

inspection report

Fostering Services

North Tyneside Fostering Service

Children`s Services
Camden House
Camden Street
North Shields
NE30 1NH

7th March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION	
Local Authority Fostering Service?	YES
Name of Authority North Tyneside Fostering Service	
Address Children`s Services, Camden House, Camden Street, North Shields, NE30 1NH	
Local Authority Manager Paula Gibbons	Tel No: 0191 200 5000
Address Children`s Services, Camden House, Camden Street,	Fax No:
North Shields, NE30 1NH	Email Address
Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)	NO
Name of Agency	Tel No
Address	Fax No
	Email Address
Registered Number of IFA	
Name of Registered Provider	
Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)	
Date of first registration Date of	latest registration certificate
Registration Conditions Apply ?	
Date of last inspection 22/3/04	

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Dennis Bradley	074426
Name of Inspector	2	Hilary Stewart	151548
Name of Inspector	3	Glynis Gaffney	074449
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable Lay assessors are members of the	•		
independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some			
inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.	ess.		
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Paula Gibbons	

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 North Tyneside 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.

North Tyneside Fostering Service is part of the Family Support and Placement Service, which is based at Children's Services, Camden House, Camden Street, North Shields. The Fostering Service recruits, assesses and supports foster carers to provide a range of placements to children and young people including a short break care service for children with disabilities. The Fostering Team now has responsibility for assessing and supporting long term foster carers and the Service has been developed to include an Immediate Placement Scheme and Assessment Foster Carers.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Service was supporting approximately 146 foster care placements. The Service was operating with a staff team of 14 including the administrative support staff.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This is the report of an announced inspection.

The purpose of the inspection is:

- a) to assess progress made towards meeting requirements and recommendations (where applicable) from the previous inspection
- b) to assess the service against the National Minimum Standards.

This inspection focussed on key standards in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services along with other standards that were judged to be necessary. This is in line with the current CSCI policy of proportionality. As a result there are a number of standards in the report that have not been assessed.

Standard 1 - Statement of Purpose

This Standard was not assessed but was met at the time of the last inspection.

Standards 2 and 3 - Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.

Both of these standards were met.

The Manager of the Fostering Team had a Diploma in Social Work and had significant experience of working with children. The Manager demonstrated a good knowledge of the operation of the Service and an awareness of its strengths and areas for development. The Manager was undertaking training leading to suitable management qualification.

Standards 4 and 5 - Management of the Fostering Service

Neither of these standards was assessed. Both of these standards were met at the time of the previous inspection.

Arrangements were in place to monitor the operation of the Service. Staff interviewed were clear about their roles and lines of accountability. The Senior Social Worker provides cover in the Manager's absence.

Standards 6 to 14 - Securing and Promoting Welfare

8 of these 9 standards were assessed. 6 were met and 2 were nearly met. The other standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

The assessment process for new foster carers was comprehensive and had been developed to include a specific Health and Safety audit. There was evidence that the specific needs of children and young people were given consideration when foster placements were arranged. Action had been taken to reduce the demand for short term and emergency placements. There was evidence that young people were consulted about their care plans and that arrangements were in place to enable young people to voice their opinions about their experience of being in care. It was evident that the promotion of young peoples health, development and achievement was taken seriously by the Council. The health care needs of children and young people were given consideration when placements were arranged and at formal reviews of the placements. A 'Raising Health and Education for LAC' (RHELAC) Team had been established to provide a more integrated service aimed at promoting the welfare of looked after children. Arrangements were in place for children and young people

to receive an initial health assessment within 28 days of being accommodated. Where young people in foster care refused to attend, or were excluded from school, support was available for the young people and their foster carers. A Safe Caring Policy had been prepared and issued to all foster carers. Action was being taken to ensure that suitable safe caring guidelines were in place for each foster home.

<u>Standards 15 to 23 - Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers.</u>

4 of these 9 standards were assessed and 3 were met 1 was nearly met. The other 5 standards were met at the time of the previous inspection.

The Council's recruitment and selection procedures had been reviewed. The Service had a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Support included membership of Fostering Network. A system was in place to provide regular supervision to all foster carers. The Foster Care Handbook had been updated and issued to all foster carers. Out-of-hours support arrangements were in place via the Emergency Duty Team. The provision of a dedicated out of office hours telephone service for foster carers was still under consideration. Procedures were in place covering the assessment, approval and review of foster carers and in general these were implemented effectively. The Service had a recruitment policy and strategy aimed at recruiting a range of foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people living in North Tyneside.

Standards 24 and 25 - Records

Both of these standards were nearly met.

There were written policies regarding case recording and what information should be held on children's files and foster carers' files. In general, appropriate records were maintained in respect of children although there were delays in foster carers receiving appropriate documentation. Foster carers confirmed that they knew why a child is placed with them and the basis for the placement. Foster carers have access to training on Life Storey Work.

Standard 26 - Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service

This standard was not assessed. However it was met at the time of the previous inspection.

Standards 27 to 29 - Financial Requirements

2 of these standards were not applicable and the third was not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

Standard 30 - Fostering Panels

This standard was not met in full.

The Fostering Service Panel was observed to work thoroughly and effectively. Arrangements were in place to be provide the Panel with the appropriate information to enable it to carry out its monitoring functions. The Panel's policies and procedures had been reviewed. Panel members were provided with training and had individual training pathways.

Standard 31 - Short Term Breaks

This standard was met.

Significant progress had been made in integrating the Short Break Care Service into the Fostering Service. There was more consistency in the way carers were assessed and reviewed. The Short Break Care Service had policies and procedures aimed at meeting the particular needs of children and families who use the service. There was evidence that a careful and considered matching process took place to ensure that each child or young person was matched with a carer who could meet their assessed needs.

Standard 32 - Family and Friends as Carers This standard was not met. The Service was sensitive to pre-existing relationships when assessing and approving family and friends as carers. This process needed to comply fully with the Service's own Fostering Procedures and the Fostering Services regulations 2002.

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	NO
satisfies the regulatory requirements:	
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	NO
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:	
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
Willott to flot continuorou cubotantiuri.	
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
Tostering Service.	
The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:	

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

|--|

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	20	FS15	Take action to ensure full compliance with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	30/9/04
2	34	FS9FS8	Take action to ensure that foster placement agreements are completed prior to the commencement of a placement. Develop the Foster Carer Agreement document to clearly set out the expectation that foster carers comply with the Service's policies on child protection and bullying.	30/10/04
3	38	FS32	Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure compliance with Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 in respect of the assessment and approval of relatives and friends as foster carers.	30/12/04

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition		Compliance
Comments		
Condition		Compliance
Comments		
Condition		Compliance
Comments		
Condition		Compliance
Comments		
Regulatory Inspector	Dennis Bradley	Signature
Second Inspectors	Hilary Stewart and Glynis Gaffney	Signature
Regulation Manager	Fiona Millns	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 Reguirements for fostering services.

No.			Requirement	
1	20	FS15	Take action to ensure full compliance with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Ensure that, where a person has previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended is obtained. Maintain a record of the outcome of such checks. Copies of CRB disclosures must be kept until the next CSCI inspection before they are destroyed. Copies of disclosures should not be kept on the personnel files but should be held separately in secure storage. Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure that CRB checks, in respect of all people working in or for the Agency, are renewed every three years.	30/5/05

2	34	FS9FS8	Take action to ensure that foster placement agreements are completed prior to the commencement of a placement or, where a child is placed in an emergency under Regulation 38(1), within 24 hours of the placement commencing. Develop the Foster Carer Agreement document to clearly set out the expectation that foster carers comply with the Service's policies on child protection and bullying.	30/5/05
3	38 & 34	FS32	Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure compliance with Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 in respect of the assessment and approval of relatives and friends as foster carers. In the case of an immediate placement under Regulation 38 the Council must arrange for the child to be visited at least once a week during the placement.	30/7/05
4	16	FS13	Ensure that, where appropriate, Personal Education Plans are in place for each young person and that these are kept under review. Foster carers should be involved in the preparation of the Plans for the young people in their care.	30/7/05

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).

	COHOR	acrea for imp	implementation by the Authority of Registered Ferson(s).	
No. Refer to Rec		Refer to	Recommendation Action	
		Standard *		
	1	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should clearly refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and the action required to compensate for identified gaps.	
	2	FS24	Ensure that the relevant information and Looked After Children documentation is made available promptly to foster carers as set out in the Children's Services Function's own procedures.	

3	FS25	Ensure that records of complaints and allegations include details of the action taken and the outcome of any investigation.

^{*} 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

Currey of placing authorities	YES				
Survey of placing authorities					
Foster carer survey					
Foster children survey	YES				
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES				
 Directors of Social services 	NO				
 Child protection officer 	YES				
 Specialist advisor (s) 	NO				
 Local Foster Care Association 	NO				
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES				
 Interview with children 	YES				
 Interview with foster carers 	YES				
 Interview with agency staff 	YES				
 Contact with parents 	NO				
 Contact with supervising social workers 	YES				
 Examination of files 	YES				
Individual interview with manager	YES				
Information from provider					
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					
Inspection of records					
Interview with individual child	YES				

Date of Inspection	7/3/05
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	82

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

[&]quot;0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

[&]quot;9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

[&]quot;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? 0

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

The Manager of the Fostering Team had a Diploma in Social Work and had significantly more than the required length of experience of working with children. The Manager demonstrated a good knowledge of the operation of the Service and an awareness of its strengths and areas for development. There was evidence that the Manager exercised appropriate leadership of staff. All of the staff interviewed said that they felt well supported by the Manager during what had been a period of major change in the organisation of the Service. The Manager had commenced a Post Graduate Certificate in Management that was equivalent to NVQ Level 5. She was due to complete this training in June 2005.

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?

A Criminal Records Bureau check had been carried out in respect of the Manager in January 2004. Arrangements were in place to ensure that this check would be renewed every three years. There was evidence that records were kept of checks and references that had been obtained.

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 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?		
Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspe	ection.	
Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	7	_
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.	0	
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		

		·
Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and effici	ently.	
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time	e of the previous ir	spection.

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

foster home.

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

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?

Arrangements were in place to ensure that foster carers provide a safe and healthy environment.

Foster carers receive written guidance regarding health and safety and this is covered in the assessment and initial training of carers. Issues regarding smoking and the use of alcohol are also discussed as part of a carer's assessment. Arrangements were in place for a health and safety check to be carried out in relation to a prospective foster carer's accommodation and any vehicles that they might use to transport foster children. These checks will also be carried out as part of the annual review of each carer's approval. The Foster Carers Training Matrix was being developed to include post approval training in health and safety.

The standard of accommodation in the homes of those foster carers who were visited as part of the inspection was satisfactory. There were examples of children sharing bedrooms with other foster children or the children of carers. There was also an example of one child in a kinship care placement having to share a bedroom with the carers. However, it was also noted that another kinship carer was being supported by the Council to obtain a larger house.

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

There was evidence that, when foster placements were being arranged, consideration was given as to how the specific needs of the children and young people could be best met. The Service provided a range of foster care placements to meet the needs of young people and this included a Contract Carers Scheme for children with disabilities. There were examples where placements had not met all of a child's needs and additional support had been provided, such as the services of an interpreter, or training for the carers in alternative or augmentative communication such as Maketon. The Council was collaborating with other services in the region to develop a strategy for the recruitment of black and ethnic minority foster carers

Diversity and anti discriminatory practice were covered in the assessment and initial training of foster carers. Foster carers received written guidance on valuing diversity. Post approval training was being developed to include training aimed at promoting foster carers' understanding of diversity and anti-discriminatory practice issues.

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?

It was evident that efforts were made to ensure a suitable match between a young person and a foster carer takes place. Although the availability of placement choice was still quite limited, staff in the Fostering Team said that there was the opportunity for the considered matching of children and young people with carers who were capable of meeting their assessed needs. The involvement of the LAC Teacher on the Directorate's Resource Panel meant that the educational needs of children were taken into account when placements were being considered. There was also evidence that more placements were being planned rather than being made in an emergency. Plans were in place for two members of the social work team to concentrate on working with long-term carers and to take up the role of 'family finder' for children who had been assessed as requiring long-term placements.

It was confirmed that foster carers and, whenever possible, Fostering Team social workers were involved in the matching process and that, where possible, children usually had the opportunity for introductory visits to a proposed foster carer before moving in.

A proforma was being used at placement agreement meetings to ensure that the required information was obtained. In addition, social workers in the Fostering Team were taking the responsibility for arranging and chairing these meetings. This had lead to an improvement in how quickly these meetings took place and in the information provided to foster carers at the outset of a placement.

However, there were still examples of delays in placement agreements being completed and in foster carers receiving relevant information. One foster carer described how, even though she attended a planning meeting regarding the placement of a young child, there was no introductory visit and the child was brought to her home with her belongings in a plastic bag. The social worker had left the child with the carer without giving her any information regarding the child's routines and preferences and without leaving any documentation. There were examples of placement agreements that did not refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration in agreeing the placement.

Of the 62 children's social workers who completed a questionnaire, 61 confirmed that the foster carers were looking after the child in accordance with the foster placement agreement.

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?

The Fostering service had arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people in foster care. These included:

- Preparatory training for foster carers included: 'Strategies for Safe Caring'; 'Child Sexual Abuse'; 'Positive Parenting and Managing Behaviour'; 'Abuse and Dealing With It'. Post approval training included Safe Caring; Caring For The Sexually Abused Child; Managing Behaviour and Child Protection;
- A Safe Caring Policy had been prepared and issued to all foster carers. Action was being taken to ensure that suitable safe caring guidelines were in place for each foster home;
- Foster carers received written guidance setting out the Council's expectations regarding
 the managing of behaviour, the action to be taken if a foster child was missing from home
 and, how to recognise and deal with bullying. Post approval training for carers included
 'Anti-bullying', 'Assertive Parenting' and 'Managing Behaviour'. It was noted that only 10
 carers had attended the anti-bullying training provided during the previous 12 months;
- Management systems were in place to collate information relating to child abuse or neglect.

All of the children's social workers who completed a questionnaire confirmed that they considered the child to be safe in their foster placement. 66 out of 67 indicated that they found the foster carers control practices acceptable.

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

Χ

%

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

Foster carers received written guidance and training regarding working in partnership with parents and supporting foster children to maintain and, where appropriate, develop their family contacts. Related procedures were also in place for social workers. It was evident that, where appropriate, the maintenance of contact with a child's family and friends was a consideration when placements were being arranged.

There was evidence that contact arrangements were usually clarified and agreed at the outset of a placement. However, one newly approved carer said that they had been asked to supervise contact between a child and their family without being given any guidance about how to do this. The child had been placed in an emergency and the carer had not received a visit from a social worker during the first 10 days of the placement. Those foster carers interviewed were aware of the contact arrangements and were complying with them. Foster carers interviewed were aware of their responsibility to maintain records of the outcomes of contact arrangements. Some foster carers supervised contact between children and their families and they received payment for carrying out this responsibility.

44 out of 45 children's social workers confirmed that, where a child was subject to restrictions on contact, they were satisfied with Fostering Service's management of these

restrictions.		

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

There was evidence that the Council had put in place arrangements to consult with foster children and their families. These included:

- Foster children's views were sought as part of the annual reviews of foster carers and at the end of placements;
- Children are asked to complete a consultation form for their LAC review and they can attend if they wish;
- The computer programme Viewpoint had been purchased to facilitate looked after children expressing their views about the Service and the Council via the internet. Some foster carers required training in using computers in order to help the children in their care use the programme;
- Young people in foster care had been involved in the Council's Corporate Parenting Review:
- Young people in foster care were involved in 'Children's Link' a group for young people in the looked after system. This group met regularly and had been consulted regarding leaflets and other documents issued to young people as well as piloting the Viewpoint programme. The group had been involved in developing the Council's Participation Strategy and also met with the Director of Social Services every 2 months. A 'Make A Difference Day' had been facilitated by an independent agency. Consideration was being given as to how to feedback to the young people the outcomes of the various consultations that had taken place;
- The council had a Participation Officer who had been doing activity based work with a group of young people.

The preparatory training for carers emphasises the need to listen to the views of children and young people. Children also received visits from their social workers. 14 children responded to a questionnaire. 9 indicated that their foster carers 'often' asked for their opinions and ideas, 5 indicated 'sometimes'. 7 indicated that the Fostering Service had asked for their opinion about how the service could be improved. 4 indicated that their social worker 'often' saw them on their own to ask their opinions, 6 indicated 'sometimes' and 4 'never'. There were examples where social workers were not visiting children at the required frequency. One child, who had been in a foster placement for 6 months, had only been visited by their social worker at the foster carer's home on 2 occasions. Children were provided with information explaining how they can raise any complaints or concerns. This information was available in different formats, including a subtitled video in sign language. 12 children confirmed that they had received this information.

North Tyneside has a nationally recognised 'Children Who Foster' support group, which is concerned with promoting the interests of foster carers children. This group had held workshops aimed at developing practice within fostering services and had won a national award.

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?

It was evident that the promotion of young peoples health and development was taken seriously. The Council had a Looked After Children (LAC) Health Team that was responsible for coordinating and overseeing the general health needs of children and young people. This team was to be part of the newly established 'Raising Health and Education for LAC' (RHELAC) Team to provide a more integrated service aimed at promoting the welfare of looked after children. The team also includes 2 paediatricians and a clinical psychologist. Arrangements were in place for children and young people to receive an initial health assessment within 28 days of being accommodated. A database collates relevant health information to enable effective monitoring. The Council has also implemented the National Healthy Care Training Programme aimed at supporting carers to promote the health and well being of children.

There was evidence that the health care needs of children and young people were given consideration when placements were arranged and at formal reviews of the placements. Foster carers usually received appropriate information regarding the health care needs of the children and young people placed with them although one carer said that it took weeks to establish whether a child had had certain immunisations. Social work staff had good links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and access to assessment and treatment could be negotiated.

Written guidance was in place for foster carers regarding health and medical issues. Training in health and hygiene issues, first aid and health promotion was available. Those foster carers interviewed were able to demonstrate their awareness of the health needs of the young people placed with them. Foster carers were provided with a Health File for recording relevant information about each child.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? | 2

The Council promoted the education and achievement of children and young people in foster care.

The newly formed RHELAC Team included 3 teachers, a learning mentor and an educational psychologist. Priorities for the team included supporting Year 11 children to achieve at least 1 GCSE and to improve the school attendance statistics for looked after children. The latter had been made more difficult because of the number of fixed term exclusions. School attendance was being monitored by a private company. The databases of the Education and Social Services Directorates needed to be integrated to enable the collection of more accurate information about exclusions and to enable more effective monitoring. In addition to the RHELAC Team providing 1:1 support to children and young people, sessional tutors were being recruited to provide after school tuition. Teachers from the National Teachers Advisory Service, an independent agency, had also been used to

provide 1:1 support to children.

An 'Accelerated Learning Provision' was available for children who have been permanently excluded from school, this aimed to provide a minimum of 25 hours education a week for such children. There was a waiting list for this service. Outreach support was available to provide respite to foster carers who were looking after children who were not attending school. The use of this support had reduced significantly during the previous year.

Preparatory training and post approval training for foster carers covered the promotion of the educational achievement of children in their care. However, the 'Choices' programme of training, devised by Fostering Network, had still not been made available to carers. All those foster carers who had applied had been provided with computers. These were for the use of foster children to aid their educational progress. However, some foster carers needed training in their use in order to assist the children in their care.

In the sample of children's case files examined there was no evidence of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for one child and the PEP for another had not been updated, following their move to high school in September 2004. The foster carer for this child had not been involved in the preparation of the PEP that was in place. This child had been supported by a mentor in primary school and it was identified that this support would be required when they moved to high school. However, there had been a delay of nearly 6 months before a mentor was allocated. The PEP for another child had only been partially completed.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 0

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

A sample of staff files was examined these were clearly organised and well maintained. The files contained the majority of the information specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations 2002. However, in respect of one recently appointed member of staff, there was no evidence that, where the person had worked with children and vulnerable adults, the reason why their employment or position had ended had been verified.

There was evidence that police checks or Criminal Records Bureau checks had been carried out in respect of staff and foster carers and arrangements had been put in place to have these renewed every three years. However, there were examples of delays in renewing the checks of some carers. Copies of CRB disclosures must be kept until the next CSCI inspection before they are destroyed. Copies of disclosures should be held separately in secure storage.

There was evidence that the Fostering Team social workers were appropriately qualified and Documentary evidence of relevant qualifications was available in the experienced. personnel files examined. Those social workers interviewed demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role.

Total number of staff of the	1.1	Number of staff who have left the	1
agency:	14	agency in the past 12 months:	ı

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 0

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?

The Fostering Service had a stable core staff team and there was relatively low turnover of staff in the social work team. Social work staff interviewed said that at times the Service was stretched, particularly when foster placements required significant levels of support. A workload management system had been introduced and the Manager advised that staffing levels were being kept under review in light of the Fostering Team now being responsible for the assessment of long term foster carers and the assessment of family and friends carers. The budget for 2005/06 included finance for an additional social worker and an administrative assistant. The service employed an Independent Reviewing Officer and an agency social worker was also employed to take on the caseload of a member of staff who was attending a course of training.

Examination of the Service's procedures and process for recruiting and approving foster carers indicated that the process was thorough. The assessment of foster carers included the use of a competency-based assessment. The assessment format used by the Service was being reviewed. People who have completed the preparatory training and assessment process are asked to complete a questionnaire. The information obtained is used to inform the way training is provided and how assessments are carried out. The Service had a recruitment policy and strategy aimed at recruiting a range of foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people living in North Tyneside.

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?

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 0

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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

The Service had a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Support included membership of Fostering Network, which provides access to a legal advice helpline and an independent advice and conciliation service. If allegations are made against a carer they can obtain independent support commissioned by the Service from an independent provider. Monthly support groups were held although attendance could be improved. The short break carers' support group met every 3 months. Other support included the provision of respite care and out of hours support provided by an Emergency Duty Team.

Those family placement workers and foster carers who were interviewed were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. The Service's Procedures included guidance regarding the supervision of foster carers. Although there were examples of good communication between the Fostering Team and the fieldwork teams, work needed to be done to improve communication and collaboration between the teams. Action was being take to address this.

There was evidence, in the sample of carers' files examined, that reviews of carers were being carried out and that the review reports were available to the Fostering Panel. The report arising from the first annual review of each foster carer is presented to the Fostering Panel and at least three yearly there afterwards.

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?

There was evidence that each approved foster carer, including kinship carers, was supervised by an appropriately qualified, named worker on a regular basis. Records were maintained of the visits that were carried out by the supervising social workers. There was evidence that unannounced visits to foster carers were being carried out.

The Service's Foster Care Agreement format contained clear expectations in relation to foster carers and the Local Authority. Foster carers receive a Handbook that contains information about the procedures for dealing with complaints and allegations. Handbook had recently been updated and issued as a CdROM. Records were being maintained of complaints and allegations.

Out-of-hours support arrangements were in place via the Emergency Duty Team. provision of a dedicated out of office hours telephone service for foster carers was still under consideration.

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? 0

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?

Policy and procedural guidance was in place regarding the purpose, content and structure of young peoples' and foster carers' files. The case records of young people in foster care were maintained by the relevant child-care social worker in the area teams.

Foster carers confirmed that they usually received sufficient information when children are placed with them. However, there were examples of delays in foster carers receiving the relevant Looked After Children (LAC) documentation. One carer interviewed had not received all the required documentation 6 months after a child had been placed with them. Another carer said that they had been waiting 12 months for a placement agreement for one child.

All of the foster carers interviewed confirmed that they understood why the young people were in their care as well as the purpose of the placement. They also demonstrated an understanding of the need to encourage, as appropriate, young people to reflect on and understand their past. Guidance regarding this was included in the preparatory training for foster carers and post-approval training programme included a session on Life Story Work. Foster carers were given hard backed bound books for each child in their care to record relevant information. They also received lockable storage to keep records relating to the children. There was evidence that carers were involved in reviews and case conferences.

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?

The Children's Register and Register of Foster Carers had been developed to include the required information. Separate records were maintained of allegations, complaints and accidents occurring to children whilst placed with foster carers. The records of complaints and allegations indicated that these had been treat seriously and were dealt with promptly. However, some of the records did not include information about the outcome of the investigations.

Arrangements were being put in place for more effective monitoring of the records concerning foster carers to ensure that they are satisfactory. A policy and procedures were in place for staff in the Children's Services Function in respect of access to, and the retention of, records. Current foster carer's records were stored in lockable filing cabinets in a

lockable cupboard.		
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	146	
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	X	
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £ X Maximum £	X	

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

? 0

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?

Not applicable.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 9

Not applicable.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 0

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?

There was evidence that the Fostering Panel was effective and robust in carrying out its quality assurance function in relation to the assessment and review of foster carers and carers in the Short Break Carer Scheme. Arrangements had been made to provide the Panel with the information to enable it to monitor the range and type of carers available to the Authority in comparison to the needs of children. However, the Panel Chair felt that the quality of the information could be improved. The Fostering Service Manager presented quarterly reports to the Panel regarding the operation of the Service and the Independent Reviewing Officer to presented regular reports about the outcomes of the annual reviews of foster carers. Panel members were provided with training and had individual training pathways. For example arrangements had been made for a newly recruited panel member to attend the preparatory training for carers. The Panel Chair and Panel Advisor had recently completed an annual report concerning the work of the Panel.

Evidence from the observation of a panel meeting, as well as an examination of panel minutes, indicated that the Fostering Panel members were well prepared and engaged in a thorough consideration of the information presented to them. The Panel Chair ensured that there was a structured decision making process and encouraged and facilitated the involvement of all the panel members in the consideration of the matters presented to the Panel. A questionnaire issued to newly approved carers includes questions about the Panel and the responses are used to inform practice. Prospective carers are also given a leaflet about the Panel, including details and photographs of panel members.

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?

North Tyneside had a Short Break Care Service for children with disabilities. mainstream foster carers also provided shared care to children with disabilities. Significant progress had been made in relation to the integration of the Short Break Care Scheme into the Fostering Service. For example, there was more consistency in the way carers were assessed and reviewed. There were closer working relationships between staff in the Fostering Team and the Children with Disabilities Service. Each short break carer had a named support worker who visited at least every 3 months. There was also evidence that the children's social workers visited regularly when the children were in placement.

The Short Break Care Scheme had policies and procedures aimed at meeting the particular needs of children and families who use the service. There was evidence that a careful and considered matching process took place to ensure that each child or young person was matched with a carer who could meet their assessed needs. It was also evident that the parents/carers of the children concerned were fully involved in the matching process and the introduction of the children to the foster carers. There were examples of carers being provided with additional support, such as training in alternative communication, or their homes being equipped with appropriate aids and adaptations, to enable them to meet the needs of the children. For example, consideration was being given to installing a ground floor bathroom in the home of one carer.

Two contract carers had been recruited who provide care for a specific number of children with disabilities and receive a salary. Plans were also in place to recruit black and ethnic minority carers for the Short Break 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?

There was evidence that the Council was sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as carers. Family and friends carers did not undergo preparatory training as part of their assessment and approval. It was evident that the completion of assessments of kinship carers within statutory timescales had been given a high priority. Children's social workers were responsible for carrying out initial assessments and submitting a report to the Fostering Panel within. In the sample of records inspected there was an example where the interim assessment had taken over 12 weeks from the time the children were placed. Full assessments were carried out by social workers in the Fostering Team, following a joint screening visit with the child's social worker. assessments were shorter than those for other foster carers, although there was evidence that the assessment process was thorough. The Service's procedures had been revised to ensure that the Fostering Team was notified promptly regarding any immediate placements with kinship carers, so that a social worker from the team could be involved from the outset. The Service's procedures state that assessments must be completed within 3 months of a placement commencing. Although progress had been made in meeting this target the example referred to above took 6 months. There was also evidence that the children in this placement did not receive weekly visits from a social worker prior to the approval of the carers

Kinship carers had the same access to post approval training as other carers and now have the same level of support from a named support worker. It was evident that staff in the Fostering Team were sensitive to the particular needs of family and friends carers. member of the team had been identified to develop the support and training for these carers.

PART C	LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY				
(where applicable)					
Lay Assessor	Signature				
Date					

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PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 07 March 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.	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	YES
	\/50
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	
Other: <enter details="" here=""></enter>	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 Helen Jane Watson of North Tyneside Council (North Tyneside Fostering Service) confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	
Signature	
Designation	
Date	

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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