



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Integrated Services Programme

Central Office

Church Street

Sittingbourne

Kent

ME10 3EG

7th – 11th 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

Integrated Services Programme

Tel No

01795 428097

Address

Central Office, Church Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10
3EG

Fax No

01795 421 512

Email Address

info@ispcentral.co.uk

Registered Number of IFA

H060000597

Name of Registered Provider

Integrated Services Programme

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Jayne Elizabeth Westcott

Date of first registration

30th October 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

14th September 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

16/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		7th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Alex Turner	099984
Name of Inspector	2	Felicity Reeves	
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		Jane Westcott	

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 Integrated Services Programme. 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.

Integrated Service Programme (ISP) is an independent fostering agency providing family based childcare services for children referred by local authorities. Services include foster care placements, qualified social work support, therapeutic input, transport, respite care, contact supervision and education provision. This inspection relates only to the services ISP operates in Kent.

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 announced and conducted over five consecutive days with additional visits to observe the fostering panel and a children's consultation group. Requirements and recommendations from the last inspection report have been met. A total of thirty out of thirty-two standards have been assessed (two standards were not applicable). Twenty standards have been rated as met, six standards have been rated as almost met, and four have been rated with standard exceeded. Throughout the inspection process the social work, administrative and management staff of the fostering service were cooperative, open and receptive to the inspection process. Four foster homes were visited; the children, young people and foster carers who took part in the inspection are thanked for the valuable contribution they made. The inspectors were impressed with the manner in which therapeutic, education and foster services are integrated and delivered. The high degree of pride and ownership expressed by staff and carers regarding the work of the agency is especially noteworthy.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The statement of purpose and children's guide includes useful information about the services offered in formats suitable for the intended audience.

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

The people carrying on and managing the service are fit to do so.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

The service has been managed competently and in a professional manner as reflected in the findings of this inspection.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

The service has effective systems to ensure children and young people's safety and welfare is promoted. Diversity is recognised and taken into account across service provision. The matching and placement process is primarily informed by determining the needs of children and young people and ensuring that these are taken fully into account. Child protection procedures were robust and well managed. Commitment towards maintaining and promoting contact between children and young people and their families was clearly evidenced. Practice relating to education, health and consultation with children and young people was excellent and in all of these areas the standards have been exceeded.

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

Recruitment procedures would be enhanced with the addition of more rigorous checks on employment histories as prescribed by the regulations. Staff interviewed during the

inspection were unanimous in their praise of employment practices and stated that management, training and supervision was to a high standard. Foster carers have been assessed and approved in line with current good practice. There are clear strategies utilised in practice for the management, support and training of carers. Good practice recommendations have been made with regard to foster placement agreements and the professional supervision of foster carers by a qualified social worker.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Records were organised and legible. Records relating to children and young people were detailed and contained relevant information regarding history, background, services and care provided. There was evidence of a good exchange of information between the service and foster carers. Administrative records were also well maintained however there were some omissions in terms of details required by regulations.

Fitness of premises to be used as fostering service (Standards 26)

Three of the services premises were visited during this inspection including the central offices. In each case the buildings and their surroundings were suited to their designated function and provided a welcoming and attractive environment.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

The service is well resourced and financially viable. Records indicate accounting standards and practice have been complied with. Payments to carers have been prompt and in accordance with service policy.

Fostering Panels (Standards 30)

The functions of the fostering panel have been carried out in a manner that reflects current good practice guidelines. Areas of good practice have been noted and include the process of assessment and presentation to panel of prospective foster carers.

Short-term breaks (Standards 31)

Not applicable at the time of this inspection

Family and friends as carers (Standards 32)

Not applicable at the time of this 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:

Not applicable

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector

Alex Turner

Signature



Second Inspector

Felicity Reeves

Signature

Regulation Manager

Alison
Spreadbridge

Signature

Date

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	7	FS2	The registered provider shall ensure the registered manager commences training to attain a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management or another qualification that matches the competencies required by the NVQ Level 4.	25/06/05
2	42	FS4	The registered person shall refer to and ensure compliance with all elements of regulation 42 (Fostering Service Regulations 2002)	25/06/05
3	20(3)(d)	FS15	The Fostering Service Provider shall not employ a person (for a definition of employing a person please refer to regulation 2 (3) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 (FSR2k2)) to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the matters set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 1 (FSR2k2).	25/06/05
4	28(5)(b)	FS22	The Fostering Service Provider shall make arrangements to review the Foster Care Agreements with reference to each of the points specified in schedule 5 (FSR2k2).	25/06/05

5	30,31 & 32	FS25	The Fostering Service Provider shall ensure that the records required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are kept and maintained by the fostering service in accordance with the and include the detail specified in the regulations.	25/06/05

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 manager of the fostering service should take into account the needs of different groups of children and young people placed by the fostering service and if found to be necessary ensure the children's guide is produced in different formats to meet these needs.
2	FS22	The Fostering Service Manager should make arrangements to issue (or if applicable reissue) the Foster Care Agreement at each formal review that is undertaken regarding individual foster carers suitability to foster, and their approval status; update it where necessary and for each party to sign their agreement in the first instance and / or subsequently where changes to the foster carers approval status have been made.
3	FS22	The fostering service provider should ensure each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker that meets regularly with the foster carers thus providing the opportunity to supervise the foster carers' work.

* 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	12
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	07/02/04
Time of Inspection	0930
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	30

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?

3

A statement of purpose and children's guide has been published in line with the standard. Both documents are subject to review with the latest proposed amendments and additions going to the board in March 2005. Children and young people have been involved in and contributed to the review of the children's guide. Amendments to the statement of purpose are to include the description of service provision and management structure in order to reflect ongoing developments and changes within the organisation. The manager of the fostering service should take into account the needs of different groups of children and young people placed by the fostering service and if found to be necessary ensure the guide is produced in different formats to meet these needs.

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?	2
<p>The manager of the service is suitably experienced and holds qualifications in social work though has yet to attain a suitable qualification in management. The overall findings of this inspection however indicate the manager has exercised effective leadership of the staff and operation of the service.</p>		

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The suitability of the registered persons to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children has been established in the registration process.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are systems in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service. These systems were not however backed up by a written quality assurance policy. Management information is produced and fed back to the registered manager and board of directors. The process to collate, utilise and present this information with the purpose of reporting on and improving the quality of care on an ongoing basis was poorly evidenced. It was very encouraging to note that this matter has been addressed in some detail and included in the business development plan for 2005. The manager and staff of the service were clear about their own and each other roles. Lines of accountability were well defined. In terms of statutory notifications to the commission, practice was under review leading up to the inspection as the manager had identified there had been shortfalls in this area. The number of notifications received does not reflect the number that ought to have been made. It is valid to note however that the findings at this inspection indicate that significant events recorded and sampled had all been followed up in a manner that promoted the welfare and safety of children and young people.

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.

2

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The overall findings of this inspection indicate the day-to-day operation of the fostering service is managed effectively. The manager has a job description. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined. There is a suitably qualified and designated person to deputise for the manager in their absence.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Four foster homes were visited during this inspection. These were seen to be warm, adequately furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. All the homes visited provided single rooms to the children being looked after as opposed to any of them being in a shared bedroom. Evidence obtained from annual reviews confirmed that homes are inspected annually and subject to health and safety checks. Training on health and safety is provided to carers, however it remains outstanding for some. A recommendation is made to cover this. Guidelines are provided regarding carers health and safety responsibilities. Discussions with staff confirmed that transport provided is safe and appropriate to the child's needs. Carers understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.</p>		

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Evidence obtained from discussions with children, carers and agency staff confirmed that children's placements reflect their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. The recruitment of panel members, staff and therapists reflects the diversity of the children/young people referred. Evidence obtained through discussion with education staff also confirmed that diversity is valued, recognised and celebrated in the education provided by the agency. Given the diversity of placements that carers have had, it was possible to note that the training provided had been varied and wide ranging. Discussions with children verified that they were able to develop and pursue their talents, interests and hobbies. Evidence obtained from discussion with social workers, therapists, teachers, carers and children confirmed that all staff work closely together in a holistic manner to enhance children's confidence and feelings of self worth. Some training has been provided in relation to preserving each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background, however this has not been attended by all carers. A recommendation has been made in relation to this. Observation of the panel confirmed a good awareness of these issues. The therapy department provides consultation for foster carers in relation to the issues outlined above. Discussions with foster carers demonstrated that children with disabilities receive specific services and support to lead as full a life as possible.</p>		

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**

Evidence obtained during the inspection confirmed that matches are achieved through means of information sharing and collaboration between professionals. The process is taken very seriously. Senior managers from education, therapy, and social work departments meet together and consider issues such as racial, religious, cultural and linguistic needs, other children in placement, proximity to schools etc.

In spite of the collaborative approach, written evidence regarding matching was not readily available. Foster placement agreements do not contain specific reference to elements of matching taken into account when the placement was made and neither did they consistently identify support to compensate for any gaps. In one case the agency's matching process was not consistent with the behaviour management policy and once identified, the agency was slow to compensate for any gaps. A recommendation is made in relation to this. When considering foster carers annual reviews, all specific evidence in relation to carer's particular circumstances should be incorporated into the recommendation made by the panel regarding the approval status of carers. Where practicable each child has the opportunity for a period of introduction to a proposed foster carer, however one child would have liked this extended to cover a whole day. All emergency placements with the agency are made initially for an eight-week assessment period. This is to enable the child to voice their opinion of the placement and to gather more information, and assess the match. An example was seen of a child's wish for one to one attention being reflected in the choice of carer

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**

Evidence obtained from documentation and discussions with staff and foster carers confirmed that all staff and foster carers undertake training in protecting children from harm and promoting children's safety and welfare. The agency could consider updating this training at yearly intervals. Safe caring guidelines were in place on the foster carers files, however a recommendation is made to ensure that these are specific to each child in placement and updated with each change of placement. Information obtained at the time of referral regarding a child's specific needs in this regard to be reflected in the safe care plan. Foster carer agreements contain reference to the unacceptability of corporal punishment. Management systems to collate and evaluate information regarding the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care were in place and of a high standard.

Information obtained during the course of the inspection demonstrated that carers clearly identified an incident of bullying and responded appropriately. The amount of written information obtained about the foster child is variable. Examination of files confirmed that the agency is proactive in its attempts to obtain information from local authorities. Conversations with foster carers demonstrated that the agency has a clear written procedure for use when a child is missing from home and that this had been put into practise.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Discussions with staff and carers demonstrated that the agency has a strong commitment to maintaining and developing family contacts. Facilities provided by the agency for this purpose reflect this commitment. Evidence obtained from questionnaires demonstrated that carers pursue contact via letters, phone calls and travelling long distances. The proximity to another family member was taken into consideration when matching a child with a particular carer and evidence obtained from discussions with foster carers and social workers confirmed that the maintenance, monitoring and reviewing of contact takes a high priority. Documentation from LAC reviews and foster carers annual reviews indicates that the views of the child or young person are sought in relation to contact arrangements. Arrangements for supervising contact are well documented in the foster placement agreement. Transport for contact is provided by the agency.

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?	4
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Young people provided both written and verbal feedback, which indicated that their views are sought in relation to most areas of their lives, apart from the way in which the agency is run. Discussions with social workers from the agency demonstrated their commitment to listening to the views of the children and young people. Children's views are sought as part of their own statutory reviews and as part of the foster carers annual review process. Evidence obtained from the children's guide, discussion with children and information provided by the agency's complaints officer demonstrates that children know how to raise complaints or concerns and that these are taken very seriously. Foster carers birth children are also consulted by a social worker with responsibility for the foster families. The inspector attended a consultation group for children and young people. Children are empowered by this group and have been enabled to voice their views about their care in parliament. Their contributions have contributed to the new guidance regarding overnight stays. This was highly commended by the inspector and an indication that the agency exceeds this standard.

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?**

4

The fostering service is well informed about health services available in the area it covers. Evidence obtained from discussions with foster carers confirmed that children's health requirements are taken into consideration when placements are made and in one case a child's very specific needs were matched with a carers medical expertise. Before placement, carers are provided with a description of the child's health needs and procedures governing consent. The agency has developed written health care plans for all children. Foster carers receive training on health and hygiene issues and also training which relates to more specific issues such as autism and dyspraxia. The inspector observed a training session on sexually transmitted diseases, which was of a high quality. Discussion with and carers confirmed that they have a clear understanding of their role in terms of helping to promote the health of any child in their care and also acting as an advocate on the child's behalf. Children are registered with doctors and dentists. The agency demonstrated close links with health agencies and has developed its own therapeutic services to a high degree. Discussions with therapists and foster carers indicated that therapy is an integral part of the package provided by the agency and that the emotional and social development of children is given a very high priority. 16 therapists are employed by the agency and offer a wide range of therapies, for example art and play therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, psychotherapy. The agency has the resources to match the therapeutic input to the individual needs of children. The service provided was considered by the inspectors to be an example of excellent practise.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The agency runs a primary school in Rainham and two secondary schools in both Sittingbourne and Teynham. The schools cater for a wide range of children, including those with specific learning difficulties, behavioural problems and language difficulties. The school at Teynham was viewed by the inspector and was seen to reflect the holistic approach of the agency. The buildings were of a very high standard, and offered an environment, which the inspector considered to be particularly conducive to learning. Discussion with the head of the Sittingbourne school demonstrated that the agency's integrated approach to working with children is reflected in the education provided. Communication between everyone involved with the child is prioritised and meetings are held to plan strategies in response to incidents at school or at home. Carers confirm that there is excellent communication between themselves and the school and evidenced that they provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. The agency has education systems to demonstrate the educational achievement of children and young people and these reflect the agency's commendable commitment to ensuring that all children achieve their full potential. The agency also provides support to children in mainstream school and ensures that their successes are celebrated.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Clear requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent living are set out by the agency. Training has been provided to carers to enable them to provide support and guidance to young people preparing to move into independent living. Evidence obtained from young people during the inspection confirmed that they are consulted regarding their future and that there is a system in place to pursue local authorities in the provision of Pathway Plans.

The inspector was informed of the agency's intention to recruit a suitably qualified person to further develop this area of work

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are established recruitment and selection procedures applicable to staff working in the fostering service. Recruitment records contained the majority of checks and processes specified in the standard and required by regulation. They did not however demonstrate how gaps in employment histories were identified and the reasons for these gaps subsequently checked, nor where a person had previously worked in a position whose duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended. Conversations with social work staff indicated that they had a high level of understanding with regard to their role and function.

Total number of staff of the agency:

153

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

18

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The management structure was well defined and understood by those whom were spoken to. Lines of accountability have been established. Staff performance is monitored and supervised on an ongoing basis. In terms of delegating tasks and responsibilities there are established job / service descriptions that govern to a reasonable extent the remit and scope of individuals practice. Workload is managed, monitored and tasks assigned to respective personal by individual managers overseeing and coordinating specific areas of the operation. Assessments, approvals and reviews of carers have been managed and implemented effectively. Social work staff access professional supervision and consultation via the line management process. Ongoing training and development is encouraged and supported for both carers and staff working for the agency. Administrative systems, personal and equipment are commensurate with the demands of the service.

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The staffing arrangements are in line with the statement of purpose and the needs of the fostering service. Foster carers have commented there is always someone from the agency to talk to or provide support when the need has arisen. Placing authorities have been complimentary about the service provided and of the quality of staff and foster carers of the agency. Young people and children placed with foster carers have commented positively about the foster carers looking after them. There are good overall levels of staff retention. Staff have expressed ownership and pride in the service and that they valued the opportunity they had to work within the agency. Foster Carers have been recruited, assessed and approved in line with the standards and regulations.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Foster carers and staff who have expressed an opinion either in writing or verbally have been unanimous in providing positive feedback about their experience of working within the agency. Out of hours management and support services are available for foster carers. The system for carer supervision and support is addressed in the text to standards twenty-one and twenty two. Carers benefit from an appraisal process in the context of their annual review. Health and safety policies and procedures are in place in relation to staff, carers and looked after children / young people. It has been confirmed that public liability and professional indemnity insurance is in place.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There is a clear strategy for the training and development of staff involved in fostering work through induction, post-qualifying and in-service training. A system of performance review / annual review takes into account development needs, which then informs individual training and development plans. Development needs have been addressed using a variety of methods including training, group discussion, mentoring and guided reading. Training provision is monitored, it is linked to the training and development plans of staff and carers thus relates to the tasks assigned to them. Conversations with social workers, advisory foster carers, administrative personnel and heads of service confirmed that each was well informed and up to date with developments in their areas of expertise. Training programmes are routinely evaluated. The overall training programme for foster carers is reviewed annually and amendments made as necessary. Joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers is held on a regular basis. Action plans and targets concerning training are included in the agencies business development plan.

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

Staff spoken to knew whom they were accountable to. They were complimentary about the support they received; this included formal systems of support via line management and supervision and more informal support for instance ad hoc advice and consultancy from their peers and senior colleagues. Job descriptions have been developed detailing what is expected in terms of the capacity in which staff are employed. All staff members receive management supervision; a record is kept of the content of the supervision and of progress made. A system of staff appraisal is in operation. Regular staff meetings are held; it was confirmed that each member of staff has the opportunity to attend and contribute to these meetings.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

There is a clear strategy for working with foster carers. Foster carers have expressed verbally and in writing that they are well supported by the agency. The strategy used is innovative; it recognises and utilises the experience, knowledge and capabilities of experienced foster carers. A small group of the agencies most experienced foster carers are employed as advisory foster carers to provide day-to-day guidance and support to other carers' on fostering issues. Advisory carers spoken to during this inspection were supporting up to sixteen families and working to a well-defined service description outlining their principal responsibilities. They are supervised and managed in this role and have access to professional support, consultation and advice. They work in close partnership with social workers also employed by the agency. These social workers primary role is to work with the looked after child / young person(s) placed, liaise with the placing authority and ensure the placement plan is complied with and that the needs of the child / young person are being met. Whilst acknowledging the added value that this arrangement can and has brought to foster care provided by the agency the inspector was concerned that such an arrangement may be in breach of regulations. The matter has been discussed and legal and professional advice has been sought on the matter. Advice to date has been non prescriptive therefore no recommendation or requirement is made in this report.

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

The fostering service and foster carers are obliged to enter into an agreement that sets out what is expected from the fostering service, the foster carers and placing authorities. In each of the carers files sampled there was evidence of such an agreement however the agreements did not address all of the areas specified in the regulations. There were no arrangements for a named and suitably qualified social worker to meet regularly with foster carers in order to provide practice supervision. The system to provide practical support to foster carers includes respite care, out of hours support, social work support, prompt payments and also encompasses the arrangements described in the text to standard twenty-one. Fosters carers are provided with a handbook and other documents relating to practice as a foster carer. Information about how to make a complaint or representation has been widely distributed.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a comprehensive programme of pre-approval and induction training for carers. Training is evaluated on an ongoing basis and updated to reflect developments in the operation of the service and developments in good practice. Carers have been supported to gain recognised national qualifications and develop skills relevant to the needs of the children and young people placed with them.

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

Comprehensive case records were being maintained by the service with regard to children and young people being looked after. The records included information regarding the care and support to be provided on an individual basis. Foster carers commented that the service has been proactive in providing them with information regarding children and young people referred to and placed with them. Carers were aware of the need to maintain records and to store them securely though there was an apparent need to clarify the purpose and ownership of the records kept.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Administrative records required by regulations were being maintained though in some instances required additional details for example in the childrens register and in the records recording individual placements with foster carers. The fostering service maintains records relating to foster carers in terms of their assessment, approval, subsequent reviews, and support meetings. There is a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely. Records of complaints and allegations are recorded including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken. Separate records are also kept which bring together data on allegations and on complaints.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

165

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

77

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

68

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

34

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

25

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

375.48

Maximum £

450.52

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

The agency has large identifiable premises in the centre of Sittingbourne. The inspector also viewed office premises at Whitstable. The agency has developed robust and efficient administrative systems, which include IT, and communication systems. The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room and measures have been taken to secure electronic data. The premises provide an equipped base from which staff work. The buildings offer a particularly welcoming and attractive working environment where the needs of staff, children and carers have been carefully considered. Premises are also used for training, meetings and supervised contact visits.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Financial records show that the agency is viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. Regulations and guidelines imposed upon businesses are conformed to as indicated by the most recent financial audit report.

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

Financial processes are subject to independent financial auditing; no irregularities in the financial processes have been identified. There are documented financial arrangements for control and supervision of the agencies financial affairs and powers. It was confirmed that information on the financial state of the agency is provided to the registered provider on a regular basis. There is a clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses. Information concerning charges to be made is available to purchasers and others with a legitimate interest as appropriate.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster carers receive an allowance and agreed expenses. Foster carers have confirmed that payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually. There is a written policy on fostering allowances. This and the current allowance levels are included in information provided to foster carers.

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

An observation of the panel in operation and a discussion with the panel chair was included in the process of the inspection. The panel was provided with adequate information relating to reviews and assessments prior to the meeting taking place. There are clear written procedures that cover decision making when unanimous decisions have not been reached. Discussion with the panel chair confirmed that these policies are reflected in the operation of the panel. The panel chair also demonstrated a clear understanding of the functions of the panel. The panel has access to medical expertise. Evidence obtained from the panel chair and from observation of the panel confirmed that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. The panel's commitment to ensuring that the assessment process is fair to all applicants was evidenced in panel minutes and during the observation of the panel and the inspector considered this to be an example of good practise. The panel chair also meets with assessing social workers on a regular basis to try to ensure consistency in the assessment process. Meeting also take place between the panel chair and the panel advisor, which aim to develop reflective evaluation of the effectiveness of the panel. Observation of the panel confirmed that the panel receives management information about the outcomes of foster carers' reviews however these did not always fall within the regulatory timescale. A requirement has been made to address this shortfall. Independent members of the panel include expertise in education, child health and a person who has been placed with foster 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?
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This standard was not applicable to the agency at the time of the inspection.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This standard was not applicable to the agency at the time of the inspection.	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not applicable.

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on the 7th to the 11th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

This was a thorough, detailed and rigorous inspection, which was very much welcomed by ISP. We viewed the experience as a collaborative one with opportunities for learning and development by all parties. All staff, foster carers and young people who participated in the process enjoyed it – some gave the agency helpful feedback in terms of future inspections.

At ISP we have become concerned about the focus some bodies place on the score obtained, to the exclusion of other factors. We very much hope that people will read the text of this report to gain a fuller understanding of ISP's service and good practice, as indeed urged by the C.S.C.I.

Jayne Westcott
Registered Manager

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

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 27 May 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

NO

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 Jane Westcott of Integrated Services Programme 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	<u>Jane Westcott</u>
Signature	<u>On file</u>
Designation	<u>Registered Manager</u>
Date	<u>10.06.05</u>

Or

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

Print Name	_____
Signature	_____
Designation	_____
Date	_____

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

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S0000036876.V202620.R01

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