04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS16	Review the current telephone system as detailed in standard 16 of this report.

2	FS21	Review respite arrangements as detailed in standard 21 of this report.
3	FS26	Review premises and equipment used by the family placement teams as detailed in standard 26 of this report.

* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NO
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	01/03/04
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	32.0

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) |

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Both the family placement team and the family link team now have statements of purpose and children's guides. These have not yet been distributed as they are awaiting the commission's approval. The statements of purpose were seen and need to include numbers of complaints made and their outcomes. The family link children's guide was designed to be as accessible as possible to children with disabilities. The family placement children's guide was aimed at and suitable for children and young people aged 11-18, but consideration needs to be given to producing a guide suitable for younger children. All guides need to include the contact details for the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The family placement service is divided into three teams; recruitment, short-term and long-term including permanency. Each team is managed separately by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The family link team is managed separately by an experienced and qualified manager.

It was evident from our time spent with the managers that they collectively have a broad range of experience and expertise in management, children's services and the provision of fostering services. They work closely and meet regularly to discuss service provision and progress. During the inspection the managers were seen to exercise effective leadership and organisational skills and feedback from staff interviews also supported this view.

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

The managers and staff are suitably qualified and experienced to provide fostering services.

The personnel files showed evidence of appropriate employment histories and qualifications. Some gaps were still found on staff files in relation to the information required by schedules 1 & 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and this needs to be rectified.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Throughout the inspection it was evident that there are clear roles and lines of accountability for managers and staff.

There is a budget allocated annually for the fostering service for which each team manager has responsibility for a part. The budgets are monitored monthly by the finance department who supply a statement of expenditure to each manager. Amounts paid to carers are set annually as a scale of age related payments for each child and a fostering plus fee if appropriate.

It was noted that the fostering service has had 5 notifiable events during the past year but the commission has only received details of one of these. The service needs to supply information to the commission of all notifiable events.

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

1

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.

2

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?****2**

The level of delegation and responsibility of the managers is clearly defined in the organisational map. Managers still did not have accurate job descriptions and these are required.

The management structure of each team now includes a senior practitioner. It was hoped that this new structure would allow the managers more time for development work, but the managers still felt that there was a shortage of time for this. Managers and staff both said that there was an ongoing process of clarifying and developing the role of the senior practitioners.

The managers plan their leave to ensure that one manager is always available. There are also two job-share service managers that assume operational accountability and responsibility in the team managers' absence.

The family link team manager is covered by the service manager for that service when absent or on leave.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>All foster carer homes visited during the inspection were well-furnished, decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. The homes were seen to be free of avoidable hazards, and where younger children were placed, appropriate safety barriers were provided. The children's bedrooms were seen to contain their own beds and age appropriate toys, clothes and equipment.</p> <p>Where carers are expected to provide transport for children, the fostering service provides car seats. The service also has two people carrier cars that are available for carers to borrow and their insurance and driving licence documents are checked when they use these vehicles. In addition the foster carer's handbook has a section about the use of cars and associated safety requirements.</p> <p>The duty family placement social worker and locality children's social workers now carry out risk assessments on room sharing. Social workers have had training in this. The family link risk assessments for this were seen and were satisfactory.</p> <p>The foster carer agreement includes the expectation that foster carers may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.</p>		

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Diversity and equality are promoted within the service in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the carers' preparation training and support and supervision sessions. • Information relating to the child's gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture and any disabilities are requested on the placement referral form. • Children are matched with carers of the same ethnicity where possible. When this is not possible the service tries to maintain links with the child's ethnic origin by placing them in a multi-racial area, supporting them to maintain links with any clubs that they belong to and arranging for them to continue with any religious services that they attend. • Children of dual-heritage have a family group conference before being placed to try to identify alternatives to foster care. • Child asylum seekers are provided with interpreters at school and when otherwise needed. • Foster carers are provided with training and guidance in culturally appropriate hair care, cooking and toys. 		

- Foster carers of disabled children are linked to specialist training and occupational therapists and are provided with appropriate aids and adaptations.
- The family placement recruitment team have specific campaigns targeted at people from ethnic minority, gay, lesbian and deaf communities. The managers explained that they have continued to have difficulty recruiting carers from ethnic minorities.

Evidence of the service's efforts to value diversity and promote equality were seen on foster carer recruitment posters aimed at people from the above mentioned communities, in the foster carers' handbook, in their integrated equalities policy and in the foster carers' training plan.

The foster carers visited were able to comment on ways that they had supported and advocated for children when they felt that they were being discriminated against. They were also able to tell the inspectors about hobbies and activities that they had supported and encouraged. This information is asked for on the placement referral form and the Looked After Children forms and can therefore be passed onto the carer at the time of placement. Feedback from carers still indicated inconsistency in the level of information that they received about a child from the child's social worker.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>At the time of this inspection the fostering service teams were still using their old database system for matching, however the local authority has recently installed a new computer system called PARIS. The family placement module for this will go live in September 2004. It is anticipated that this will assist with matching and monitoring of placements. The efficacy of the new system will be examined at the next inspection.</p> <p>The demand for emergency and short-term placements still regularly exceeds the in-house provision and therefore careful matching is not always possible. When a placement is not ideal the family placement team ensures that extra support is given to the child and carers.</p> <p>The duty officer collects all available information and history of the child at the point of referral. They then discuss the child's needs with prospective carers to consider a match for placement. Evidence of these discussions was seen on the referral forms.</p> <p>The Family link team now get a copy of each child's placement plan, which assists with matching and monitoring of placements. The family placement teams need to ensure that they also receive these so that they can monitor gaps in the matching process.</p>		

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 training programme for foster carers includes training in caring for a child who has been abused, safe caring skills and managing behaviour.

Foster carers are asked to consider a safe caring policy for their individual homes at the time of induction and assessment. Evidence of this is in the form F assessments. Further written policy and guidance are found in the foster carers handbook.

Carers sign an agreement, which states that corporal punishment is not acceptable. Signed copies of these were seen. The foster carer agreements have now been rewritten to comply with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A copy of this was seen and was satisfactory apart from the need to update with details of the new Commission for Social Care Inspection.

A new anti-bullying policy and recording form has been written in draft and was seen to be appropriate, and the annual training programme includes sessions for carers on anti-bullying. The family link team is in the process of producing an anti-bullying policy using Makaton symbols.

A system is in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. Training is now provided on the process of dealing with allegations and the foster care agreement now states that outside support can be provided to carers in the event of them being the subject of an allegation. Training around complaints is now also available.

The written procedure for use if a foster child is missing from home is provided for carers in the foster carers' handbook.

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

0

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers' preparation training includes guidance on the promotion of contact, the skills needed for this and the setting of boundaries. Issues around contact are monitored and reviewed by the carer's social worker during supervision sessions. Written feedback from carers gave good illustrations of the ways in which they promote contact.

There is no standard procedure within the fostering service for contact arrangements. This is done individually for each child and details are contained in the Looked After Children (LAC) forms that carers receive for each child. The foster carers' handbook contains a section on children's birth families, promoting contact and guidance on recording and reporting observations and concerns to the child's social worker.

Arrangements for contact are considered when finding a placement for a child. In addition transport and childcare costs are covered to ensure that contact takes place as needed.

Overall the foster carers were positive about contact arrangements in their feedback.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The foster carers' training programme includes guidance on listening to children and responding to what they say. The LAC review system provides opportunities for children to express their opinions about their daily life and children's views are now included in foster carers' annual reviews.

Information about making complaints is now included in the children's guide in a child friendly format. Voice for the Child in Care has now been commissioned to provide an advocacy service for looked after children.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service now has two designated nurses, one of whom sits on the fostering panel. The nurses also provide training to foster carers and were viewed by team managers as providing a very useful addition to the service.

There is a new service which will be available to looked after children called The Bristol Collaborative Service. This will be a 4 bed residential unit and outreach service to schools jointly run by health and social services.

The assessment of carers includes a description of the area that they live in and the local healthcare facilities. This information is then used in the matching process. When placing a disabled child, the layout of the carer's home is also taken into account. Occupational therapists assess the homes of family link carers and obtain appropriate adaptations for the children placed there.

The placement referral form contains sections for health needs and records. This information can then be given to the carer at the time of the placement or before. Carers are also provided with training and guidance in the promotion of health and hygiene during their preparation training and in their handbook.

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

Foster carers with the family placement teams described the active role that they take in helping children to attain their full educational potential. Carers interviewed described close working relationships with schools. In addition Personal Education Plans are now being introduced for all looked after children of school age.

The council has a separate service for the educational needs of children looked after (ECLA). They support children in school experiencing difficulties and can also provide education for a number of children out of school at their base for three days per week. The service now also has a policy regarding exclusions from school.

Foster homes visited provided space for homework and each foster carer household with children of 13 years and over have now been provided with a computer and internet access.

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

The service now has a policy on preparing children and young people for independent living. A copy of this was seen and was satisfactory. The family placement and after care teams are now also providing training for foster carers about this. Evidence of this was seen on the training plan.

The family placement team managers felt that communication with the after care team had improved. This team also includes one personal advisor for disabled children.

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 council has appropriate written procedures for recruitment and checking prospective members of staff. The recruitment procedure showed a selection for interview process identifying candidates by numbers only to provide equal opportunities. All the managerial staff that engage in the selection and interviewing process are trained to do so.

Inspection of fostering service staff files held at the HR department showed that these procedures were followed and that the social work staff employed in the fostering service are qualified, have experience of working with children and in the field of fostering. Telephone follow up to written references is now being done. Gaps in these records have already been referred to in standard 3 of this report.

All the social work staff in the team hold appropriate qualifications, and in the course of interview discussion demonstrated an understanding of the legislation relevant to children and fostering. They had direct experience and training in the growth and development of children and evidence of their discussion with foster carers on this subject was also found in supervision records.

Social work staff undertaking the assessment of foster carers are qualified and the team collectively have many years experience in this process.

Assessment of prospective foster carers is supervised by the manager of the recruitment and training team, any assessments undertaken by students on placement in the team are directly supervised by their practice supervisor; the fostering panel also provides a quality control role in monitoring the standard of assessment.

Foster carers' references and checks were found to meet the requirements of Regulation 27 and information required by Schedule 3.

Total number of staff of the agency:

41

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

2

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 management, accountability and delegation structure of the service are detailed in standards 2, 4 and 5 of this report.

Workloads are allocated in team meetings by mutual consent between the team manager and the social worker. Workloads are monitored during individual supervision sessions and team managers meet regularly to discuss team workloads.

Team managers and the fostering panels ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of foster carers are managed and implemented effectively.

Before independent agency carers are used, the agencies are asked to provide their statement of purpose, child protection and equal opportunities policies, proof of registration with the CSCl and foster carer assessment forms. Child care social workers are then expected to monitor the equality of care during their regular visits to the children placed with the agency.

Staff were able to confirm that they are offered opportunities for on-going training and development. Foster carers are also offered an annual programme of training and opportunities for development. Their training records were seen on their files and most had attended some of the training offered.

Reception and information staff have been recruited since the last inspection. The family placement teams now have their own designated administrators, although these staff still have to take turns staffing the general reception area at Avonvale Road.

The team managers felt that the anticipated improvements that would come with the reception and information staff had only partially materialised and commented that these staff were behind in updating the database due to a new phone system which has recently been installed.

All staff interviewed felt that the new phone system was inappropriate for their needs as it does not allow carers to leave the detailed messages that they used to be able to leave on their social worker's individual answer machine. Carers interviewed had a range of both positive and negative views on both the new and old systems. It is recommended that the new telephone system is reviewed to ensure that both staff and carers feel that it is the most effective system for the efficient running of the service.

From discussion with family placement social workers it was evident that they have a clear understanding of their roles and how they can work effectively with the childcare social workers.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Although the posts within the family placement teams that had been frozen at the time of the last inspection were now unfrozen, there were still vacancies within the teams that were causing operational problems. These posts had been appropriately advertised to resolve the situation.

The service actively promotes recruitment of a range of carers to meet the needs of the children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Prospective carers are assessed appropriately using the form F method. Copies of these were seen on carers' files.

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
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The discussion with staff and carers and inspection of their files showed that the service operates sound employment practices.

An out of hours service is available to foster carers between 5pm and 12 midnight. Most foster carers commented in discussions and via questionnaires that they found this service useful and supportive. A duty support line is also available during the day if needed. Supervision of carers is detailed in Standard 21 of this report.

Staff receive a health and safety policy in their employment handbook. For foster carers this is covered in their handbook and foster care agreement.

We saw that the service has a whistle blowing policy which is available to all staff and carers.

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
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The team managers provide induction training for new social work staff within the team, this commences immediately they join the team. The team managers explained that they would expect an induction programme to take two weeks, it would cover all aspects of the service and provide a new member of staff with experience of working alongside experienced staff. Staff also have an annual appraisal with their manager.

The managers reported that the staff training programme was short staffed and therefore not providing the usual range of training opportunities.

Senior practitioners new in post had had a series of meetings with the service manager and trainer in order to identify and meet their training needs. Team managers have also had discussions with senior practitioners about their roles and responsibilities and a working

party is planned to continue this process of role monitoring and evaluation.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Staff still do not have accurate job descriptions and need to be supplied with these.

Staff receive formal recorded supervision and appraisal from their team managers on a monthly basis, and informal supervision via the open door policy that team managers operate.

Team meetings are held weekly for the long term and short term teams and fortnightly for the recruitment team. They are held on Wednesdays to enable all staff (including those who job share) to attend.

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**

The strategy for working with foster carers is written in the foster carer agreement and the foster carers' handbook.

Carers interviewed individually and as a group were able to describe the support they received from the service. They each had an allocated social worker that visited them on a regular basis, every 4 to 6 weeks. It was difficult to evidence this from carers' files as some of them had gaps in the running report. There have also been gaps in visits due to vacancies within the teams. Where this occurs telephone contact is maintained and visits made as needed by other team members. The service now has a proforma to be used for home visits to carers. Contact is made between the supervision visits by telephone either by the carer or social worker.

The service managers randomly audit foster carers files on a quarterly basis.

The family link team visit their carers every three months as a minimum and this was evidenced in the carers' files.

The service provides a duty advice line for carers throughout the day at the office and until midnight after office hours by a rota of team members. Carers appreciated the support provided out of hours and felt it was more useful than the service provided by the EDT.

There are foster carer support groups throughout the city and carers find these groups particularly useful to link up with others in their area. One group was attended during the inspection.

Feedback from carers indicated that many would like to see an improvement in respite arrangements. This was also identified as an area for improvement by the team managers. It is recommended that respite arrangements are reviewed in consultation with carers.

We found that communication between children's social workers and fostering service social workers was good. Most family placement social workers now use e-mail in order to improve communication between teams. This has also been addressed in supervision sessions with social workers.

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 carers receive and sign an agreement with the fostering service that explains the expectations of them and of the local authority.

The foster carers' handbook was seen and the carers visited confirmed that they had been given a copy. The foster carers' handbook has not been updated yet.

In addition, carers receive out of hours and social work support as previously mentioned, insurance cover and automatic membership to Avon Foster Carers Association.

Foster carers receive information about procedures for dealing with complaints. These can

be raised informally with the team managers or sent to the complaints department where they are formally recorded.

Information about the procedures for dealing with investigations into allegations is given to staff and is in the foster carers' handbook. Children are given information about how to complain and this is included in the children's guide.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are two social workers located in the recruitment, assessment and training team who have responsibility for providing training for foster carers. They produce an annual training programme and carers can select appropriate sessions they wish to attend. The effectiveness of training provided is evaluated from carers' feedback after each session and at their annual reviews. Written feedback from carers showed a good level of attendance at training events amongst that sample.

Experienced foster carers are used as co-trainers on the induction programme and other on-going training. Foster carers can also access training via the central training department, which provides them with opportunities to train alongside social work and residential staff.

Where two adults in one household apply to be approved as joint carers they are expected to complete all the induction training. There are specific training days identified in the annual programme for foster carers' children and for male carers.

Training is organised at convenient times in local venues around the city. The council also provides reasonable expenses for childcare.

Foster carers are able to access NVQ training in childcare via the central training section in the city.

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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There was a good understanding between childcare and family placement teams regarding their respective responsibility for record keeping.

The placement referral form contains information about the legal status, care plan and background of the child and the duty social workers told us that they discuss this information with the carers when matching.

The assessment and supervision of carers includes guidance on helping children to record life events and understand their history. The childcare social workers also assist with this.

Foster carers are given guidance by their social workers on safe storage of information and those visited demonstrated a good understanding of confidentiality.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There are separate records kept for staff, carers and children. The managers monitor the quality and adequacy of records by supervision. Foster carer files are now checked and monitored regularly by team managers.

Records are stored in secure cabinets and the computer system is password protected. The building has a burglar alarm. There is a written policy on case recording and for access to confidential records.

The family placement module of the new computer system PARIS will be going live in September 2004. The service still has difficulty in providing some of the statistics required below using the current system and was unable to provide some of them at this brief inspection. These statistics will be sought at the next inspection. The 589 placements refer only to those made by the family placement teams, whilst the numbers of carers approved and de-registered are for both the family placement and family link teams.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			589
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			37
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			33
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	89.81	Maximum £	168.49

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 premises used by the teams were the same as at the last inspection. The team managers reported that they had lost a meeting room which was previously available for their use. This has meant that staff meetings have been difficult to hold as the teams meet on the same days. Managers also reported that they felt there were not enough computers, telephones or desks for their staff and that accommodation continued to be cramped.

It is recommended that the local authority reviews the premises used by the teams to ensure that the accommodation and equipment is sufficient for the number of staff employed.

The managers reported that the foster carer trainers now have the use of an OHP, TV and video to support delivery of training sessions.

The canteen at Avonvale Road is being refurbished for the use of staff.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering services are funded as part of the local authority social services department. There is an annual allocated budget, and the service plan determines how the budget will be spent. Each manager receives a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending patterns. The finance department provide advice in relation to budgeting matters.

The local authority payroll services ensure regular payment of staff salaries, including deduction of income tax and national insurance.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The chief executive, chief elected member and the director of social services determine how the overall budget will be allocated. The budget is held centrally and delegated to the team managers for management of individual budgets.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances which is contained in the foster carers' handbook, and details about allowances are published in recruitment information. The policy states clearly what expenses the allowances are expected to cover. Further payments are made automatically throughout the year.

Since the last inspection foster carers have had their fostering allowance rate increased. Holiday payments can be negotiated with the locality children's team managers.

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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At the time of this inspection the fostering panel was in the process of changing its structure to meet the standard and regulations for fostering panels. As this process was not complete at the time, it was agreed that this standard would not be assessed on this occasion and that the new panel would be assessed at the next inspection.	0
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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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The family link team was inspected as part of the fostering service inspection this year and information about their service has been included throughout this report.

At the time of the inspection the team supported 80 carers and 93 placements. The team manager reported that new recruitment strategies were being tried, such as advertising in hospitals, and that numbers of carers have increased over the past year.

The family link team approves family and friends as carers where this is possible and appropriate.

Children placed for more than 120 days per year are monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Looked After Children system.

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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The service has advertised for a kinship carer social worker to join the family placement long-term team. This has been done to bring responsibility for kinship carers within the remit of the fostering service. The managers reported however that they have had difficulty in recruiting to this post and at the time of the inspection it remained vacant. This standard could not therefore be properly assessed on this occasion and will form part of the next inspection.	0
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not 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 Draft report relating to the Inspection conducted on 1st March 2004 of announced inspection at Bristol Social Services Fostering Services 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 14th July 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 Bristol Social Services Fostering Services 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 Bristol Social Services Fostering Services 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.