

inspection report

Fostering Services

Community Foster Care

Twigworth Court

Twigworth

Glos

GL2 9PG

21st February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Community Foster Care

Tel No

01452 541483

Address

Twigworth Court, Twigworth, Glos, GL2 9PG

Fax No

01452 550104

Email Address

mail@communityfostercare.co.uk

Registered Number of IFA

D030000552

Name of Registered Provider

Community Foster Care

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Miss Suzanna Jacoby

Date of first registration

9th March 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

9th March 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

23/09/03

Date of Inspection Visit		21st February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Mike Williams	148257
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Diana Waters	093866
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Miss Suzanna Jacoby	

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Community Foster Care is a Fostering Agency set up in February 1999 with the express purpose of enabling children and young people to remain in communities similar to their own. They are committed to social and economic integration in disadvantaged areas of Gloucestershire.

Community Foster Care was set up as a company, is a Registered Charity and not-for-profit community business. The Responsible Individual is a member of the management board and is a co-ordinator of one of the local neighbourhood projects.

The company's Chief Executive has been employed since 1999 and qualified as a social worker in 2002. The social work qualified Operations Manager and Supervising Social Worker have been in post since August 2003. The three Fostering Link Workers support carers. The office support team comprises of a Services Manager, a Management Accountant and an Administration Officer and Assistant.

External staff are contracted by the Agency as required to conduct Foster Care Assessments, to support carers and young people and to train carers.

The Agency operates a 24-hour on call system and when the link workers are on call they are backed up by one of the social workers.

The majority of the carers are in easy reach of Gloucester city.

As in the Agency's Annual Report 2004, Community Foster Care (as at 31.12.04) had 40 sets of approved foster carers and 27 children placed with them. A substantial number of these were children in long-term placements.

The majority of the children placed in foster care with the Agency are from Gloucestershire or areas nearby.

Carers have both localised support groups and a centralised location for regular training; they also meet regularly for social events.

The Agency's Foster Care Panel was established in November 2003.

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.)

Statement of Purpose, Standard 1

Standard inspected and almost met.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service, Standards 2 – 3

Both standards inspected and both met.

Management of the fostering service, Standards 4 – 5

Both standards inspected and both met.

Securing and promoting welfare, Standards 6 – 14

8 of these 9 standards inspected: 1 exceeded, 6 met and 1 almost met.

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

5 of these 9 standards inspected: 1 exceeded, 3 met and 1 almost met.

Records, Standards 24 – 25

1 of these 2 standards inspected: 1 almost met.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service, Standard 26

Standard inspected and exceeded.

Financial requirements, Standards 27 – 29

1 of these 3 standards inspected: 1 exceeded.

Fostering Panels, Standard 30

Standard inspected and met.

Short-term breaks, Standard 31

Standard not inspected.

Family and friends as carers, Standard 32

Standard not applicable.

Since the last inspection September 2003, the inspectors found that the service has moved on tremendously. There has been an overall development within the service, largely through their having taken ownership of the processes where there were identified shortfalls, and having seriously set about the implementation of National Minimum Standards.

In pre-inspection questionnaires, one carer commented: "I think it is a very well run agency."

With staff who really care about our children and work hard to get the best for them.” And one young person commented: “I get things that I didn’t think I would ever get.” Comments that encapsulate what the inspectors found during their inspection.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	17(3)	FS24	The Provider must ensure the carer has access to all relevant updated information to enable them to provide appropriate care	31/04/04

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

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Mike Williams	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Diana Waters	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Ian Godfrey	Signature	_____
Date	26/05/05		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	17 (3)	FS24	The Provider must ensure the carer has access to all relevant updated information to enable them to provide appropriate care	31/07/05
2	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The Provider must ensure that the Agency's recruitment procedures and personnel records include all the information required of persons seeking to work with a fostering service	31/07/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The Agency's Children's Handbook should be in a more user-friendly format suitable for young people to understand
2	FS8	The Agency should evidence that Risk Assessments are undertaken and considered when matching children with respite carers
3	FS8	The Agency's written Foster Placement Agreements should contain specific reference to elements of matching

* 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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	21/02/05
Time of Inspection	0930
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	67

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported the minor shortfall that the service users' guide "should be in a more user-friendly format suitable for young people to understand." The inspectors were given a copy of the current Children's Handbook and it was found to still not be suitable for children, as the information included has not been adapted for them. One foster child interviewed commented that they had read it and it confused them because, for example, the bullying guidance is for carers, not for children. During the inspection, a member of staff agreed to take on the project of making this guide suitable for children.

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

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that the Registered Manager was looking at the relevant management training course to commence in the near future. She has now completed the level 4 Diploma in Management and is the Chief Executive in the company, supervising the company's Management Accountant, Operations Manager and Services Manager. Together these four provide the company with a good mix of relevant specialist knowledge and skills. The three managers have regular three-way meetings, facilitating the good working relationship and interface that was seen to exist between them.

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

(A key inspection standard.) It was evident from personnel records and various interviews (with the Chief Executive, the three managers, the three fostering link workers, the supervising social worker, carers and foster children) that the managers were suitable people to run the Agency.
(See also standard 15: Suitability to work with children.)

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

(Not a key inspection standard.) The company operates according to its structure: with a Board of Directors, a Chief Executive, a Management Accountant, an Operations Manager (who supervises the Fostering Link Workers and Supervising Social Worker) and a Services Manager (who supervises the Administration Officer and Assistant). So there are clear roles for managers and staff and well established lines of communication and of accountability between them and carers.

With their Management Accountant, the service has proper and up-to-date financial procedures.

Prior the inspection, the Services Manager raised a query about Schedule 8 notifications: what constitutes a 'serious' event? So the inspectors scrutinised the Agency's Schedule 8 Notifications file and passed on their advice regarding this.

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

3

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

(Not a key inspection standard.) A Fostering Link Worker interviewed commented that since the last inspection September 2003 the Agency's practice has become more formalised and "tighter". The Agency holds monthly Management meetings – involving the Chief Executive, Operations Manager, Services Manager and Management Accountant.

In effect, the Agency is organised so that the Chief Executive is more removed from operational management to concentrate on the Agency's strategic development and public relations, with the Operations Manager attending to the day-to-day operation of the Agency. In the absence of the Operations Manager, the Chief Executive assumes responsibility for the Agency, but in practise it is currently a shared task with good communications between the two.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

(A key inspection standard.) From the last inspection September 2003, three good practice recommendations were identified relating to this standard. The Agency has since taken the following three actions to implement each of these recommendations. 1. "The Agency's matching policy states that wherever possible all young persons are given their own bedroom. CFC would not deviate from this policy. The only exception is same sex siblings placed in the same house and only with the prior approval of the placing social worker." 2. "The Agency provides all carers with written guidelines on their Health and Safety responsibilities." 3. "The Agency provides all carers with a copy of the Safe Caring booklet. The Safe Caring course was re-run in February 2004 and was well attended." Each of these actions were evident during the inspection.

A Health and Safety checklist is always part of a carer's Annual Review. And one-day Health and Safety training – covering basic health and safety in the home – and two-day Child protection and sexual abuse training is compulsory training for the Agency's carers.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

(A key inspection standard.) As their name suggests, within the Community Foster Care Agency there is a clear emphasis on recruiting carers from and placing children in local communities, and where this has happened children have successfully maintained their local links. At the time of the inspection, the Agency was pro-actively seeking to recruit carers from among local neighbourhood projects.

The Agency provides specialist one day Equality and diversity training for carers "who care for children who require more specialist care e.g. challenging/disabled children."

The Agency provides a good level of support to carers of children with disabilities. The Agency is also not afraid to challenge placing authorities when it comes to trying to secure appropriate care and resources for children with disabilities.

The Agency's Equal Opportunities Policy is included in the information provided to foster carers. It makes reference to specifically targeting applications from groups not represented and the Agency's supervising social worker reported that they are now looking to recruit black and Asian carers.

When tracking one foster placement, in supervision recording the inspectors found reference to the carers now needing to think about promoting the cultural background of the young person placed with them (now that it had been decided that they would be staying with them).

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**

(A key inspection standard.) In children's pre-inspection questionnaires, in response to the question 'What's the best thing about fostering for you?', children wrote several positive comments about matching. Such as: it "kept me and my brother together"; it "kept us in the same county"; and "where I am living and where I have been placed."

In interviews with staff, it was commented the Agency stick to their carers' approvals as part of their matching process, and that the cautiousness associated with matching in particular can at times be frustrating for staff and carers. One carer wrote "The foster children do not come through fast enough" in their pre-inspection questionnaire. Nonetheless, Agency staff recognised that matching is something to be most careful about and that it promotes longer-lasting placements.

The inspectors tracked one placement where excellent matching practise was on-going with the Placing Authority, to be followed by a phased move into placement if a match was agreed. Staff commented that it was the first Agency placement that had happened like this – with such a long period of consideration – and the inspectors hoped that it would leave the Agency with a model of good matching practise to emulate in the future.

Matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration (8.3), and while one set of carers interviewed said that they had "all the information we want", another set said that they did not have enough information about the young person (their past and their problems) placed with them, and that this was the case even when the young person was first placed with them for respite care. This tied in with other inspection evidence that the Agency need to evidence the risk assessment that is undertaken and considered when matching children with respite carers. (See also standard 24 Case records for children.)

The Agency's written foster placement agreements do not contain specific reference to elements of matching (8.4), and this is a good practice recommendation from this inspection.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

(A key inspection standard.) Training for foster carers includes compulsory training in Child protection and sexual abuse, Managing challenging behaviour and Safe caring. While appropriate training and information on safe caring is currently provided, the Agency is aware that it now needs to take the next step of each foster home developing their own safe caring policy, which is reviewed for each child placed.

The Agency has a Bullying, Child Protection, Children Missing Without Permission and Behaviour Support and Management in the Foster Home policy. The latter includes a section on 'Sanctions' that clearly states that "All forms of corporal punishment" must not be used and lists "Short-term small financial penalties" as one sanction that might be appropriate. Several children's questionnaires, however, variously mentioned "lose pocket money", "get some pocket money dropped", "pocket money stopped" as 'punishments' they have been given in their foster home. One set of foster carers visited talked about the difficulty of stopping all of their child's pocket money and not stopping all of their foster child's pocket money, as they did not want to treat them any differently. As a result, the

inspectors advised the Agency to provide further clarification about the use of this sanction and possibly use the more detailed guidance on it in the Children's Homes regulations. The last inspection September 2003 reported a minor shortfall in relation to this standard (9.7) that the Agency has now addressed by revising the list of paperwork they request from placing authorities and writing to all social workers requesting outstanding paperwork.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

(A key inspection standard.) One placing officer's questionnaire reported that the Agency's foster carers work 'Very well' with the child's family and that "Parents are quite difficult to work with but foster carers have been very professional when dealing with difficulties." One foster carers' questionnaire described how they help foster children maintain contact with their family: "Help children maintain all contact with father, monthly visits, were weekly, we drive the kids to and from, phone calls, occasional writing to mum."

Contact is compulsory training for the Agency's carers. In agreement with the Placing Authority, family contact is either supervised or supported by the Agency. For example, the Agency's link workers and sessional workers facilitate contact when foster carers do not, and when foster carers do facilitate contact they receive even more support from the Agency: one set of carers reported seeing their link worker almost weekly when their foster child was having lots of contact.

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

(A key inspection standard.) The Agency gives new foster children a 'Welcome..' letter and goody bag – including a camera and a diary - as part of their aim to make foster children feel as welcome as possible. The letter explains that if they are worried about anything, and need to talk to someone, they should not hesitate to talk to their foster carers, foster family, fostering link worker or social worker. Fostering link workers frequently see the young people in placement as well as carers and are open to young people's views.

Foster children are encouraged to participate in their statutory Reviews and if appropriate foster carers help them to fill in the consultation paper for their Review.

From children's questionnaire responses and interviews with carers and young people it was evident that children's views are heard and appropriate responses are given.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

(A key inspection standard.) Health is one of the areas of information on foster children that is held both in children's files and the Agency's database (Foster Track). First aid and Health & Safety are compulsory training for carers.

The Agency can access therapists – such as a play therapist, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist - as needed for young people and an 'Introduction to the therapies' is specialist training available to the Agency's carers.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

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

(A key inspection standard.) The Agency's carers go to any of the foster child's school meetings. The inspectors tracked one foster placement where there was daily two-way school contact: the carers writing in a school communication book about the young person's evening and the teacher speaking to the carers every afternoon about the young person's day. One fostering link worker described how the Agency had been involved in satisfactorily resolving one young person's educational problems, in part by their participating in multi-agency meetings. An after-school club is one of the out of school activities that the Agency supports. Education is another area of information on foster children that is held both in children's files and the Agency's database.

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?****0**

(Not a key inspection standard and not fully inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported a minor shortfall in relation to this standard, which the Agency reported it had addressed by encouraging foster carers to actively prepare children for independent living and writing guidelines to become part of the Foster Carers Handbook. 'Preparation for leaving care' is now specialist training available to the Agency's carers.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

(A key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that sessional workers needed to be subject to the same vetting procedures as other staff and checked in line with 15.3 of this standard. During this inspection, the Agency informed the inspectors that they have reviewed their procedures and policies regarding sessional workers. An inspection of sessional workers' personnel files found the information required in respect of persons working for a fostering service (Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002), except where a worker had previously worked in a number of different services with children and there was no verification of the reason why their positions had ended.

In the personnel records of permanent staff, no shortfalls were found.

The Agency staff who hold Social Work qualifications are the Chief Executive, Operations Manager and Supervising Social Worker and one of them now approves all placements.

The Agency's three Fostering Link Workers are supervised by the Operations Manager, and although they are not social work qualified they have been in post a long time and possess a valuable range of relevant experience and knowledge (for example, in psychiatric nursing, counselling and play therapy).

The Agency contracts qualified social workers to undertake the assessment and approval of foster carers and at the time of the inspection they were in the process of contracting both a Psychiatrist and an Educational Psychologist to carry out initial assessments as required with foster children.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****0**

(Not a key inspection standard and not fully inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met.

For this inspection, the Agency gave the inspectors a copy of the Staff Handbook, informed them that they have revised contracts and job descriptions for staff (for example, since April 04 Fostering Link Workers' hours have increased from 25 to 30 hours) and have ensured there is adequate administrative back up, by temporarily employing a part-time administrator. In terms of the adequacy of administrative back up - to enable staff to carry out their duties in an effective manner - staff interviewed commented that the Agency's Services Manager (who coordinates the office activity) is "absolutely fantastic" and provides "terrific administrative support".

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

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

(A key inspection standard.) The Agency now has six permanent staff in the social work team and an on-call procedure, so support is always available. (See also standard 21 Management and support of carers.)

The Agency contracts a small number of qualified social workers to assess and approve foster carers. When the inspectors observed the Agency's Fostering Panel, they were provided with assessment reports that they could see followed the process and considered the issues identified in this standard. (See also Standard 30 Fostering panels.)

There are plans for the Agency to recruit another Supervising Social Worker, so they do not have to continue out-sourcing assessment work.

At the time of the inspection, Agency staff had just finished covering the long-term absence of one of the fostering link workers. The inspectors were told that in future the Agency will bring in a locum worker to cover such absence.

As reported in Standard 7 (Valuing diversity), the Agency emphasises recruiting carers from and placing children in local communities.

Part of this standard is that "Staff policies encourage retention of salaried staff...", and at the time of the inspection the Agency had some work to do in terms of reassuring their fostering link workers of the value and the continuation of their role (following the introduction of the supervising social worker role).

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?**

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not inspected on this occasion.) This standard was met in the last inspection September 2003.

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?**

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not fully inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported "There is further work being planned by the Agency to meet this Standard." From interviews with staff - including discussion about their individual training, joint training with carers and their annual appraisals - this work appeared to have been completed.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not inspected on this occasion.) This standard was met in the last inspection September 2003.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****4**

(A key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported the minor shortfall that annual reviews are held on carers but these are not currently up to date and not yet presented to the foster care panel, as the Agency's panel has only just been established. The Agency's action plan in response to this was that "The paperwork for annual reviews has been revised to ensure compliance with the Fostering Regulations and Care Standards and will be issued at the end of April [04]. Dates to be set." During this inspection, the inspectors were given a copy of the Agency's Foster Carer Annual Review Form and Annual Review Dates for carers. The latter clearly listed Carers, their Supervisor, the Date for the annual review, and whether it needed to go to Panel. The inspectors found that annual reviews usually went to panel at the date proposed.

In their pre-inspection questionnaires, foster carers reported very favourably about the support they receive from the Agency. They listed phone calls [weekly by the fostering link worker], visits [three-weekly by the fostering link worker], 24 hour on call [when a fostering link worker is on-call they are backed up by a qualified social worker], supervision [once a month by the supervising social worker], support group meetings [three small support groups supported by a worker, and one large support group with an occasional training element], the Christmas party and activities for children in school holidays as sources of support. Staff interviewed reported that more support is available as required, for example to support new placements and depending on the competency and experience of the carers.

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

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported the minor shortfalls that Foster Care Agreements must be in place for all carers and the carers' handbook should be updated regularly. The inspectors saw that both of these matters had now been satisfactorily addressed (in accordance with the action plan the Agency submitted following the last inspection).

This standard states that "Supervising social workers meet regularly with foster carers." The Agency's practise (informed also by National Foster Care Association standards) is that Foster carers are visited monthly by the Agency's supervising social worker. With Fostering Link Workers also visiting carers three-weekly, the Agency needs to be mindful about the coordination of these different visits. (The inspectors found that on some occasions there was only a two-day gap between the two visits.) The Agency also needs to be mindful about the communication between the different workers involved (who are both supervised by the Operations Manager). It was reported to the inspectors that initially there had been a problem with the communication between them, but there is now direct communication between them in the form of fortnightly social work practice meetings, looking at cases and upcoming issues, which facilitate their working together.

The supervising social worker also carries out very comprehensive unannounced visits. Foster carers' files were found to include separate supervision, link worker and unannounced visit reports.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported the minor shortfall that each carers' annual review should include an appraisal of training and development needs. The Foster Carer Annual Review Form now lists training courses that carers have attended and asks both carers and their fostering link worker to comment on their training needs.

The Agency produces a Carer's Training Plan, detailing compulsory, specialist and sessional work training. Where possible, they have arranged to run the courses on several dates, including evenings, to facilitate attendance.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

(A key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported the major shortfall that the Agency must ensure the carer has access to all relevant updated information to enable them to provide appropriate care. While the Agency has revised the paperwork on young people that they request from placing authorities - and record and file the paperwork received – the inspectors found a problem with this information being made available to carers. As reported in Standard 8 Matching, one set of carers visited said that they did not have enough information about the young person placed with them. They reported not having seen one piece of paperwork on the young person placed with them and not knowing anything about their medical history (standard 12.3) or family background (standard 9.7), information which they thought might give them some understanding about the young person's behaviour in placement. This was particularly disappointing as the carers said they had asked the Agency for information and the Agency held paperwork on the young person. However, other carers visited had the information they required. The Agency are in the process of addressing two minor shortfalls reported in the last inspection: their policy on case recording (clarifying the information to be held on carers' and children's files) and assistance for carers with recording significant life events with and for young people.

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?

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 made a recommendation in relation to this standard, that the Agency has reported they have implemented (by installing a data base to monitor and evaluate the quality and accuracy of records, and revising their case recording policy to include this).

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

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met. It has now been exceeded with the Agency's recent move to even better office premises.

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?

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met.

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?

4

(Not a key inspection standard.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met. With the work of the Agency's dedicated Management Accountant, this standard has now been exceeded. The Agency gave the inspectors a copy of their Business Plan 2005 - 2008.

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?**

0

(Not a key inspection standard and not fully inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met. The Agency gave the inspectors a copy of their Foster Care Rates and Other Allowances.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

(A key inspection standard.) Community Foster Care's own panel was set up in November 2003. The Panel is constituted as required and members have been provided with panel training. The inspectors observed panel in January 2005 and afterwards interviewed the panel chair. Panel was observed to be well run and professionally chaired and relevant issues were seen to be identified and sensitively handled. Carers reported satisfactory experiences at Community Foster Care's panel and the inspectors were impressed by the Agency's thorough application to running a panel fully compliant with the standards. The Agency provided the inspectors with a copy of their Panel Action Plan and Annual Report 2004 (covering recruitment, retention, training and support of carers; strengths and achievements of the provider; performance measures; and future developments) to be presented for the Panel's approval.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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(A key inspection standard, but not inspected on this occasion.) The last inspection September 2003 reported that this standard was met.
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
(A key inspection standard, but not applicable.)		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 21st February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

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

YES

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 6th July 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____
confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation
of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that
I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with
these.

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

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

--	--

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation _____

Date _____

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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