



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

KCC Fostering

Kent County Council

Social Services Department

Sessions House

County Hall

Maidstone Kent

ME16 1XX

3rd March 2005

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

KCC Fostering

Address

Kent County Council, Social Services Department,
Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone Kent, ME16
1XX

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

0845 3302967

Address

Kent County Council, Social Services Department,
Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone Kent, ME16
1XX

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		3rd March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Alex Turner	099984
Name of Inspector	2	Bill Wallace	
Name of Inspector	3	Not applicable	
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) 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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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Inspection visits

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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)

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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

7. Fitness of premises

8. Financial requirements

9. Fostering panels

10. Short-term breaks

11. Family and friend carers

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Part D: Provider's Response

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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 KCC Fostering. 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.

The fostering teams provide statutory fostering services across the county of Kent. Specialist schemes have been established demonstrating some very good practice in foster care. The service offers placements across the range including short term, day care respite, long term, emergency and permanency. There are clear systems and strategies to support foster carers and placements made.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

The inspection took place over one week in March 2005. The inspection focussed on the provision of services as represented by two of the area teams. The findings and outcomes recorded in this report are made in this context. An additional visit was made to observe one of the fostering panels in operation. Action has been carried out to address the requirements and recommendations included in the last report. A total of thirty out of thirty-two standards have been assessed (standards relating to the financial management of the fostering service were not inspected). Throughout the inspection process the social work, administrative and management staff of the fostering service were cooperative, open and receptive to the inspection process. Eight foster homes were visited; the children, young people and foster carers who took part in the inspection are thanked for the valuable contribution they made. Close to one hundred and seventy children and one hundred and sixty foster carers completed preinspection questionnaires contributing significantly to the inspection process.

Statement of Purpose - Standard 1

The Statement of Purpose provides useful information about the service. The statement was being updated to reflect service developments. Children's Guides to the service have been produced though not received by all of the children / young people who provided comment regarding this area of practice.

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

The professional qualifications, experience and achievements of the manager and senior staff relate to their operational functions and support their fitness to carry on a fostering service.

Management of the fostering service - Standards 4 & 5

The fostering service has been managed diligently by people who are competent and committed to do so. The manager was aware of and working on areas where standards in practice could and should be raised.

Securing and promoting welfare Standards 6 to 14

The service operates in a manner that protects and promotes children & young peoples welfare. The service has demonstrated a commitment to ensure looked after children receive educational provision according their needs. Recommendations made relate to the matching process, safe care policies and the maintenance of health care records and issues concerning permissions and consent. More should be done to ascertain children's views during foster carers annual reviews.

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

Staff and foster carers were well managed. Foster carers were on the whole positive about the support provided by the fostering service. The staff team were complimentary of employment practices and expressed that they felt supported by the fostering service and their colleagues. Recruitment checks should be enhanced with reference to regulatory requirements. Out of hours support should be reviewed. Written agreements with foster carers should be reviewed and updated. The fostering service has demonstrated commitment to ensure staff and carers have opportunities for training and professional development.

Records - Standards 24 & 25

The children's and young people's social work team maintained children's files. Information was being shared with and made available to the fostering team. Shortfalls were identified in relation to specific information required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 not having been obtained and / or maintained as required.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service - Standard 26

The premises visited were satisfactory as assessed against the standard.

Financial requirements - Standards 27 to 29

Two of the standards were not assessed. One standard was met.

The agencies financial systems and procedures were not inspected. Foster carers allowances have in the main been paid promptly.

Fostering panels - Standard 30

The standard was nearly met.

Panel procedures have been established and were adhered to by the panel observed. The findings of this inspection indicate the panel undertakes a rigorous analysis of the information under consideration.

Short-term breaks - Standard 31

The arrangements for providing respite care and short-term breaks were well thought out and operated in practice.

Family and friends as carers - Standard 32

The valuable role of family and carers as carers is recognised and engaged with in a sensitive and effective manner.

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:

Please note - Section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000 has been repealed. A notice to the director of Kent County Council Social Services has been made in accordance with section 81(4) of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Alex Turner **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Bill Wallace **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager Suzannah Burden **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The Fostering Service Provider shall ensure that each child / young person using the service has available to him / her, a copy of the children's guide.	15/07/05
2	4	FS1	The fostering service provider shall review the statement of purpose.	15/08/05
3	29	FS11	When undertaking a review of the approval of a foster carer, the fostering service provider shall seek and take into account the views of (subject to the child's age and understanding) any child placed with the foster parent.	15/07/05
4	20(3)(d)	FS15	The Fostering Service Provider shall not employ a person (for a definition of employing a person please refer to regulation 2 (3) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 (FSR2k2)) to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the matters set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 1 (FSR2k2).	15/07/05
5	38	FS17	The fostering service provider shall ensure that placement of children with people that are not foster carers follows the criteria set out in regulation 38.	15/07/05
6	28 (schedule 5)	22	The Fostering Service Provider shall make arrangements to review the Foster Care Agreement with reference to schedule 5.	15/07/05

7	30,31 & 32	25	The Fostering Service Provider shall ensure that the records required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are kept and maintained by the fostering service in accordance with the and include the detail specified in the regulations.	15/07/05
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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	FS7	The fostering service provider should review practice regarding permissions and arrangements concerning matters such as overnight stays, and school trips; within this context the fostering service provider should work towards ensuring any unnecessary restrictions and delays are avoided.
2	FS8	The fostering service provider should develop profiles of foster carers addressing the factors that should typically be taken into account in the matching process. This information should be readily available to the duty worker and an adapted version in place for the emergency out of hour's team.
3		The Fostering Service Manager should make arrangements to ensure foster carers develop safe care policies specific to their circumstances. The Fostering Service Manager should also ensure the policies are cleared with placing social workers and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child or young person being placed.
4	FS12	The fostering service provider should ensure there is a written health record for each child placed that is updated during the placement and moves with the child.
5	FS18	The fostering service provider should conduct a review of the out of hour's service provided to foster parents.

* 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	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
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	NO
Date of Inspection	14/03/05
Time of Inspection	0930
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40

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?

2

A Statement of Purpose has been published and was available for inspection. The content is somewhat outdated by developments in the service and lacking details specified in the standard. A guide to the foster care services is available to social workers placing children. The guide provides useful information to social workers with little previous experience of working with the fostering service. A Children's Guide has been produced in two versions, one for those aged twelve and over and the other for under twelve's. Pre inspection questionnaires completed indicate that many of the children and young people did not have a copy of the 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?	4
<p>The manager of the fostering service is suitably qualified and experienced. The combined qualifications and experience of all those involved in the carrying on and management of the service quite clearly exceed the requirements of this standard. The fact the fostering service manager oversees a number of teams which are managed on a local level is not taken into account in the Minimum Standards though is acknowledged here to reflect the scope of the task in hand. The overall findings of this inspection indicate the manager has exercised effective leadership of the staff and operation of the service.</p>		

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
<p>Those managing the fostering service demonstrated excellent awareness of issues relating to safeguarding children. It was clear that the needs and welfare of children were held paramount. With regard to recruitment procedures see text to standard fifteen.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Information is provided to the fostering manager regarding the activities of each of the area teams and specialist schemes. How this information is gathered and processed on a local and organisational level varies according to resources and methods of work. Reference was made to a process of updating and improving information systems and expectations of the benefits that this shall bring. Monthly statistics are collated and quarterly management reports prepared. Financial procedures were not assessed as part of this inspection. There is no statutory requirement on Local Authority Fostering Services to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of the events 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:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The overall findings of this inspection indicate the day-to-day operation of the fostering service is managed effectively. Managerial responsibilities, delegated duties and the lines of accountability have been defined. There is a suitably qualified and designated person to deputise in the fostering service manager's absence and for each of the team leaders in each of the areas served. The organisation of local authorities fostering service reflects the scale of the operation across the county and the development of specialist fostering schemes. In order to recognise the scope, breadth and diversity of the fostering service managers task and the overall findings of this inspection a rating of four has been awarded.

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

Children and young people who completed pre inspection questionnaires were on the whole complimentary about the foster carers they were now living with. Some were straightforward in praising their foster carers and the homes they were living in. All of the homes visited provided accommodation suitable for the children / young people that had been placed. It was highlighted from visiting one of the homes that the service could be more mindful to ensure measures are taken by foster carers to recognise, acknowledge and promote children's individuality; for example in the context of establishing a child's favoured decorations, toys and artefacts to have in their bedrooms when they come to stay. Health and safety issues are included in the training and guidance made available to foster carers. The annual review includes an inspection of the entire home.

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

Most of the feedback from children and young people in the context of diversity and equality was with regard to processes and consequences of foster care; for example meetings, questionnaires, special permissions, delays and social workers, and how these can mark them out as different and disadvantage them in day to day life. Discussion took place regarding these issues and a good practice recommendation has been made. There were isolated cases where young people felt their culture and background had not been respected or understood by their foster carers or the wider team involved. There were also isolated cases where children / young people gave examples of how they had been supported in this area. There is a specialised respite scheme for children with disabilities with specific support services and training delivered to those carers offering these placements.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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During this inspection two area teams were visited. The matching process was explained and discussed. With the addition of information regarding vacancies and approval status the process works on information exchange and discussion between the fostering staff and the referring social worker, within the fostering team itself and with “short listed” foster carers before deciding suitable families to put forward as a match. Emergency placements are made at which time the quality and quantity of information exchanged can diminish, especially out of hours. A small but significant number of foster carers responded in the pre inspection questionnaires that they had been asked to take children that they did not consider they would be able to care for. The recommendation is made to develop profiles of foster cares and families addressing the factors that should typically be taken into account in the matching process. This information should be readily available to the duty worker and an adapted version in place for the emergency out of hour’s team.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The training programme for foster carers includes topics relevant to this area. It is recommended that foster carers develop safe care policies that are particular to their own circumstances. The recommendation is also made to review these policies with reference to placements being made and ensure the policies are agreed with the placing social worker and explained clearly and appropriately to the child or young person(s) in the home. Foster carers have explicitly been made aware that corporal punishment is not allowed. Allegations against foster carers have been treated seriously and investigated according to procedures. Details of allegations, investigations and outcomes are maintained and scrutinised in the ongoing managerial monitoring of the service. There are clear written procedures to follow in the event of a child or young person going missing.

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

Records indicated that contact arrangements had been included in placement agreements, discussed in statutory reviews and verified in ongoing correspondence. Foster carers were aware of the duty to support children and young people in maintaining and developing family contacts and friendships. Foster carers have reported various ways in which they have supported children and young people in this area including help with transport and escorting children and young people to contact venues and supporting them to have contact via emails, the telephone and letter writing. Outcomes and observations made following contact visits have been recorded and relayed back to the fostering service and the placing social worker.

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 majority of children and young people providing feedback stated that they are sometimes or often asked for their opinions by their foster carers. Many were able to give examples of how their opinions had been listened to and acted upon. Consultation through children's rights group has provided young people with a platform to air their views about fostering to the people running the service. The process of reviewing foster carers suitability to foster did not formally include seeking the opinions of the children / young people that have been placed with them; the requirement to do so has been made.

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 were examples found where children and young people have been supported to access health care services that were inline with their needs. In addition to regular health care services such as general medical practitioners, opticians, dentists and accident and emergency departments, the provision of specialist services has also been secured. The fostering service operates within a wider context of finite and sometimes limited resources and has addressed the challenge to ensure children receive the support and services they need with the appointed nursing personnel to promote health issues and advocate on children's behalf. In terms of written health records the recommendation was made to investigate means by which these can be enhanced in order to provide a comprehensive and unified history of a child's or young persons health care status.

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?**

4

A number of initiatives have been taken to ensure the educational needs of children and young people in foster care are being met. Included in these initiatives is the provision of computers for looked after children, the operation of a literacy project, and implementation of personal education plans. The service is commended on the creation of education support worker posts to ensure young people get the education services best suited to them. In certain cases school placements have been supported by the fostering service making arrangements for the provision of specialist advice and support. It has been confirmed that the educational needs of children not attending school have been promoted through home tuition and close liaison with education advisors to secure suitable school placements.

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

Ways in which the fostering service has addressed the needs of young people moving towards independence includes the provision of training for foster carers in helping prepare young people for adulthood. Links have been established and working relationships developed between the fostering service and the 16+ social work team. Placement reviews and placement agreements have included the identification of tasks and roles with regard to this aspect of service provision and support. Some of the young people visited were of an age and stage where these matters were important to them and described the support that they had been provided as satisfactory. Some of the young peoples questionnaires were very positive about this aspect of the fostering experience and felt that they were well positioned for the transition to greater independence.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There was no indication that any of the people working for the fostering service were unsuitable to do so. All of the personnel spoken to during the inspection put great emphasis on the needs of young people were child focussed and interested in the welfare of children. The employment of staff includes many elements of safe practice with checks on suitability carried out. Checks routinely conducted include enhanced criminal record bureau disclosures, verification of qualifications and the taking up of references. Recruitment practice could and should be improved upon and by verifying written references with a follow up phone call, and by ensuring that where a person has previously worked in a position whose duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended. The fostering service must also ensure that the recruitment and personnel records required by regulation are maintained for all persons working for the purposes of the fostering service including panel members and those employed on a sessional basis.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

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 is county wide with separate teams operating within defined geographical areas. There are also specialist schemes with specific functions such as emergency and assessment, the therapeutic reparenting programme, remand fostering and treatment foster care. The fostering manager maintains a good overview of all the services and delegates day to day managerial responsibilities to designated team leaders / service coordinators. Lines of accountability were clearly defined. These arrangements were functioning well.

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 fostering team, its resources and the carer group has developed and grown in line with changing needs and demands put upon the service. Additional key personnel have been employed in areas that include children's health, education, and foster carer support. Practice and efficiency in the recruitment of foster carers has been enhanced with the review and re-provision of services in this aspect of the teams work. The specialist fostering schemes are further examples of good practice in foster care. Childcare social workers, staff in management and administration, foster carers and in a small number of instances children, have commented that the workload is high. It was confirmed that staffing levels have been and are kept under review. The process of assessment and approval was in line with many areas of good practice though key stages in the placement of children with people who are not approved foster carers should be reviewed; a requirement has been made.		

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?	2
The members of staff spoken to were satisfied with day-to-day employment practice. Flexible working arrangements, childcare and a staff care package are all among the measures in working with and supporting staff. Out of hours management and support is available to carers. There was mixed feedback from a range of carers regarding their experience in using this service. This was discussed with the manager and responsible individual of the service; the recommendation is made to review this area of practice.		

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
Training is taken into account in the ongoing development of staff. Training opportunities include a broad array of in house and external courses.		

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

Lines of accountability were clear. There are systems in place for the provision of formal supervision however the frequency of such has varied and fallen below minimum standards on occasion. It was noted that with the addition of a practice supervisors to the teams practice in this area has improved. In the teams visited it was confirmed there are regular team meetings and the opportunity for all staff 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**

There are clear strategies informing day-to-day work with foster carers. There are several tiers of support encompassing practical assistance and advice, professional social work supervision and support and access to management and senior personnel. Predominantly foster carers have reported satisfaction with the level of support they had received. There were isolated incidences of discontent, which were being or had been addressed. Several foster carers were unhappy with the arrangements concerning respite care. A recommendation to review this area of practice has been made. Forums have been established that enable foster carers to be consulted with as a professional group and some excellent practice has been established in this area.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Agreements entered into by the service with foster carers should be reviewed with closer reference to the standard and regulations. Written information and guidance concerning the fostering task is provided to carers by the service including how to make complaints and representations. Foster carers have stated the fostering service is clear about the expectations placed upon them. Qualified social work staff were providing carers with regular supervision at intervals typically of between 4-6 weeks; more regular contact took place with phone calls and visits by fostering assistants. Records demonstrate that complaints or allegations were dealt with seriously and in accordance with procedural guidelines.

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

Training provision for foster carers has been thoroughly reviewed by the service. A process of consultation and evaluation of existing measures has informed the strategies developed. The training manager is commended for the comprehensive and inclusive manner in which this task has been completed however no comment is made as to the efficacy of the approach in terms of achieving training outcomes as the delivery of the programme had yet to be commenced. Foster carers have commented the arrangements for training had been fair to date good though required improvements in some areas for example the location and timing of events.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A common issue for many foster carers was the lack of information about children's backgrounds and circumstances prior to and during placements. Foster carers typically qualified this view with the assertion that the fostering service was good at providing them with the information available. The issue was recognised by the manager of the fostering service and a manager of one of the referring children and families' teams. Foster carers kept records of events and issues regarding each placement. Examples were seen how children and young people had been supported to record their life events.

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

Action was identified in how practice may be improved. The children's and the foster carers register needed developing and records required in the instance where emergency or immediate placements had been made were lacking. The fostering service maintains records relating to foster carers in terms of their assessment, approval, subsequent reviews, support and supervision. There instances where entries had not been signed and / or dated. There is a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely. Records of complaints and allegations are recorded including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken. Separate records are also kept which bring together data on allegations and on complaints.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

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:

X

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The facilities used as premises by the fostering service are many and varied. Staff remarked upon the nuances of the offices from which they worked from for example the parking arrangements and limited workspace were criticised in one area. It has been confirmed accommodation is kept under review. Measures were in place to safeguard information systems and the physical security of the buildings.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	0
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This standard was not inspected.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	0
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This standard was not inspected.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Verbal and written feedback indicates payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are being reviewed. There was an element of discontent regarding expenses though not to an extent to constitute a theme.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are written procedures and policies about the handling of the panel's functions. Discussion with the panel chair confirmed that Criminal Records Bureau checks are required for panel members and that the recruitment of panel members is to be more formalised in future. New panel members will be provided with initial training whether or not they have previous experience. There is access to medical expertise and the inspector was informed that the advice provided was of a very high quality. Evidence obtained through observation of the panel and discussion with the panel chair confirmed that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. There is close liaison between the panel chair and the panel advisor to ensure that feedback given to the assessors is put into practise. The inspector was informed that a workshop is planned to encourage dialogue between the panel and the assessors and further develop consistency of approach in assessment. The panel receives information regarding foster carer's reviews. Observation of the panel confirmed that the panel undertakes a rigorous analysis of the information under consideration. The panel monitors the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. The inspector was informed that two new panel members have recently been recruited with considerable expertise in education and child health. Written records of proceedings were seen to be of a high standard.

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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Day care including specific services for children with disabilities has been established. Carers are recruited and approved to these schemes following the same processes as full time foster carers. There is work underway to increase the number of placements that can be made in these schemes with the recruitment of additional carers across the county.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Examples were seen whereby the fostering services has assessed and approved family and friends as foster carers in a sensitive yet rigorous manner. The support and training for this group of carers are assessed and met in the same way as for other carers. The text and requirement under standard seventeen regarding the placement of children / young people with people who are not approved foster carers is especially relevant in this area.

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 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Kent County Council Fostering service were pleased to see acknowledged within the rating and the body of the report the work undertaken by the service and the recognition of the managers and staff within the service.

It would be helpful if future questionnaires to carers and children could differentiate between services to allow carers/children to be specific about particular parts of the over all LA service e.g. View on Out of Hours Service (i.e. County Out of Hours or Fostering's specialised Out of Hours Service).

Many staff, and carers have expressed the view that the inspection was very sensitively managed for all concerned, and it has been a very helpful process to be engaged in.

The service is pleased that all other points of accuracy have been addressed.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of KCC 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 TERESA VICKERS
Signature Teresa Vickers
Designation County Fostering Manager
Date 22.06.05

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of KCC 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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