



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Isle of Wight Authority Fostering Service

Isle of Wight Council Headquarters

Fairlee Road

Newport

Isle of Wight

P030 2EA

17th – 31st January 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Isle of Wight Authority Fostering Service

Address

Isle of Wight Council Headquarters, Fairlee Road,
Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 2EA

Local Authority Manager

Mrs Sarah Pepys

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01983 566011

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01983 612918

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sarah.pepys@iow.gov.uk

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

23/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		17th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lynda Mosling	074953
Name of Inspector	2	David Coulter	
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		Ms Sarah Pepys	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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 Isle of Wight Authority 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 CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Isle of Wight Local Authority Fostering Service is currently managed by Mrs Sarah Pepys and is based at Ryde Social Services Centre in Lind Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight.

The service currently has approximately 160 young people in placement with foster carers.

The fostering service includes: Family Link – a service providing short breaks to children with disabilities, Combined Accommodation Scheme – providing family placements to young people beyond their 18th birthday, Kinship Care, and respite care.

The service aims to provide placements on the Isle of Wight as far as possible, but due to insufficient carers and resources there are some young people placed off of the Island.

The service recruits, trains, assesses and supports foster carers across the Isle of Wight. There is a dedicated fostering panel.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

The inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over a five-day period. The inspectors were able to meet with a range of staff within the fostering service, including the manager. Visits were made to foster carers and the young people fostered by them. A meeting of foster carers was also arranged as part of the inspection. Evidence was also collected by the completion of questionnaires from young people and carers.

The service was generally felt to be well managed and staff reported feeling supported. They demonstrated clear knowledge of their tasks and responsibilities.

The main shortfalls appear to be the lack of available carers to enable good matching of carers and children's needs. The carers were mainly positive about the support received from the fostering social workers, but felt the support from children's social workers was less consistent.

The inspectors were able to access all the information required and received full co-operation from all persons interviewed and visited.

Statement of Purpose, Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Service, Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

5 standards were assessed. 3 were met, 1 was partially met and 1 was exceeded.

There is a statement of purpose that meets the standards. In addition a Children's Guide is provided to each child at the start of their placement. The manager is well qualified for her post and is respected by carers and staff. However, she is due to leave the service at the end of March 2005 and this has caused some anxiety amongst the team. Recruitment of her successor is already underway.

The cost of services have not yet been published and carers still do not have itemised payments.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

9 standards were assessed. 4 were met and 5 were partially met.

There are some gaps in the safety checks undertaken on foster carers homes. Diversity and equality is covered in all training offered to foster carers. Matching of children's needs with carers' skills is not happening due to insufficient numbers of available carers. Abuse training is provided. Safe care plans should be specific to the child placed. Contact with family and friends is supported. A children's rights officer has been appointed to aid consultation processes. There are appropriate systems in place for young people's health care. A project to increase the educational outcomes for children has been put in place. It is recommended that services to the 16+ age group be reviewed in the light of young people's

feedback.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15 – 23)

9 standards were assessed. 4 standards were met, 3 were partially met and 2 were exceeded.

There is a well-documented recruitment process. Job descriptions are available for each worker. Workloads were felt to be fairly distributed. The new Swift computer system was seen as an improvement. Staff numbers in the team were sufficient but there was a major shortfall of available carers. Staff training was seen as positive, but there have been difficulties in the delivery of carer training. Support of carers was variable across the Directorate.

Records (Standards 24 – 25)

2 standards were assessed and both were met.

The inspectors looked at a range of records and found them to generally meet the standards. Confidential records are locked and there are good administration systems in place.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 26)

This standard was partially met.

The premises are cramped and uncomfortable to work in. More appropriate options are to be considered.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 – 29)

1 standard was assessed and met.

The Isle of Wight Council determines the budget set for the fostering service. Financial processes are in place and there are annual audits. Payments to carers are felt by carers not to meet the cost of caring but they have seen increases in some areas during the year.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

This standard was met.

The inspectors observed a Panel meeting and confirmed that it met the Regulations. Applicants are invited to Panel and are welcomed by the members. Inclusion of an ex-fostered child would add a valuable dimension to the Panel.

Short term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

The Family Link scheme is seen as supportive and efficient. Carers reported positively about the training and support offered. There is good communication between carers and parents of children using the scheme.

A member of staff has been recruited to extend the respite/short break service. This is thought to be a beneficial move and responds to the growing demand for this type of care.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standards 32)

This standard was met.

The Directorate supports the use of friends and family as carers and staff were aware of the benefits for the children. Inspectors visited a grandmother approved to care for her grandchild and heard that payments and support from the fostering team was satisfactory. Assessment processes are currently being reviewed.

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:

YES

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:

The inspectors saw evidence to suggest that the Fostering Service meets the required standards and provides a service that generally promotes the welfare of the children and young people fostered by the service.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Lynda Mosling **Signature** _____
Second Inspector David Coulter **Signature** _____
Locality Manager _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	

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.	FS4	Allowances to carers to be accompanied by itemised payment details.
2.	FS4	Consider notifying the Commission of significant events within the service.
3.	FS6	File audits are undertaken to ensure notes are kept regarding choice of placements offered and any gaps in matching.
4.	FS6	Information to Panel includes details about where everyone within the household is to sleep.
5.		Consider providing joint training focusing on the needs of young people at the point of placements breaking down.

6.		Gaps in the matching of placements are used to inform the recruitment process.
7.		Safe caring plans are child specific and kept up to date.
8.		Systems are put in place to ensure all allegations relating to child protection follow the Directorates procedures.
9.		Foster carers are informed of the available education options and are informed how to access them.
10.		Managers audit the services provided to young people in 16+ age group to ensure their needs are met.
11.		Consider accessing inter-agency training for staff and carers.

* 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	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	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	YES
Date of Inspection	17/01/05
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	56

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a statement of purpose that covers all of the areas required by the Regulations. It states the aims and objectives of the fostering service and was updated in 2004.

In addition there is a children's guide that is set out as a question and answer guide, covering some important information for children. The guide lists names and contact numbers that can provide help and advocacy for young people. The Commission contact number is included in this.

Responses received from the children's survey confirmed that they had received a copy of the children's guide.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The manager is well qualified for the post. She qualified as a social worker in 1974 and has worked with the family placement team since 1987. Qualifications include: Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, Certificate in Family Placement and Certificate in Management Studies NVQ 3. She is currently undertaking the Diploma in Management Studies at Chichester University. The manager has a great deal of experience in managing fostering services and is seen by the team as a competent and supportive manager.	
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In July 2004 the manager did a temporary job swap with the manager of the children's access team, dealing with new referrals, child protection enquiries etc. The manager who moved into the family placement team went on sick leave soon after joining the team, leaving the team briefly without a manager. This caused a great deal of anxiety and upset for the team members. Inspectors were told that they felt vulnerable and hurt by the experience. They felt they had not been consulted about the change and felt the work that they do had been seen as a low priority. This experience, and the recent resignation of the current manager has left a number of the team feeling worried about the future of the team. On a number of occasions inspectors were told that the service felt 'unsafe'.

The deputy manager is a qualified social worker with many years experience of working with children. She supervises a number of the team social workers and is seen as supportive and competent. She undertakes the management responsibilities in the absence of the manager.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The current manager was recruited by the Isle of Wight Council in 1987 using the Council's recruitment procedures. The Isle of Wight Council gave notice to the Commission of the manager's fitness, which was confirmed by the inspectors during the 2003 inspection process.

All of the necessary checks have been completed and written references kept on record. The manager has the confidence and respect of both staff and carers and has kept up to date with new initiatives and research.

Promoting the welfare of looked after children has been central in her choice of training and development courses.

The Council will need to notify the Commission of the fitness of the new manager once they have been recruited.

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

The staff working in the fostering team each have job descriptions and are clear about their responsibilities. They are supervised on a regular basis by the manager or deputy manager. There are financial procedures regarding the payment of allowances to carers and these have recently been clarified.

Carers told inspectors that they still do not have itemised payments for their fostering work. This is a particular problem for those carers who care for a number of different children in a respite arrangement. This has been raised as an issue at each inspection. However, inspectors were told that the new computer system should make itemised payments a real possibility. It is recommended that this be put in place without delay.

The cost of each of the services provided have not yet been published, but work has been undertaken on this by the Council and it is anticipated that the costs of services will soon be available.

The Council have a procedure for staff to declare any conflicts of interest. This also extends to the members of the Fostering Panel.

Although it is not a requirement for the LA fostering service to notify the Commission of the incidents mentioned below it is recommended that the service consider doing so in the future. Most other local authorities volunteer such information to the Commission as part of its monitoring systems.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

The inspectors were told by the staff that the current arrangements for managing the team worked well and were tried and tested. The manager and deputy are seen as experienced and competent. There was anxiety expressed as a result of the manager's recent resignation. The staff are hoping that they will be involved in the recruitment process of the next manager.

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?

Standard met?

The carers' assessments include a section on the health and safety issues within the foster home, including the possible risks associated with household pets. The inspectors visited a sample of foster homes and found them to be generally warm, comfortable and suitable for the placements made. The young people in the homes had their own rooms and were offered privacy and safety. There was evidence on the carers' files that issues of concern relating to cleanliness and/or safety had been taken up by support workers and/or children's social workers. Carers were appreciative of the service's attempts to improve the transport arrangements for foster children placed, explaining that they are able to lease larger vehicles when the family car is not large enough.

The information provided to Panel regarding carers with firearms was rather vague and should include clearer information about how access has been restricted. The information presented in one application also did not adequately clarify how the sleeping arrangements of the children, including foster children, would meet the Council's own policies. Information on the carers' files regarding matching considerations, safety considerations etc was not consistent.

It is recommended that the file audits consider the consistency of notes made at the time of placements being arranged.

It is also recommended that the information presented to Panel should have clear statements about sleeping arrangements and other issues of safety.

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?

Standard met?

The service makes it clear to foster carers that they should be sensitive and supportive of children's differences. Equality and diversity is covered in the preparation and assessment process. Specific training on diversity has been offered in the past but was poorly attended. The service has now decided to make it a core focus of each training course offered. The Directorate has entered into a contract with a local agency, which allows them to link with speakers of foreign languages very quickly. The service has also taken advice from specific religions and ethnic communities when placement issues arise. Foster carers spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of the need to promote the child's self esteem and use the child's interests to do this. They were also aware of the need to help the child feel proud of his/her background. Questionnaire responses from children/young people confirmed that they felt accepted and valued by their foster carers. They also were able to list the activities they offered. Visits undertaken by the inspectors to carers looking after children with disabilities confirmed that carers are provided with appropriate equipment and knowledge to care appropriately for the children.

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

There are a number of reasons why this standard is not met, including the availability of information about the child at the time of placement and the lack of enough carers. The staff and carers spoken to knew of the issues relating to matching and the need to provide appropriate placements to children. They were also very aware that suitable matching is not happening. Social workers spoke of their frustration when arranging a placement with carers who were felt to be a poor match with the child. This added to the likelihood of a number of moves for young people. On some occasions the social workers have asked that their objections to the placement are noted, but have been told it is the only placement available at the time. Carers, in their questionnaire responses, commented frequently on the lack of choice of foster carers. One stated ' They place children in inappropriate placements that are bound to fail before they start which not only causes distress to the child, but to the foster family as well'. Inspectors heard of carers who accepted inappropriate placements because they knew how desperate the service was to place the child, and of others who had asked for placements to end, but were told there was no-where else for the child to go. Carers have been told that there is an expectation that they will give the service 28 days notice of an ending of a placement. This is in order to plan a move, as a number of carers had been asking for immediate removal of children. Some staff felt that the support workers supported the carers in asking for the placement to be ended rather than working with them to help make the placement work. Inspectors were told that if there was a risk to either the placed child or the family then the 28 days notice would be waived. However, carers told the inspector that they had often struggled hard to make the placement work prior to requesting it to end and that having to continue with the placement once relationships had deteriorated was not in the best interests of the child or the family. Whilst the inspectors appreciate the thinking behind this 'expectation' it appears that carers have seen it as another example of the service placing the responsibility for lack of carers onto the carers themselves. It was mentioned by both carers and staff that joint training focusing on the needs of the child when placements are breaking down may help. It is recommended that this is considered by the service.

The position of the service, along with other Local Authority fostering services, means they have to find placements for all children assessed as needing to be looked after. There are clearly not enough carers to make appropriate arrangements.

Although staff are aware of their responsibility to consider religion, culture, gender etc when making placements the reality is that these things are overshadowed by the need to find a child a placement, any placement. Inspectors were told that young people who return from residential placements on the mainland for the holidays were sometimes placed in the situation where they are taken to a social services centre, with their bags and have to wait to hear where they will spend the night. This is clearly unacceptable.

It should be noted that there are many placements where matching has been achieved and successful placements made. The inspectors spoke to carers who were permanently committed to the children placed with them and heard from young people who felt they were

happy and safe in their placements.

It is recommended that consistent records be kept of the gaps in the matching process and how the service intends to bridge those gaps. This information should also be used to inform further recruitment of carers.

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

Carers are made aware of abuse issues during the preparation process and are offered training in how to keep themselves, their family and the fostered young people safe. There are courses dealing with caring for children who have suffered abuse and each placement has a safe caring plan, although inspectors noted that some were more useful than others. Some of the safe caring plans were out of date and too general. It is recommended that child specific safe caring plans be written for each placement, taking into consideration the child's specific needs. Policies and procedures regarding child protection are clearly written.

The service is very clear about the forms of punishment that can be used and have asked foster carers to sign agreements not to use corporal punishment. However, it was noted that admitting to using smacking had not led to deregistering a carer, although there was a full investigation and behaviour management training put in place. The questionnaires completed by young people felt that the punishments used were fair and appropriate. Only one child commented that he had been hit. Bullying in the foster home was not mentioned as a problem by any young person.

Allegations of abuse were recorded and action taken noted. Each foster carer's file has a front sheet recording concerns, complaints and allegations – this makes monitoring easier. Queries were raised as to whether the support workers refer all child abuse concerns, and whether investigations should be undertaken by social workers who are more independent than the support worker and the child's social worker. However, the need to support carers through these processes was also acknowledged.

A number of carers and staff felt the frequent changes of placements of young people amounted to abuse, and that this had not been taken seriously by the Directorate.

Carers also mentioned that the lack of information about the child at the point of placement could lead to children being placed in potentially abusive situations.

There are appropriate procedures available regarding missing persons and some carers are in frequent contact with the police regarding their young people. It was suggested that an individual profile, with photograph, of each child placed be made available to carers to use when reporting to the police. The information could include names and addresses of significant people and ideas on where to look if the child goes missing.

It is recommended that there are systems put in place to ensure all allegations of abuse by foster children go through the appropriate systems.

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?****3**

Expectations that contact with family and friends will be encouraged is made clear to carers during the assessment process. The placement agreement should contain information about contact arrangements. Foster carers are often involved in these arrangements. Foster carers told the inspectors that sometimes the agreed arrangements do not happen due to staff shortages. The inspectors spoke with young people who were in frequent contact with their family and friends. One child placed remains in contact with her adopted siblings and she spoke with great pleasure about this. In the questionnaires the majority of young people said they were in contact with their family, but understandably said the worst thing about being fostered was 'not being able to live with my family'. Support is given when the contact happens outside of the foster home and carers reported there were expenses paid when travel was involved.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

The Directorate has made impressive attempts to involve young people in plans for the future of the service and to generally consult with young people in the looked after system. There has been an appointment of a Children's Rights and Participation Officer. A leaflet explaining her role has been given to young people and a 'Listening to Young People In Care' survey has already been undertaken. The results of this survey have been used to plan future services. The survey was wide ranging and support many of the views expressed during this inspection i.e. frequent moves of placement.

Reviewing officers are able to speak with young people prior to reviews and this process was experienced as being more robust in recent months.

Young people who completed the questionnaires said they were consulted by their foster carers over most day-to-day decisions. The inspectors heard from older young people that they felt well consulted by a range of workers but felt this did not lead to any beneficial action. Some young people appeared 'worn down by the talking' but had little hope that anything they said would make a difference.

The Directorate arranged a corporate parenting conference, which involved young people and gave them an opportunity to share their anxieties and experiences. This led to some concerns and upset for carers and highlighted the complexities of inviting young people to be honest about their feelings. It is noted that honest feedback can be very threatening to some carers and staff.

There is an arrangement with the Youth Trust for them to independently support young people to make complaints. However, there have been relatively few complaints. Young people responded, in the questionnaires, that they knew how to complain. Clarifying their rights through a range of initiatives demonstrates the Directorate's commitment to listening to children. Within the fostering service young people's views are canvassed prior to foster carers reviews. Young people's views regarding specific applications to foster are presented to Panel.

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**

Young people/children are registered with the same GP as the carers if they are not able to keep their own. Fostered children have a medical card that accompanies them on placement and contains as much information as the parents have given. Some information is difficult to obtain i.e. immunisation records. Carers reported that often specialist appointment dates are not recorded and carers have to 'start again' when trying to meet the child's medical needs. Dentists are in short supply on the Isle of Wight and carers report having difficulties in registering young people with a NHS dentist.

Carers reported a continuing problem with accessing psychological/therapy support, although it is hoped that this should be greatly improved by the appointment of a specialist in this area.

Personal Advisors have a specific role to address the health needs of young people, and there are joint strategies in place to deal with drug problems and teenage pregnancy.

The Directorate are in the process of compiling a leaflet for young people, their parents, carers and social workers regarding sexual health and relationships.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

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

There have been a number of new initiatives aimed at improving looked after children's education provision. Carers and staff were aware of the poor outcomes in education for looked after children. Carers also spoke at length about the additional pressure placed on them if they care for a child who is not in school. The fostering service recognises this and can provide additional funds to help carers provide activities and support for children who are out of school. The inspectors spoke with the manager of the LACES – Looked After Children Education Scheme which is set up to promote and improve the education options for looked after children. Good ideas were shared, and enthusiasm to gain the views of carers and young people was demonstrated. Computers are now to be provided to each foster home for use with the young people placed. LACES are hoping to operate a 'drop in' centre for children out of school and to provide co-ordination of education provision. There is also an assistant in the LAC 0-16 team who can offer intervention to young people having problems at school. Whilst the service has obviously developed services in this area carers still spoke of their difficulties dealing with acting out young people on a 24 hr basis. Their needs were expressed as needing a break from the young people by providing activities and education outside of the foster home. Their appreciation of the services provided are often judged by whether this need is met or not. Carers also commented that the LACES work is focused on targets and GCSE results and therefore only available to the young people in the relevant age groups. It is recommended that carers be informed of the criteria of the services provided and how to access them in order that misunderstandings do not arise.

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**

Young people spoken to during the inspection had some concerns about their future. One young person was due to leave care in a few months time and told the inspectors that he did not know where he was going to live, what his benefits would be or how he was going to spend his days. He felt that although there are a lot of people around who can provide support no one actually 'does anything'. This was a common theme and there were some young people, and carers, who felt the LAC 16+ team had not 'kept their promises'. This was the opposite of the feedback heard by inspectors last year.

Those young people who are in long term, settled, placements felt they were being helped to become independent by their carers. There was still some concern about benefits and the effect their continuing placement was having on their carer's benefits. This is an issue well known by the staff involved who have made attempts to raise this issue with the Government.

The combined accommodation scheme has been set up to approve carers who are prepared to care for young people beyond their 18th birthday (up to 24 years old). This helps young people feel they are not rejected as soon as they become an adult and offers support to the carer's family.

Personal Advisors are allocated to look after children following their 14th birthday to devise, with the young person, an individual Pathway Plan. As with other services the impact of this arrangement appears variable, with some young people feeling there are too many people and not enough action, whereas others feel they have been provided with a good service.

It is recommended that there is a management audit of the services being offered to the 16+ age group to ensure the services being developed meet the needs of the young people.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The inspectors spoke with two newly recruited social workers in the fostering team and looked at a sample of staff files. These showed that the correct recruitment procedures had been followed. Appropriate references had been taken up and records were on file. The staff working in the family placement team have had many years combined experience working with children. The staff were knowledgeable, confident and keen to improve standards. Although there are some unqualified staff they are supervised by qualified staff and do not undertake Form F assessments alone.

Certificates of qualification and training undertaken were on the individual's file and the appointments appeared to have been matched to the needs of the service.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

3

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Each member of the fostering team has a job description and a clear understanding of their role and how it fits into the service. There has recently been a role created to concentrate on recruiting respite carers to offer support to the current foster carers as well as parents in the community. The staff said they felt their skills were used to the best advantage.

All workers felt they were well supported by the administrative staff and had well developed systems. The new computer system was seen as a great advantage.

The Family Link scheme has dedicated workers who cover all aspects of the service. There are also dedicated Combined Accommodation Scheme workers recruiting and supporting carers for young people up to the age of 24 years. The team are all based together and this promotes a busy atmosphere. Most of the staff felt they share ideas and advice freely and learn from each other's experience. However, there was also a concern that the division of the work into specialist areas can lead to some staff feeling cut off from the main focus of the team, or decide to 'keep their head down' and not get involved in team tasks. Staff feel that workloads are worked out fairly and that they can ask for help if they feel under pressure. Relationships with other teams is dealt with in Standard 21.

Standard 17 (17.1 – 17.7)

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

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

The number of staff within the team has increased since the last inspection. This is seen as a positive move and is responsive to the identified gaps in service i.e. respite services. The team members feel valued and demonstrated a generosity amongst each other. They said they felt the manager was good at pulling them all together. Each team member has some responsibility for recruitment and approval of carers.

The issue of supply of carers has already been covered in Standard 8. It is clear that there are not sufficient carers to meet the needs of the range of children needing placement. The team continually look at new ways of recruiting carers but are frustrated by the lack of sufficient numbers coming forward. The service has also devised systems of rewarding loyalty to the service in an attempt to retain carers. However, there are a number of independent fostering agencies competing for carers on the Isle of Wight and who pay fees the local authority are unlikely to be able to match.

The assessments of carers are thorough and presented to the Fostering Panel for recommendation. Information gathered in the Form F provides a good indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the family. There is a large range of skills and abilities within the available carers. Social workers outside of the fostering team were clear that many of the carers do not have the skills to care for the young people that are placed. Managers and social workers within the team acknowledged that this may be true, but that there would be even fewer carers if they did not make the most of some of the less able carers.

Standard 18 (18.1 – 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

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

The staff in the fostering service are recruited using the Isle of Wight Council's procedures and are consistent with up to date requirements. The staff have a handbook which covers grievances, sickness, leave and disciplinary procedures. The manager is responsible for the health and safety of the team.

Carers have their own handbook, but are not employees of the Council. There is insurance cover in place for all carers, which includes cover for legal fees in the event of allegations, and public liability.

There is a whistle blowing policy for staff and carers. There is access to the Social Services out of hours service and to the fostering team out of hours service. This is seen as some support, but many carers still feel there should be more available help at weekends and during holiday periods.

Staff spoken to felt that they had been treated fairly by the Council.

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?	4
<p>Staff reported that they are able to access many opportunities for training. The manager has been supported to gain her management qualifications and a number of the team have been undertaking the PQ in Child Care Award. Each member of staff has an annual appraisal where training needs are identified. The Council provides a programme of training for staff that can be accessed by the fostering team. In addition there are training programmes provided by external providers specifically relating to fostering. Staff members are able to access these. There is a library of books in the team that can be used by individuals and provides up to date research. Information gained by team members is passed on to the team at team meetings and development days.</p> <p>The staff demonstrated an understanding of new legislation and Government initiatives relating to their service.</p> <p>Expenses are provided for training courses and time allowed to attend during work hours.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Staff felt supported by the manager and deputy manager of the team. They were aware of the lines of accountability and were comfortable with this. They were less sure about the support available at a higher level and many did not feel particularly involved in wider childcare issues or management.</p> <p>There have been a number of re-organisations and the staff appear to employ self-protection strategies in order to cope with these.</p> <p>The manager has a clear view of the way the Council runs and of the hierarchy and feels supported in her position.</p>		

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?	2
<p>There is a clear strategy on how the fostering team provides support to its carers. This is written in the foster carers handbook. Carers' responses to the questionnaires were mainly very positive about the support offered by the fostering team. The only criticism was of the gap in cover when social workers leave the team, or are on sick leave. However, a tension has always existed between the support offered by the support workers and that offered by the children's social workers. Relationships with the fostering team and other childcare teams has not appeared to have improved as had been hoped following the creation of the LAC teams. There was some criticism expressed about the lack of support given to carers by children's social workers and several people said they felt there was not enough understanding and respect shown for the foster carers by the Looked After Children teams. This view was mirrored by the feedback in foster carers questionnaires, where criticism was made of the lack of relationship with young people and the lack of communication with the carers. Comments include: 'Lack of communication with social workers, Low value placed on foster carers, Lack of understanding by reviewing officers', 'We have raised concerns about lack of support by children's social workers, and despite assurances that changes will be made and lessons will be learnt we have found this to be contrary to what has happened and it still continues'.</p>		

Staff outside of the fostering team, however, suggested that the fostering social workers could be more pro-active in supporting foster placements and some were seen as colluding with the carers they support.
As recommended elsewhere in the report some joint training should be considered to try to address these tensions

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

Each carer is allocated a support worker following their approval who is tasked to provide support and supervision to carers. Supervision of carers is undertaken on a monthly basis. There have been recent changes in the way these sessions are recorded and it is now expected that written supervision notes are signed by both the support worker and the carer. Records seen by the inspectors noted that there were some gaps in the notes and that monthly visits are not always achieved. Where this is the case it would be useful to have a written explanation about the gaps and any issues arising during these periods. Carers generally find the supervision sessions helpful and supportive. They are able to bring issues of concern to the sessions and discuss strategies to help manage the placements they have. Reviewing of carers is also undertaken by the support workers. Carers are provided with a foster carer handbook that details policies and procedures relating to the task. This includes details of the complaints procedure and handling allegations against carers. Training needs are discussed at the carers' reviews.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Pre-approval training is provided to carers and forms part of the assessment process. Carers were positive about the training they received during this process. The inspectors were told that the annual training programme for carers had not been delivered last year due to the problems with the personnel responsible. This is being addressed through the appropriate employment processes. It has left carers without training and unable to progress their skills in a planned way. There has been the possibility of accessing one-off courses at the request of the carers, but not courses to meet identified needs. The inspectors were told that this would be put right this year and that courses provided to social workers will also be made available to foster carers. It is hoped that this may help both parties have a better understanding of the tasks of the other. Carers who are employed in other directorates within the Council suggested that there is some training provided to other staff i.e. teachers which may be useful to carers. It is recommended that the fostering service consider the possibility of sharing some of the training arranged across the Council.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The files holding information about looked after children are based with the supervising social workers and was not seen by the inspectors during this inspection.

Records seen by the inspectors related to the carers and the way they were managing the placements.

There is a case recording policy in the Directorate and inspectors were informed that managers audit these records.

Foster carers make records about the child in placement and share this information with the child's social worker if requested. Carers spoken to understood the need to keep the records confidential.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service office has a range of locked filing cabinets that store the records relating to the recruitment, training and support of foster carers. Records are kept of referrals for placements and details of young people needing placements. The carers' files looked at by the inspectors contained the information required by the Regulations. Although raised at the inspection last year, there did not appear to be booklets for children introducing the foster home. Those seen in other agencies by the inspectors include photographs of the foster home, family, pets, friends and local community. They are produced by the foster family prior to approval and are seen as useful by the young people as well as the members of the fostering panel.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			160
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			99
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:			18
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			18
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	108.50	Maximum £	191.38

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?

2

The fostering team is situated in the Social Services Centre in Ryde. The office is shared with the Looked After Children Team. Both teams have grown since the last inspection and the premises, which were always cramped, are now at bursting point. Staff are squashed into areas that are not suitable in terms of confidentiality, space and accessibility. There are not enough desks for each member of staff and the office is quickly running out of space for the confidential records it is required to keep.

The inspectors were shown around the premises and saw consultation-taking place in corridors and kitchens.

Meeting rooms are constantly booked up and access to and from the rooms can interfere with the work in progress.

Panel meetings are arranged at a more appropriate venue.

The staff informed the inspectors that they had taken up the issues of space on numerous occasions and have no idea whether there are any plans to move the service.

Although the office is centrally situated in Ryde and is easy to access, it is attached to public toilets and situated below a theatre, where rehearsals are noisy and frequent.

The premises are not suitable for the number of staff trying to work there and does not provide adequate facilities for the staff. It is recommended that the premises are urgently reviewed and plans make more suitable arrangements.

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

The financial viability of the service was not inspected – this is the responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The financial procedures and systems for the fostering provision are agreed through the Isle of Wight Council processes. The Council's budget has an influence on available spending across the Directorate. However, there have been a number of additional grants and funds directed towards the fostering service over the last year or two. Since the last inspection senior managers of the service have met with foster carers to gain their views on the best way to use additional funding. New arrangements include: loyalty payments, payments linked to training and financial help when young people are excluded from school.

There are published budgets and accounts that are audited annually and are open to public scrutiny.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

As mentioned in the previous standard, carers have had some additional allowances paid to them and the issue of finances was not raised as an issue with inspectors as often as in previous years. Although payments to carers are unlikely to compete with those paid by independent agencies carers displayed a degree of loyalty about staying with the Local Authority service.

Carers are very clear, however, that the allowances do not cover the cost of the care of children placed. They also commented on the fact that they have to use clothing that they have collected over a period of time in order to keep the children appropriately dressed.

The issue of discretionary allowances is still of concern to some carers who believe they need to plead with staff to get what they feel a child is entitled to i.e. initial clothing grants and school uniforms. However, the inspectors were told by the manager that the criteria for paying the additional allowances had been clarified during the past year.

Carers said their allowances were generally paid on time but are not accompanied by details of what the allowances relate to. (see recommendation in Standard 4).

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

The inspectors observed a Fostering Panel and interviewed the chair and an advisor. The Panel is appropriately constituted but would be enhanced by the membership of an ex-fostered child. This has been an expressed aim of the manager over the last three years, but as yet it has not been achieved. It is recommended that continued attempts be made to recruit an appropriate person.

The Panel achieved full, open discussion and came to decisions by consensus. Visitors to the Panel were treated with respect and sensitivity.

Panel members receive training and up-dates throughout the year. They are committed to the task and take time to read the papers and devise the questions prior to the panel.

There is a system to report possible conflicts of interest and the opportunity to be excluded from relevant items of business.

Some social workers reported feeling nervous when appearing at Panel, but generally felt the process was fair and thorough.

One ex-carer raised the fact that carers resigning from the service are not invited to Panel and felt Panel members may not be given vital feedback about the experience carers have. It is recommended that the Panel consider extending invitations to resigning carers.

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
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The inspectors were able to obtain feedback from the Family Link carers, and some of the young people. The Family Link scheme was generally felt to be a supportive and efficient service. Carers reported that they are well supported and feel valued by the parents, as well as the Directorate. There were well-established systems, training and support for carers. Particular strengths include the good communication between carers and parents who appear to work together to meet the needs of the children.

In response to the need for short-term, respite placements within the main fostering service a social worker has been recruited specifically for this purpose. The aim is to recruit carers who will be able to provide short term breaks, possibly at weekends, for children who are supported at home the majority of the time, and for full time carers who need a break. It is hoped this will provide more consistent placements for children who need on going short-term breaks.

The assessment, support and training of carers will need to meet the standards but will be devised to take account of the particular stresses of providing short-term care.

The social worker recruited to this post demonstrated a good understanding of the needs of the children requiring this service.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspectors were able to meet with a grandparent who was specifically approved as a carer for her grandchild. This was one of a number of such placements arranged to meet the needs of children requiring family placement.

The family placement social workers were very supportive of the arrangements made with family and were well aware of the benefits of this type of placement. Children's social workers are encouraged to consider family and friends as an option at the start of young person needing accommodation. However, the inspectors were told that this process was often not consistent or robust enough.

The assessments undertaken and the support offered to family and friends were of a comparable quality to other fostering arrangements.

A social worker in the Family Placement team is in the process of reviewing the assessment information taken to the fostering panel with regard to family and friends' applications.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on week beginning 17th January 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

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

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 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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of I W Fostering Authority 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 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 I W Fostering Authority 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 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
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