



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Walsall MBC Fostering Service**

Children`s Resources

Walsall MBC, Civic Centre

Darwall Street

Walsall

WS1 1RG

22nd 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**

Walsall MBC Fostering Service

**Address**

Children`s Resources, Walsall MBC, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1RG

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

01922 658239

**Address**

Children`s Resources, Walsall MBC, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1RG

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

NA

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		22nd March 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		08:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Mr Chris Clode	073481
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Ms Chris Fuller	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	NA	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>	NA	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.		NA	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		NA	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Beate Wagner	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

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

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

**Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)**

**Part D: Provider's Response**

**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council is committed to the development of a comprehensive fostering service to children/young people and their families. The Authority aims to recruit foster carers from as broad a representation of the community as possible, in order to meet these diverse need. The main tasks of the fostering service is to provide of children/young people with family placements. This is achieved through the recruitment, assessment, training, preparation and support of a wide range of prospective foster carers. The fostering service provides a range of placements including 210 Temporary, 34 Permanent and 16 Short Break. It currently provides 310 placements for children and young people. Placements are provided by 149 approved foster carers of which 14 are African/Caribbean, 2 are Indian, 2 are Pakistani, 4 are dual heritage and the 121 are White/European and a further 6 are not listed. 149 of the LA foster carers are In Borough, 41 LA foster carers are Out Borough. Relative/Friend foster carers In Borugh are 35 and Relative/Friend foster carers Our of Borough 6. Agency foster carers In Borough are 10 and Agency foster carers Our of Borough are 73. The carers are supported by a team of four managers, 3 senior practioners,13 qualified social workers, 4 family support officers; a training officer, a marketing officer, a peer support development officer and a co-ordinator of foster carer reviews. The two fostering teams, the Recruitment and Training team and the Fostering Support and Development support team provide the whole range of placements, including emergency, temporary and long term/permanent placements for children and young people aged between 0 and 18 years. In addition, the service offers short term breaks and a matching service for disabled children. Specific arrangements have been made to meet the particular requirements of individual children, including structural alterations, aids, adaptations and personal support. Other aspects of the service are the provision of a single referral point for referrals for all types of placements of looked after children, excluding short term breaks, which go through a referral meeting process. Matching is an important aspect of the service for in house resources, external and out of borough placements. Walsall offers the opportunity to foster carers for career development and a professional fee. Training is being promoted by the organisation through the recent appointment of a training officer. A dedicated supervising social worker provides ongoing supervision and support to the foster carers to carry out the fostering task. Annual reviews of foster carers are completed.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### Inspector's Summary

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

This was the first inspection for Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service. An external consultant was appointed to assist with the planning and preparation of the inspection which was well organised. All members of the organisation including foster carers and children/young people in placement assisted fully and responded constructively.

The inspectors were met with openness and cooperation; some of the issues raised were acted upon by the management before the inspection ended. A small children's group was visited as part of the inspection process. Several of the children in placement were interviewed as part of the inspection and their views recorded. Feedback forms were received from children/young people(3 ), placing social workers( 4 ), parents( 1 ), foster carers(3 ). A foster carers support group was also visited and their comments noted in the report.

The overall findings reflected that the management of the fostering service had used the implementation of the National Minimum Standards and the forthcoming inspection as an opportunity to review services and identify areas of shortfall and plan for the development of the service to meet the standards. There were many examples of action taken during the past inspection year such as new establishment posts, restructuring of the service, new members of panel, review of policy and procedures, new filing systems, provision of IT systems, provision of foster carers handbook and proposed changes to the use of and the repairs and maintenance of the premises.

Many aspects of the services are already operating effectively. There is considerable energy and enthusiasm amongst the management group and newly appointed staff with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. All aspects of the service are being reviewed and updated as monitoring and quality assurance systems are established. The statement of purpose reflects the service provided but needs to be reviewed and updated. A foster carers handbook has been provided and foster carers expressed a wish for consultation on such projects and involvement in the review and updating of the information. There is an introductory leaflet for children/young people and work is in progress for a Children's Handbook. A significant issue is the lack of foster carers placement agreements. The LAC forms do not adequately provide the information required in Schedule 6. Changes to the panel are in progress to meet compliance with regulation. The premises are in a poor state of repair and maintenance and there are some serious health and safety issues to be addressed in respect of use of the building by staff, foster carers and service users. The findings of the inspection identified the fostering service has struggled historically with ineffective management, staff vacancies and low morale. Given this context the Inspectors note a marked improvement in the service. The report makes a number of requirements and recommendations. It is acknowledged that many of the issues raised are in working plans or in the process of being implemented. The Inspectors observed some excellent examples of foster care and good practice by staff and management with a commitment to providing suitable placements for children/young people. It is important for the fostering service to consolidate the progress made and ensure all stakeholders including children/young people, foster carers, the staff group and other relevant persons are appropriately directly and effectively involved in the preparation, planning and implementation of any action plan for the service. The overall approach appears sound and provides a good foundation for the service to develop the provision of effective, well-planned placements for children and young people.



## **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:**

This was the first inspection for Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service. The report makes a number of requirements and recommendations and acknowledged that many of the matters raised are in working plans or in the process of being implemented. It is expected that the fostering service will build on the strengths of the new infrastructure which appears sound and provides a good foundation for the service to develop the provision of effective, well-planned placements for children and young people.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

**Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)****(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Chris Clode</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Chris Fuller</u>	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Mike Gerard</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>18th November 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	4(a)	FS1	The responsible person must revise the Statement of Purpose to reflect any changes of structure and include the qualifications and experience of staff. 1.4	30/06/04
2	3(a)(b)(c)	FS1	The responsible person must provide a Children's Guide which includes the following; a summary of what the Service sets out to do, information for the child on how to access independent advocacy, how to complain and the contact details for CSCI. 1.5	30/06/04
3	3(a)(b)(c)	FS1	The responsible person must ensure the Guide is available in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.1.5	30/06/04
4	Schedule 7.9	FS4	The responsible person must provide a system for the management and monitoring of medication, first aid and medical treatment in foster homes. 4.1,	31/07/04
5	Schedule 8, 43.9	FS4	The responsible person must ensure all Notifications specify if they are from the Fostering Service and outcomes of the matter notified must also be recorded and sent on to CSCI. 4.1	31/05/04
6	Schedule 8, 43	FS4	The responsible person must ensure the Child Care Manual includes the procedure for Notifications and staff and carers made aware of it. 4.4	31/05/04

7	21(4)(a)	FS7	The responsible person must provide joint training on understanding trans-racial placements involving both Fostering Service workers and childcare social workers 7.2	30/09/04
8	19	FS7	The responsible person must ensure there is an allocated social worker to work cooperatively with the foster carer to progress a child's care plan. 7.3	30/06/04
9	21(4)(a)	FS7	The responsible person must provide training for staff and foster carers in respect of the different cultural needs of Black and Asian children. 7.4	30/09/04
10	Schedule 6 34(3)	FS8	The responsible person must provide and implement use of a foster placement agreement. 8.4,	31/05/04
11	34	FS8	The responsible person ensures formal risk assessments must be made in respect of other children already living in the intended placement home and no placement should be made of a child without prior informing of the social worker responsible for any child already placed there. 8.3	immediate
12	33	FS8	The responsible person must ensure that information on LAC forms provide sufficient information to be satisfied a placement with the particular foster parent is the most suitable placement having regard to all circumstances. 8.3	immediate
13	Schedule 6 34(3)	FS8	The responsible person must ensure that foster placement agreements identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer. 8.4	31/05/04
14	17	FS9	The responsible person must ensure foster carers complete child protection training. 9.2	30/09/04
15	11,12,18	FS9	The responsible person must provide policy and procedures in respect of complaints and allegations against foster carers. 9.5	30/06/04
16	12	FS9	The responsible person must ensure that there is appropriate sharing and/or recorded restrictions of sharing of information in line with the care plan. 9.7	immediate

17	14	FS10	The responsible person must ensure risk assessments have been carried out in relation to contact. 10.6	immediate
18	14	FS10	The responsible person must ensure contact arrangements are clearly outlined in the foster placement agreement. 10.7	immediate
19	15	FS12	The responsible person must ensure children's health information/plans is kept on link worker files. 12.3	31/05/04
20	16	FS13	The responsible person must ensure the Statutory Assessment Panel which decides on access to the statement system has representation from Social services to ensure that the particular needs of LAC are fully understood and taken into account. 13.1	31/07/04
21	16	FS13	The responsible person must ensure information regarding educational needs of children and young people is kept on the link workers files. 13.2	31/05/04
22	16	FS13	The responsible person must establish a formal process for the foster carer to contribute to the assessment of the child's educational needs and progress for the planning and review process. 13.3	31/07/04
23	Schedule 6 34(3)	FS13	The responsible person must ensure the foster carer's role in line with the care plan is clearly laid out in the foster placement agreement. 13.4	31/05/04
24	Schedule 6 34(3)	FS13	The responsible person must ensure the finance for the provision of classroom support for school returner's is stated in the foster placement agreement. 13.8	31/05/04
25	20	FS15	The responsible person must ensure telephone reference enquiries are made and recorded as well as obtaining written references. 15.3	Immediate
26	20	FS15	The responsible person of the fostering service must ensure that all staff have satisfactory checks completed; this includes agency staff, sessional staff, temporary staff and any other person who in the course of their duties has regular contact with children placed by the fostering services. 15.3	immediate

27	20	FS15	The responsible person must ensure appropriate satisfactory checks are completed and / or arrangements made for use of taxi services and escorts. 15.3	Immediate
28	20	FS15	The responsible person must ensure all checks are completed satisfactory including health authority check. 15.4	Immediate
29	Schedule 1.1	FS15	The responsible person must ensure all staff must have a photo and proof of identity on their files. 15.4	Immediate
30	19	FS16	The responsible person must ensure that the functions of staff are reviewed and a workload management system is implemented. 16.5	30/06/04
31	40	FS16	The responsible person must ensure that foster carer reviews are completed at least each twelvemonth period or as required. 16.6	31/10/04
32	40.4 & 40.5 16	FS16	The responsible person must ensure that the Checklist & Guidance, Private & Voluntary Placements needs to ensure that all parts of Regulation 40 are covered, including seeing the last Commission Inspection Report on the agency. 16.6 & 24.3	31/05/04
33	19	FS17	The responsible person must ensure that adequate staffing levels within the fostering service team are maintained. 17.3	31/05/04
34	19	FS17	The responsible person must ensure that the high number of external and often geographically distant placements is addressed. 17.5	30/09/04
35	19	FS17	The responsible person must ensure that the process of recruitment and assessment had a clearly delineated procedure with timescales.17.6	31/07/04
36	19	FS19	The responsible person must ensure that there is a good quality training programme available to staff. 19.1	30/09/04
37	17	FS19	The responsible person must ensure that there is timely access to the mandatory pre approval course. 19.3	30/09/04

38	17	FS19	The responsible person must ensure that joint foster carer/social worker training is provided on a regular basis. 19.7	30/09/04
39	19	FS19	The responsible person must ensure that all staff have an annual appraisal booked by the end of May 2004. 19.3	31/05/04
40	17	FS21	The responsible person must ensure that fostering reviews are annual. 21.5	31/10/04
41	28.5b	FS22	The responsible person must ensure that all Foster Care Agreements are signed by the Local Authority Representative. 22.2	31/05/04
42	Schedule 5	FS22	The responsible person must ensure that two Foster Care Agreements under the 1991 Regulations must be updated. 22.2	31/05/04
43	44(3)(e)	FS22	The responsible person must ensure that the Foster Carers' handbook contains details of insurance. 22.5	31/07/04
44	18 & 29	FS22	The responsible person must ensure that the information about the procedures to deal with investigations into allegations is made known to foster care staff, carers and children and young people and includes the provision of independent support to the foster carer(s) during an investigation. 22.9	31/07/04
45	19	FS23	The responsible person must ensure that Training in physical intervention is provided to foster carers. 23.1	30/09/04
46	17	FS23	The responsible person must ensure that where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both successfully complete all training. 23.4	30/09/04
47	22	FS24	The responsible person must ensure that a preliminary guide is provided to the contents of Service files. 24.1	31/05/04
48	22	FS24	The responsible person must ensure that the many deficits from LAC information on the files is addressed. 24.1	31/05/04
49	22	FS24	The responsible person must ensure that case records are kept up to date and files are well ordered held in a standard system. 24.2	31/05/04



50	22	FS24	The responsible person must ensure that Carers return all information to the fostering service on children no longer placed with them. 24.8	31/05/04
51	22	FS25	The responsible person must ensure that records held by the fostering service are suitable for access by children and foster carers, make additions and comments and record personal statements, including dissent. 25.12	31/07/04
52	31.2a	FS25	The responsible person must ensure that the foster carer register contains all significant information. 25.1	immediate
53	Schedule 2.1 22	FS25	The responsible person must ensure that the foster child register holds addresses of previous and subsequent placements. 25.1	immediate
54	23	FS26	The responsible person must ensure that there are facilities to meet the needs of children and carers visiting the premises. 26.1	30/09/04
55		FS26	<p>The responsible person must ensure that hazards are assessed and remedial action taken in respect of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asbestos ceiling panels throughout the building which have been assessed as safe as long as they are not moved or damaged</li> <li>• Guttering broken.</li> <li>• Window frames broken and rotten.</li> <li>• Roof tiles broken and rotten.</li> </ul> <p>26.1</p>	31/10/04

56		FS26	<p>The responsible person must ensure that the following items receive attention:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide new clear fire notices.</li> <li>2. Repair flat roof (permanence team room) and water damage to internal walls and ceilings.</li> <li>3. Remove and repair damp mildewed patches on the interior walls of the short breaks staff room.</li> <li>4. Provide adequate heating in all rooms. Provide suitable lighting eg desk lamps.</li> <li>5. Assess and repair cracked wall plaster in hallways and stairwell.</li> <li>6. Replace the floor surfaces in the toilets and kitchen with sealed washable floor covering.</li> <li>7. Replace the sinks with worn enamel or metal surfaces.</li> <li>8. Provide bin lids in kitchen and toilets.</li> <li>9. Monitor temperatures in fridges. One fridge requires regular maintenance and possible replacement.</li> <li>10. Replace top corridor carpet.</li> <li>11. Replace soiled light pulls in toilets and any other areas.</li> <li>12. Provide adequate cleaning materials such as two mops; one for kitchen one for toilets.</li> <li>13. Remove redundant furniture, damaged filing cabinets and broken furniture i.e. desks, planks of wood, broken guttering.</li> <li>14. Make safe uneven slabs on walkways and in courtyard.</li> <li>15. Provide external lighting. 26.1</li> </ol>	31/05/04
57		FS26	<p>The responsible person must ensure that the main reception is welcoming with literature relating to the fostering service posted on notice boards or available in leaflet format. The entrance to the Fostering Service must be identified. 26.2</p>	31/07/04

		FS26	<p>The responsible person must ensure that;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a process for monitoring the secure storage of records in foster carers homes.</li> <li>2. The appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems are to be established.</li> <li>3. The building has a comprehensive security system.</li> </ol> <p>The entrance/reception to the Fostering Service must be made safe. 26.3</p>	31/07/04
58	26 2 (a)	FS30	<p>The responsible person must ensure that Fostering panels receive management information about the outcome of foster carer's annual reviews and periodically monitor their effectiveness. 30.6</p>	31/07/04
59	26 (2) (a) & 29 (7) (a)&(b)	FS30	<p>The responsible person must ensure that the panel fulfils the quality assurance function as stated in the standard. 30.5</p>	30/09/04
60	26 (2) (a) & 29 (7) (a)&(b)	FS30	<p>The responsible person must ensure that the panel monitors the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. 30.7</p>	30/09/04
61	17	FS32	<p>The responsible person must ensure that policies, procedures and practice in the fostering service addresses and recognises the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friend carers. 32.1</p>	31/07/04
62	17	FS32	<p>The responsible person must ensure that support or training provided to family and friend carers. 32.3</p>	30/09/04
63	17	FS32FS32	<p>The responsible person must ensure that annual reviews are completed for Family and Friends carers and their needs are met and assessed in the same way as other carers. 32.3</p>	31/10/04

### 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	FS6	Provide clarification of the fostering service policy and procedure and practice in information to foster carers of the impact of the standard, for "no room sharing" for a child in placement, on individual approval category. 6.4
2	FS8	Send the draft of a new Foster Placement Agreement to CSCI prior to finalisation. 8.4
3	FS11	Information about the Black Country Children's Rights services of their availability and access to their services should be given to carers and children. 11.1
4	FS12	Foster carers should maintain separate health records for each child placed. 12.8
5	FS14	It is recommended that there should be a period of joint work where the involvement of both the childcare social worker and the Leaving Care worker continues to ensure that carers understand the changing requirements of supporting the placed child towards adulthood. 14.2
6	FS14	It is recommended that training is provided in respect of preparing young people for independence. 14.3
7	FS14	It is recommended that the information system of the Transition & Leaving Care team should have an information system on education needs that dovetails with that of the Education Support team, so that carers can continue to support placed children's educational needs. 14.4
8	FS14	The cancellation and postponement of reviews should be monitored and appropriate action to ensure timely conduct of this process. 14.5
9	FS15	There should be evidence of clearance on files other than Walsall's own documentation. 15.4
10	FS16	The maximum frequency between supervisions should be included in section 4 ("Frequency/Duration") of the supervision policy. 16.8
11	FS18	The Out of hours management and support services are formalised as part of the infrastructure and equable with other parts of the service.18.3

12	FS18	The following aspects of service provision in respect of support to foster carers should be reviewed such as; family and friends as carers, independent support and fee payments during periods of investigation due to allegations or complaints and information and open decision making about additional payments e.g. holidays, home extensions etc. 18.4
13	FS26	Consideration should be given to the provision of a staff rest room ground floor kitchen, a staff changing area and storage for personal items. 26.4 & 18.5
14	FS18	The information regarding the public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers including those covering costs arising as a result of child abuse claims against any staff or carers should be made available to staff and carers. 18.6
15	FS19	The training strategy proposed by the commissioned training consultant should be provided for foster carers, fostering service staff and child's social workers. 19.2
16	FS19	Review three different inductions offered; a corporate one, one for the Department and one for the Fostering Service with a view to rationalising this situation. 19.2
17	FS20	Supervision notes from the previous supervision should be available at the next one. 20.3
18	FS21	A copy of the National Minimum Standards should be made available to all foster carers. 21.2
19	FS21	Information on both the Fostering Network and the new Walsall Association of Carers is included in induction information. 21.2
20	FS21	Review the support offered through respite provision to foster carers. 21.2
21	FS22	Foster Care Agreements should be updated to meet the 2002 Regulations as carers are promoted to new Levels with the new expectations and responsibilities that go with that. 22.4
22	FS22	<p>Review and provide clear information and guidance be provided for Foster Carers in respect of payments made as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discretionary and Holiday payments.</li> <li>• Criteria of eligibility for Loft Conversions, garage conversions and extensions.</li> <li>• Criteria of eligibility for provision of suitable transport eg cars, people carriers.</li> <li>• A complete breakdown of pocket money for children including the reward element.</li> <li>• Retainer fees.</li> </ul> <p>Fee for membership of fostering network should be paid for all carers. 22.7</p>

23	FS26	Recommend consultation with the Fire Officer and Environmental Health Officer. 26.1
24	FS26	Remove old fire zone panels. Consult the fire officer re: use of radiant heat in the upstairs kitchen: baby belling and toaster. 26.1
25	FS26	First Aid Box in the kitchen must be replaced with an unsoiled unit stored in an identifiable area. 26.1
26	FS26	Provide alternative storage to the kitchen for the Hoover. 26.1
27	FS26	Provide suitable liquid soap in toilets and kitchen. 26.1
28	FS26	Consult Health and safety officer regarding space available in the administration office and Support and Development team room (of particular importance with new IT equipment and trailing electrical wires. 26.1
29	FS26	Provide a programme for the general maintenance and upkeep of the building including the cleaning of windows removal of graffiti, removal of broken glass, fallen guttering and general debris and rubbish. 26.1
30	FS29	Consideration should be given to the involvement of finance staff in the induction training of carers. 29.2
31	FS31	The issues of service development should be explored. 31.1
32	FS31	It is recommended that carers are provided with information regarding insurance cover provided in respect of the administration of invasive medication. 31.1 & 6.7

\* 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	15.25
Survey of placing authorities	YES
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	YES
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	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	22/03/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	107

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose must reflect any changes of structure and include the qualifications and experience of staff. 1.4.

There is a Draft Children's Guide and a Need to Know pack of various information for children, but the Guide must include a summary of what the Service sets out to do and include information for the child on how to access independent advocacy. 1.5

Although there is some use of symbols on some of the pack information, the Guide should be available in a format that assists children with disabilities to access its information. 1.5

## 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
<p>There is a management Development Programme in the Training Programme and those managers not yet trained in management are scheduled to receive it, both through NVQ4 and corporately. The Service has been strengthened by the recruitment of a manager from the independent sector.</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>The managers meet the criteria of suitability. All managers were recruited to the service after the 2002 Regulations came into force. The appropriate systems for references and checks are in place.</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?

2

Although a Senior Practitioner has commenced some information systems and this is supported by the information systems that are being developed by the Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer and the recently appointed Service Development Officer, there are still gaps in the information routinely provided to managers for their monitoring of the Service. There must be a system in place for the management monitoring of medication, first aid and medical treatment in foster homes. 4.1

Seven Notifications had been made to NCSC/CSCI, but a number could not be cross referenced with Notifications received. All Notifications must specify if they are from the Fostering Service and outcomes of the matter notified must also be recorded and sent on to NCSC. 4.1

There was no policy on Notifications to CSCI in either of the Child Care policy Manuals seen and both managers and foster carers were either uncertain or ignorant of the procedure, though there was said to be one in place; the Child Care Manual must include the procedure for Notifications and staff and carers made aware of it. 4.4

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

27

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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.

8

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

1

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.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

6

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

11

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

There are clear roles and responsibilities for each manager and the delegations of responsibilities are clearly understood by both managers and staff.

## 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?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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The feedback provided by the children and young people, placing social workers, parents, records and through direct observation is that the overall standard of foster carers' homes environment is of good quality. The assessments include a risk assessment of the home environment and any shortfalls to be addressed. The quality of the foster homes seen by Inspectors met Standards of space comfort and safety.

Foster carers expressed concern in feedback of the impact of the standard for "no room sharing" for a child in placement on individual approval category. It is recommended that clarification is provided for foster carers of the fostering service policy and procedure. 6.4

In general health and safety issues had been addressed with age and stage of development and disability issues being met with appropriate equipment and furnishings. Some foster carers did experience difficulties in paying for items first and waiting for reimbursement.

Foster carers of children with disabilities stated preparation and training for the administration of invasive medication is provided and supervised by the Health authority in partnership with the fostering service.

Carers were aware of the Commission Inspectors and had some understanding of our role. The foster carers handbook explains that the home may be visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.

### 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?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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The records were seen of placing authority child's social workers, fostering service workers, panel submissions and feedback from foster carers and children in placement.

The Service and carers are dependent for written information on LAC documents and often the entries in these were either unclear or not filled in on diversity and identity issues; in one case a child had been given three different countries of origin on her files and, being Kenyan and her carers Afro-Caribbean; it was assumed that there were no issues of trans-racial placement (although the Fostering Reviewing Officer recorded it as trans-racial), despite the insistence of the carers that this needed to be taken into account. Joint training on understanding trans-racial placements must take place involving both Fostering Service workers and childcare social workers. 7.2

Feedback from foster carers, children's social workers and children's records show that there have been considerable periods of time when children do not have an allocated social worker and the foster carer struggles to progress a child's care plan. 7.3

There were examples where the families and/or foster carers felt the different cultural needs of Black and Asian children had not been fully understood or taken into consideration. 7.4

There were some examples of adaptations to a carer's home to provide for short breaks for several children with disability. The standard of work, equipment and furnishings were all of high standard providing a good quality placement.

Several carers were observed to fully support the children and young people placed with them in pursuing particular interests hobbies and activities.

### 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
<p>Foster carer files, children's files and children's social worker files were seen. Records held by foster carers were seen. The records seen did not hold a foster placement agreement. Following the 2002 Fostering Regulations, the use of the LAC Placement Plan document now no longer meets the requirements of the Foster Placement Agreement and a specific document to meet the Regulations is needed. 8.4</p>		
<p>The post/pre Placement Meeting form might provide a basis for this, but needs to be used for all placements; it is recommended that the draft of a new Foster Placement Agreement be sent to CSCI prior to finalisation. 8.4</p>		
<p>Information and feedback reflect a lack of formal risk assessment of a proposed new placement in relation to children already in placement. Also on some occasions the social worker for the child currently in placement is not consulted or informed of the proposed placement. The recording of inappropriate placements has commenced. Formal risk assessments must be made in respect of other children already living in the intended placement home and no placement should be made of a child without prior informing of the social worker responsible for any child already placed there. 8.3</p>		
<p>The organisational structure is such that all placements are made through one referral point to ensure that the appropriate service is accessed. Once the fostering service is identified a suitable match is sought in terms of category of approval of foster carer and the child's needs. The information used for the matching process is based on the LAC forms provided by the child's social worker. It was found that this information was sometimes lacking in details. 8.3</p>		
<p>Feedback from Foster carers indicated that at times inappropriate placements are made and goalposts change e.g. variations and exemptions to meet service needs for a placement rather than the matching criteria. It is recommended that foster placement agreements</p>		

identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer. 8.4

**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 officer provided a programme of joint ACPC training opportunities that have been organised for 2004/2005. Training for foster carers has been limited during the previous inspection year. It was found that few foster carers had completed child protection training other than a module during the pre approval training. Delays in child protection training and lack of sufficient notice given to carers has led to some of them not being child protection trained. It is hoped that this will be addressed through the appointment of the new Training Co-ordinator and the new ACPC programme of training. 9.2

Notification of NCSC/CSCI is included in the draft procedure on Allegations of Child Abuse against Foster Carers. Feedback from foster carers and observations at Fostering panel indicated that the current practice in respect of dealing with complaints and allegations in respect of the service provided by foster carers is unsatisfactory. There are no clear timescales, foster carers feel unsupported, link workers are expected to fulfil a dual role, and placement payments cease upon suspension regardless of the outcome or cause for delay in matters being dealt with. It was the perception of some foster carers that the independent support staff offered was also an employee of the provider. The independent support worker was undertaking consultancy work for another team on the same site. There was no evidence of lessons learnt and recommendations for action for the fostering service and or others from the findings of complaints and allegations. There were no policy and procedures available regarding "Allegations against foster carers" as they were under review. 9.5

The bullying procedure included bullying outside the foster home. In the questionnaires returned none of the children identified that they were experiencing being bullied. There was no information available on the percentage of children who do not report bullying (see below).

It was found that the address of one foster carer had been disclosed to the placed child's parents, against the arrangements in the care plan. 9.7

**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?**

2

While there was evidence from files and interviewing children and carers that much attention was paid to contact with placed children's families, there was often a lack of information or evidence of risk assessments having been carried out in relation to contact. 10.6 However, it was good to see on one file that the Service refused to agree to the carer's home as venue for contact, because no risk assessment had been yet completed.

Evidence in records indicated that the fostering service had failed to provide adequate supervision and support to a foster care family where contact issues were complex and demanding. Once again clarity of the contact arrangements in the foster placement agreement would aid this process. 10.7

There were examples of foster carers commitment to supporting contact arrangements. A number have confidential placements and escort and transport arrangements are arranged by the child's 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

While there was feedback in the returned questionnaires that children were being consulted by carers and the Service; it was also stated that frequent changes in childcare social workers had caused communication breakdowns.

Children's views are sought at times of reviews. The feedback questionnaires and interviews with children and young people indicate that they are consulted and listened to by the foster carers. Young people said that they sometimes were consulted by the children's social workers and that they are not consulted about the how the fostering service could be made better. Most young people stated they knew how to make a complaint but had not received a children's handbook. The children's handbook is in production.

Although a number of carers did indicate that they knew about the Black Country Children's Rights services, feedback for BCCR itself indicated that more information on their availability and access to their services should be given to carers and children. It is recommended that information about the Black Country Children's Rights services of their availability and access to their services should be given to carers and children. 11.1



**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?**

2

There has been a Promoting Health for LAC project and this has resulted in the appointment of a Health Coordinator and a nurse to link to mainstream Trusts.

It was found that some delegated medical authorisations were not signed on the LAC forms. Other medical/health information absent from files such as children's health information/plans were not found on link worker files. 12.3

Foster carers reported whilst they did not have copies of health plans they did have information regarding health in the LAC forms and held the Red book for children. Their own records demonstrated that they accessed health services appropriately. In general foster carers kept records of health care in a diary which could present problems where there are multiple placements in terms of providing information at times of care planning and reviews or at the end of placements. It is recommended that foster carers maintain separate records for each child placed. 12.8

There were some excellent examples of total commitment to supporting and promoting the health of a child in placement particularly for those using the short break scheme and permanent placements for children with disabilities.

**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?**

2

The Statutory Assessment Panel which decides on access to the statement system does not have a representative from Social services to ensure that the particular needs of LAC are fully understood and taken into account. 13.1

Although there were PEP's and PEP Handbooks on carers' files, there was often no information on the child's educational needs within the Service's own files. Information regarding educational needs of children and young people was not found in the link workers files. As with the health plans the absence of this information will make it difficult for the link worker to support, advise and guide the foster carer. 13.2

Foster carers generally fulfil the role of contact with the school the placed child attends. A complex transitional leaving care document was sent directly through to a foster carer with no explanation or detail of their expected contribution. The foster carer's role in line with the care plan should be clearly laid out in the foster placement agreement. 13.4

Support is provided through the Education Support Team for children and young people excluded from school with support and transport etc provided. The Education Support LAC has a developed information system on exclusions and referrals for assessment of LAC.

There were some positive examples of children and young peoples' achievements in terms

of the “Achieving Excellence” Scheme. Young people made reference to the support and encouragement given by foster carers with homework and other school issues.

There is no budget to provide finance for classroom support for school returner’s. This should be clarified in the foster placement agreement. 13.8

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

Feedback received indicated that young people leaving care had limited support through the child’s social worker having experienced periods with no allocated worker. The positive support came from staff in the leaving care team. It is recommended that there should be a period of joint work where the involvement of both the childcare social worker and the Leaving Care worker continues to ensure that carers understand the changing requirements of supporting the placed child towards adulthood. 14.2

On one visit to a carer and young person, the Inspector was shown a copy of a very large DoH pack on leaving care that had been sent though the post without even a covering letter from the worker, whom neither carer nor child had met; this was unsupportive and caused confusion and some upset for the child. Whilst there was evidence of foster carers providing support, guidance and independence living skills there was little or no written evidence. It is recommended that training is provided in respect of preparing young people for independence. 14.3

Foster carers had limited understanding and information of the Pathway Plan and their role in respect of this. It is recommended that the information system of the Transition & Leaving Care team should have an information system on education needs that dovetails with that of the Education Support team, so that carers can continue to support placed children’s educational needs. 14.4

Young people are consulted at the time of reviews regarding their plan. Feedback indicated that historically reviews have been cancelled and postponed due to absence / unavailability of child’s social worker or fostering service worker and consequently plans and decision making is delayed. It is recommended that the cancellation and postponement of reviews is monitored and appropriate action to timely conduct of this process. 14.5

## 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?
<p>A sample of staff files were inspected both at the fostering service and in the Human Resource Section of the Social Services in the Civic Centre. One managers' file was not available to be inspected. Staff interviews provided information of previous experience and the recruitment process. The Social Service Department have a Human Resources Section based in the Civic Centre. This is led by the Principal Staffing Officer ensuring the procedures follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people.</p> <p>There is a written recruitment and selection procedure for appointing staff. The current system provides for a duplicate or satellite staff file to be held at the fostering service whilst the main staff recruitment file is held in the civic centre. The manager of the fostering service is responsible to view and sign that all checks have been received and are satisfactory prior to appointment. The weakness in this system is the process and recording of information.</p> <p>There is a system to monitor the progress and timescales of applications, references and appointment. Where there are delays or matters outstanding, there does not appear to be action taken or clarity of who should take action. Only one file seen held a record of the interview, presentation and decision making process. There was no evidence of telephone enquiries being made as well as obtaining written references other than on one file. 15.3</p> <p>There were no clear arrangements for the agency / sessional staff employed. It was stated that it is the responsibility of the manager of the service to ensure the staff have satisfactory checks completed. Managers rely on confirmation from Agency providers that checks are satisfactory. 15.3</p> <p>Foster carers raised concerns in feedback regarding taxi arrangements for transport e.g. no continuity, no escort, don't see child into school, enquiry whether appropriate checks have been made. 15.3</p> <p>All those working for the fostering service are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability. One foster carer had been approved and taken placement for two years without a completed health authority check. 15.4</p> <p>There was evidence on some files that the POCALS list is checked. CRB checks are</p>	2

completed for all new members of staff and these are renewed every three years. Once CRB clearance has been received a purple record sheet is provided for the duplicate file. The original is held confidential and secure for six months and then destroyed. Evidence of identity is requested at the time of interview and upon completion of the CRB form. All staff must have a photo and proof of identity on their files.15.4  
It is recommended that there should be evidence of clearance on files other than Walsall's own documentation. 15.4

Applications include details of a history of employment and explanation of any gaps. Most files held copies of qualification certificates. Walsall fostering service has recruited workers with childcare knowledge and experience. Some have previous fostering experience either as foster carers or with another service. Where this is not the case particular support and training is provided.

<b>Total number of staff of the agency:</b>	27	<b>Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	0
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**Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
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There is a clear structure with the roles and tasks clearly differentiated between the teams in the Service. Delegations of duties and responsibilities are understood.

There are no functioning workload management systems in place. The management state that workloads are discussed and monitored in supervision. Some staff appear to carry considerable workloads and cover a wide range of duties with varying levels of responsibility beyond their designated area of work. 16.5

Some foster carer reviews have been completed beyond the twelvemonth period. 16.6

The Checklist & Guidance, Private & Voluntary Placements needs to ensure that all parts of Regulation 40 are covered, including seeing the last Commission Inspection Report on the agency. 16.6 & 24.3 Inspectors were informed a draft new document was underway.

The majority of staff receive regular monthly supervision however there are some instances of 3 / 4 monthly sessions. Staff supervision should be standardised and it is recommended that the maximum frequency between supervisions should be included in section 4 ("Frequency/Duration") of the supervision policy. 16.8

**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**

A sample of fostering service staff, foster carers and children in placement were interviewed and records were seen.

Walsall fostering service has an appropriate establishment of qualified and unqualified staff though it does carry some vacancies at the present time. It recruits staff and foster carers from a variety of backgrounds and experience. The shortfall in staffing, especially in one team, is being dealt with using appropriate contingency plans. There is a historical shortfall in staffing levels within the fostering service management and team. The service has been successful in appointing to all three management posts, a number of new strategic posts and senior practitioners. Advertising and recruitment of staff is proving difficult with posts held back for general advertisements. However improvements in staff support and training should improve retention of staff. There remains a shortfall in staffing with continued reliance on some agency workers. 17.3

Staff training has been limited in the previous inspection year due to the secondment of the head of training and the vacant Child Care training officer post. Both posts are due to be filled and a programme of training for staff established. New staff are supported to continue external training commitments. Whilst there is no formal workload management system this issue is discussed and monitored through regular supervision. Clear workloads are managed by separate teams with designated duties and responsibilities. Duty and family finding are a common responsibility for staff across the teams. Family finding is a weak area of service with disparate operational strategy.

The fostering service has been proactive in sourcing external independent consultants to develop a commissioning strategy. The demographics of the area and the looked after children population were mapped identifying target need as being for placements for sibling groups of 2/3, short term care, South Asian children's placements and boys 8yrs +. 17.5. The recent appointment to a specialist post of Marketing Officer for recruitment of carers, needs to address the high number of external and often geographically distant placements 17.5

The new Marketing Officer has experienced some difficulty in mapping out the service resources, needs and shortfalls due to the limitations of information available and accessibility of existing IT systems. A marketing and recruitment strategy has been developed following a period of networking and consultation. Management organised consultation days with foster carers and identified pressure points to be addressed as follows: More foster carers, Sibling group placements, Independent foster care placements and training coordinator post for post approval training and NVQ's. As part of the quality assurance and monitoring of the service children placed with foster carers are asked for their comments on foster carers parenting abilities. There has already been a positive response to an advertising campaign. In order respond proactively and retain initial interest, it is proposed to establish a customer care officers post in the recruitment assessment team in line with a similar post in the initial response team.

Assessments are completed on British Association of Adoption and Fostering assessment form (Form F) and includes competency based work. It is recognised there can be significant delays in the start of assessments as this is done in conjunction with training. The

service aims to provide training programmes four times a year. The training course has twelve modules both partners (of couples) are expected to attend all sessions.

The feedback from foster carers identified that it would be helpful if the process of recruitment and assessment had a clearly delineated procedure with timescales. This may well be part of the new marketing strategy and would focus the resources in the recruitment assessment team. 17.6

**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

Management systems for staff and foster carer supervision, appraisal and support are improving, the latter being supported by the appointment last year of the Independent Reviewing Officer.

The out of hours Fostering duty provision is too heavily dependent on one member of staff's input. This is much valued by foster carers who find the worker has a greater understanding of the circumstances than the staff of the emergency duty team. Management state there is a working party looking at this aspect of service provision. It is recommended that the Out of hours management and support services are formalised as part of the infrastructure and equable with other parts of the service. 18.3

Feedback from Foster carers expressed a range of experiences in respect of supervision, appraisal and support. In general comments were very positive particularly in respect of short term breaks scheme. It is recommended the following aspects of service provision in respect of support to foster carers are reviewed such as; family and friends as carers, independent support and fee payments during periods of investigation due to allegations or complaints and information and open decision making about additional payments eg holidays, home extensions etc. 18.4

It is recommended that consideration be given to the provision of a staff rest room and suitable facilities for making light refreshments. 18.5

It is recommended the information regarding the public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers including those covering costs arising as a result of child abuse claims against any staff or carers should be made available to staff and carers. 18.6

The Whistleblowing procedure meets the requirements of the Public Interest disclosure Act; staff said that whereas in the past there had been a culture where criticisms made in good faith were discouraged, they were positive about the present management.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Interview with new training officer for carers, interviews with staff and carers and staff training programmes information. The fostering service staff access training through the Social Services training section. Staff training has been fragmentary in the previous inspection year due to the secondment of the Head of training and the Child Care training officer post vacant since December 2003. Both posts are due to be filled and a programme of training for staff established. There were particular problems with the provision of qualified NVQ Assessors to progress the assessments of staff. New staff are supported to continue external training commitments. During the previous inspection year there has been limited training opportunities for staff. 19.1

A new Training Coordinator for foster carers had been appointed and was mapping out provision and shortfalls and putting together a training programme. The fostering service has appointed a training officer. Training for foster carers has been haphazard dependant upon the individual link worker providing information. Training opportunities have been available through the following: ACPC, Family Centres, Early Years training programmes, Educational development centre and the Black and Asian Carers Conference.

The fostering service Training Coordinator explained there is a restructuring of the training provision with the occupational development unit and the training centre staff due to merge to provide one team. A new base will be set up at the NVQ Centre. It is recommended that the proposed training strategy is implemented. The main training strategy for staff is due to be produced from July 2004. 19.2

New members of staff had received the fostering service induction commencing within 7 days of their employment but were still awaiting the social service induction course and the corporate induction course. Fostering Service staff are offered three different inductions, a corporate one, one for the Department and one for the Fostering Service. It is recommended that this is reviewed with a view to rationalising this situation. 19.2

“Choosing to care” – is a mandatory pre approval course provided by the fostering service staff and involving some foster carers. Due staffing issues there can be problems in providing a sufficient number of courses to prevent delays in assessments and loss of prospective foster carers. 19.3

No joint foster carer/social worker training currently takes place and although some is planned during 2004-5 in the ACPC programme, none is yet planned in the Service’s own programme. 19.7

The new training officer has concentrated on mapping a matrix of service needs and provision. The officer demonstrated a clear understanding of the needs of the service, resources available and an ability for networking and creative planning. A joint bid has been made with three other Local Authorities for monies to fund 10 candidates for NVQ’s. There is a limited budget of £8.000 for the fostering service training strategy and £6.000 to develop NVQ’s. The service must develop training programmes that reflect the policies of the fostering service and provide joint training opportunities.

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Staff clearly felt more supported and clear about accountability and roles than in the past. In addition to team, joint service and management meetings, supervision recording on files has improved since 2002. In some cases, supervision notes are being jointly signed and dated by both supervisor and supervisee, a good practice. For the majority of staff interviewed and records seen supervision is regular and booked in advance.</p> <p>It is recommended that notes from the previous supervision should be available at the next one. 20.3</p> <p>The process for staff appraisals is in a transition period with many staff appraisals outstanding. There are new targets set for all staff to have an appraisal booked by the end of May 2004. 19.3</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>Discussion and feedback from Foster carers indicated that few had seen a copy of the National Minimum Standards though many were aware of them. It is recommended that copy of the National Minimum Standards should be made available to all foster carers. 21.2</p> <p>Information on both the Fostering Network and the new Walsall Association of Carers is included in induction information and the Foster Carers Handbook. 21.2</p> <p>The fostering service does offer respite to all foster carers; this is determined by the needs of the child in placement. Feedback from foster carers indicated they perceive that the respite service provides a limited service in terms of the availability of respite care to foster carers. Also that there seems to be a different expectation of permanent foster carers/ respite generally not offered or available or is positively discouraged. It is recommended that this aspect of service should be reviewed. 21.2</p> <p>In feedback from Foster carers they requested that they should be given sufficient time to read review papers and make comment before being asked to sign them. Although there is an Independent Reviewing Officer now in post, foster carer reviews have not yet reached annual frequency. 21.5. The aim is that all reviews of resource carers and 50% of kinship carers will be complete by October 2004.</p> <p>This Officer also conducts exit interviews with carers, takes non-contentious reviews to the Review and Skills Level Board, while significant changes following reviews are taken to the Fostering Panel.</p>		



**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**

All the Foster Care Agreements must be signed by the Local Authority Representative. 22.2

Two Foster Care Agreements were ones under the 1991 Regulations and must be updated. 22.2

The updated Foster Care Agreements meet the 2002 Regulations, but it is recommended that they are updated as carers are promoted to new Levels with the new expectations and responsibilities that go with that. 22.4

Foster Carers' expressed disappointment at the lack of involvement and restrictive timescales for meaningful consultation in the production of the foster carer's handbook. The Foster Carers' handbook must contain details of insurance. 22.5

Foster Carers raised several issues in feedback and interviews regarding apparent inequalities in payments made as follows:

- There should be a clearly stated criteria for the decision making around Discretionary and Holiday payments. The system seems unfair and dependent upon the link worker.
- Clarity requested regarding the criteria of eligibility for Loft Conversions, garage conversions and extensions.
- Clarity requested regarding the criteria of eligibility for provision of suitable transport eg cars, people carriers.
- Provide a complete breakdown of pocket money for children including the reward element.
- Retainer fees.
- Fee for membership of fostering network should be paid for all carers.

It is recommended that these issues be reviewed and clear information and guidance be provided for Foster Carers. 22.7

Generally there are good systems of communication between the fostering service social worker and foster carers however this appears to breakdown with a lack of communication from the fostering service once complaints or allegations arise. Complaints and allegations process has no clear procedures, poor communication from Fostering service, no truly independent support provided, payment ceases after 4 weeks and if the allegation is unsubstantiated no compensation given. 22.9

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

There is no training in restraint for carers yet (possibly starting in June), yet the Guidance for Foster Carers, Stage 4 includes physical intervention, without the training available to do this safely. 23.1

There is no training provided for carers' children in safe caring and no ongoing groups or planned support for them. 23.6 & 23.7

The current scheduling of training often means that only one carer can attend (usually the female carer, with some male carers not having attended training for a long period) 23.4

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Although Service files have recently started to be organised into a system, there are deficits in the content and organisation of many of them, making them difficult to access; most files do not have a preliminary guide to contents. 24.1

There are many deficits from LAC information on the files- lack of legal status, unsigned, undated documents or no LAC documentation at all. 24.1

Service write-ups were not up to date, three siblings no longer placed together still shared a file. Additionally, some staff used a "Working File" which may have contained missing information, but was retained by the worker separate from the filing system. 24.2

Carers often retained information on children no longer placed with them. 24.8

**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

The new box and ring binder system is an improvement, but in their current state, access to them by children and carers is not feasible. 25.12 see also comments in standard 24

The foster carer register had some dates of birth missing, no box for recording gender and in some cases, one partner was not recorded. 25.1

The foster child register had no addresses of either prior or subsequent placements. 25.1

Figures below include agency and kinship placements, but not short term care/respice placements.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	314
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	264
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	115
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	14
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	10
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	95.60
<b>Maximum £</b>	288.89

## 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?**

1

A tour of the interior and exterior of the premises was made. The interior and exterior of the premises were poorly maintained and in need of repair, refurbishment and in some instances replacement. The premises were originally a purpose built children's home. The fabric of the building is worn and beyond repair. The Inspectors were most concerned that some aspects of the building present an immediate health hazard to staff and visitors to the building. Children occasionally visit the building there are no suitable facilities to meet their needs. 26.1

There are asbestos ceiling panels throughout the building which have been assessed as safe as long as they are not moved or damaged; the Inspectors saw panels damaged by damp and ones that appeared to have been moved, possibly by draughts. There were also guttering and roof tiles broken and rotten window frames. 26.1

Recommend consultation with the Fire Officer and Environmental Health Officer. 26.1

The Inspectors were pleased to note that a survey of the local authority buildings had been commissioned and that Essington Lodge had been prioritised for attention. A building surveyor was on site at the time of the inspection and electrical works and plumbing were due to be assessed.

While there are plans to move some of the other current occupants out of the building, making more room, and ultimately to move into central Walsall, it is currently overcrowded. The building is still signposted as Essington Lodge. The entrance to the Fostering Service is not identified. There is no reception area for the fostering service. The waiting area is a hallway opposite toilets. Visitors are taken through team rooms to interview rooms if the meeting room is not available for use. The main reception to the building is equally unwelcoming with no literature relating to the fostering service posted on notice boards or available in leaflet format. 26.2

The administrative systems serve several different staff groups and functions. IT systems are available to a limited number of staff though deliveries of computers and laptops were being made during the period of inspection. There are facilities for the retention of records in filing cabinets in a lockable room with keypad locks. Records stored off site at the Civic Centre have suitable security measures in terms of designated personnel and security equipment. Foster Carers are provided with a lockable file box for the storage of confidential information. Not all foster carers used the lockable storage some had provided their own. There is no process for monitoring the secure storage of records in foster carers homes. 26.3 The appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems are to be established. 26.3 The building did not have a comprehensive security system. 26.3 The entrance to the Service was said to be insecure as the door had to be opened to speak to visitors. 26.3

It is recommended that the fostering service premises are not equipped with suitable staff facilities such as a ground floor kitchen, a rest area, a staff changing area and storage for

personal items. 26.4

Management confirm that the local authority has adequate insurance for the premises and its contents.

The following areas require attention:

Remove old fire zone panels.

Provide new clear fire notices.

Consult the fire officer re: use of radiant heat in the upstairs kitchen: baby belling and toaster.

Repair loose and missing roof tiles.

Replace and repair loose and missing guttering.

Remove asbestos ceiling tiles throughout the building.

Replace and repair rotten window frames.

Repair flat roof (permanence team room) and water damage to internal walls and ceilings.

Remove and repair damp mildewed patches on the interior walls of the short breaks staff room.

Provide adequate heating in all rooms. Several rooms were very cold and many rooms had additional free standing heating and fans.

Provide suitable lighting eg desk lamps.

Assess and repair cracked wall plaster in hallways and stairwell.

Replace the floor surfaces in the toilets and kitchen with sealed washable floor covering.

Replace the sinks which have worn enamel or metal surfaces.

Provide bin lids in kitchen and toilets.

Monitor temperatures in fridges. One fridge requires regular maintenance and possible replacement.

Top corridor carpet is worn, soiled and misshapen presenting a trip hazard.

Provide alternative storage to the kitchen for the Hoover.

First Aid Box in the kitchen must be replaced with an unsoiled unit stored in an identifiable area. This should not be used as a door stop for the kitchen.

Provide suitable liquid soap in toilets and kitchen.

Replace soiled light pulls in toilets and any other areas.

Provide adequate cleaning materials such as two mops; one for kitchen one for toilets.

Consult Health and safety officer regarding space available in the administration office and Support and Development team room (of particular importance with new IT equipment and trailing electrical wires).

Remove redundant furniture, damaged filing cabinets and broken furniture i.e. desks, planks of wood, broken guttering.

Provide a programme for the general maintenance and upkeep of the building including the cleaning of windows removal of graffiti, removal of broken glass, fallen guttering and general debris and rubbish.

Make safe uneven slabs.

Provide external lighting. 26.1

## 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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Not applicable.

### 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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	3
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There is a clear and quickly responsive IT system for handling the finances, overviewed by the Authority's auditors. Procedures were well understood by an experienced team of finance workers.

**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

Foster carers understood what is included in their payments, were satisfied with the levels of payment and that it was paid promptly.

There was an established system for dealing with exceptional payments and the birthday/ Christmas dates are automatically programmed into the IT paying out system. Foster carers raised several issues in respect of additional or discretionary payments and would welcome written clarification, see standard 22.7.

Finance staff have been involved in the consultative review of fees. Because the finance staff have such frequent contact with many carers; it is recommended that there are involved in the induction training of carers. 29.2



## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Inspector read policy and procedures, minutes of three panel meetings and the papers for the current panel meeting that was observed. The Chair of the panel was also interviewed.

The policy and procedures about the operation of the fostering panel reflect the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000. Information has also been provided in the foster carers handbook. These make clear the functions and responsibility for decision-making.

Progress has been made in recent months regards the composition of panel members and in theory reflects the NMS. The medical expertise is provided by a qualified GP who is also a member of the panel. The panel consisted of the Chair, a elected member, two social workers and one fostering service manager advisor to the panel. There are four independent members including a child protection and reviewing officer, a foster carer from another authority and an education representative both observing for the first time. One former young person in care is due to attend. One children's home manager sent apologies.

There have been occasions when the panel struggle to meet the quorate membership requirements. This should improve with the new independent members in attendance.

The fostering service manager stated that all of the checks are completed for the panel members and held secure by the service. It was stated CRB checks and medicals are updated every three years. There is no formal training for new panel members. Written information is provided and attendance as observers of the panel process. Quality assurance and monitoring of the panel functions is to be developed.

A written record is kept of the business of the panel. The minutes and the agenda were clear with guidelines for time allocation. The outcomes, terms of approval and recommendations are clearly stated. Any action proposed is monitored and taken forward to the next panel agenda. To aid focussed discussion of the items a front sheet has been provided for each item to evaluate submissions strengths, weaknesses and any issues arising.

The Chair is effective in highlighting issues for discussion and will generally check out any inconsistencies prior to the panel meeting for information and clarification. The panel has a process for monitoring the quality of assessments giving feedback providing positive criticism and acknowledging good practice.

Members of panel make declarations of interest and absent themselves from panel where appropriate. Each panel member is given an opportunity to give feedback. Any further questions to be put are agreed and a member designated to put the question. Due consideration is given to welcoming those attending panel and enabling their participation in the process. The primary aim of ensuring the protection and welfare of children is kept foremost.

It was noted that a family and friend carer was brought to panel for review for the first time in the four years since first being approved. In this particular the review had proved positive and effective in motivating the carers to apply for approval as foster carers. Fostering panels do not appear to receive management information about the outcome of foster carer's annual reviews and periodically monitor their effectiveness. 30.6 Reg 26 2 (a)

It was noted that a foster carer was brought to panel for re-approval following several months of being suspended from service without payment following an allegation. There were a number of issues for consideration by the panel not least the length of time it took to be brought to panel and timescales for the relevant procedures. Whilst a decision was made regarding the approval status; it was not clear that any action or recommendation was to be made regarding the process and effectiveness of reviews in accordance with regulation 29 and the quality assurance function of the panel. 30.5

The fostering service presented panel with a Post Panel summary – March 2004. This gave basic information of ethnic origin, approval status, category, matching and children in placement. A Resource Carers monitoring summary for the period April 2001-February 2004 was presented to panel with new approvals being 45 and closures 46; in total there are 143 resource carers. The panel agreed that in future this would be presented as an annual item as part of the monitoring of the fostering service by panel. 30.7

The Inspector notes that the Fostering panel has seen some changes in recent months with new panel members, feedback sheets, annual summaries; these go some way to meet the National Minimum Standards. As the panel's role in quality assurance, monitoring reviews and establishing a regular mechanism for feedback on submissions develops this will strengthen existing systems. It would be appropriate to provide some training for the panel members in relation to the current standards and regulations.

The panel system appeared to work effectively and to maintain an appropriate level of independence.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspectors spoke with the fostering service staff and management of short term breaks. A sample of foster carers provided feedback and were interviewed. Records were inspected.

An issue was raised regarding the staffing complement in the team. Historically funding had been provided for two full time staff to cover the workload for short term breaks and development of the service. With one member of staff leaving, the post was given to a part time member of staff and over time the second part time post was lost. This has meant that the development of a specialist provision for deaf service users has not been actioned. The management state that the funding of the second full time post had been time limited and they had been successful in securing the part time post as a permanent established post. It is recommended that the issues of workload, shortfalls in service and service development issues should be explored. 31.1

The foster carers gave positive feedback about the support and supervision received from the fostering service and their respective link workers. There is financial support for equipment to be provided to meet the needs of children using the service. Parents feedback expressed confidence in the service provided and appreciation of the staff and carers involved.

This is contrasted by a poor service from the National Childrens Homes social work staff who support the child who change frequently and will not visit in unsociable hours and frequently change the dates and or times of reviews with very short notice.

The foster carers find the foster carer support groups can be a clique and unwelcoming and is hopeful about the prospect of a group specifically for short break foster carers who share mutual issues.

Foster carers and workers stated that the procedures and training and supervision provided for the administration of invasive medication are covered by the fostering service insurance. Evidence of this was not seen by the Inspectors. 31.1 & 6.7

On one occasion the foster carers had been asked to accept an emergency placement by the out of hours duty officer. The carers were not given sufficient information and the child in placement made was outside their category of approval.

The foster carers stated that the National Care Standards Commission feedback questionnaire forms required yes/no responses with no room for comment and were

unsuitable for children with disabilities.

## 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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Previously Family and Friends carers have been supported by the child's social worker; the score indicates acknowledgement of the commitment and planning to improve provision through the transfer of their support to be provided by the Permanence Team within the Fostering Service which will hopefully improve this situation.

The Inspectors recognise a limited sample of Family and friend carers was used on this occasion. It was found that previously policies, procedures and practice in the fostering service has not recognised the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friend carers. 32.1

The family and friend carers feedback and those interviewed and aspects covered at panel indicate that there has previously been no support or training provided to them. 32.3  
There were considerable unacceptable omissions in respect of reviews for Family and Friends carers and their needs were not met and assessed in the same way as other carers. 32.3

The reviewing officer completed the first review of the family and friend carers following a placement made four years ago. The review identified a successful placement for a young person despite the lack of involvement from any services once the young person had been placed. The carers stated they had to pursue the department for limited financial support on their own behalf. Traditionally monitoring of these placements has been the responsibility of the placing authority, the child's social worker.

It was reassuring to observe the reviewing officer had enabled the family and friend carers who expressed an interest in application to be foster carers and encouraged their application.

The Inspectors note that the fostering service is taking positive action to include the family and friend carers as a specialist aspect of service within the permanence team.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

N/a

**Lay Assessor**

N/a

**Signature**

**Date**

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Comments relating to the content of the inspection report**

I have read the report and confirm that overall I accept its contents as a fair reflection of the service. An action plan has been drawn up to address the issues raised by the inspectors, which will in particular address the following:

- Introduction of a separate foster placement agreement, agreed with CSCI
- Action on identified training requirements for staff and carers as part of the new comprehensive training plan
- Compilation of a comprehensive electronic procedures and practice manual, which will address any remaining gaps
- Review of the foster carer handbook with a view to addressing any remaining gaps, in consultation with foster carers
- Implementation of more refined internal audit mechanisms
- Review of the statement of purpose and ongoing work on the children's guide in consultation with children and young people.

We are keen to ensure that these activities are supported and jointly carried out by managers, front line staff and foster carers.

We are particularly pleased that the inspectors recognise the considerable effort and enthusiasm which carers, staff and managers were employing to provide a high quality service for children. We are encouraged by the vote of confidence in the project management approach to improving the service in line with the National Minimum Standards.

**Action taken by the NCSC 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"/>

**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"/>
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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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**                      BEATE WAGNER  
**Signature**                      \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation**                    Service Manager – Children's Resources  
**Date**                              15.11.04

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

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

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

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