



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Cambridgeshire County Council
Fostering

18-20 Signet Court
Swanns Road
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

26th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering

Address

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering, 18-20 Signet Court, Swanns Road, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

01223 718441

Address

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering, 18-20 Signet Court, Swanns Road, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

Fax No:

01223 718656

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 ?

NO

Date of last inspection

10.03.03

Date of Inspection Visit		26th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lindsey Blickem	098780
Name of Inspector	2	Jacqui Barry	
Name of Inspector	3	Peter Stone	
Name of Inspector	4	Lesley Woodhouse	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

Introduction to Report and Inspection
Inspection visits
Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings
Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection
Statutory Requirements from this Inspection
Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings
(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

- D.1. Provider's comments**
- D.2. Action Plan**
- D.3. Provider's agreement**

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Cambridge County Council (Mainstream) Fostering Service assesses, approves and provides on-going support to foster carers. At the end of December 2003, the service had 142 approved carers offering 217 placements. The service's primary aim is to provide an adequate supply of high quality family placements for children who are looked after by the local authority.

The Cambridgeshire County Council Link Service is a separately line managed service providing short-term/respite family placements for disabled children who are not the child's primary carer. This service has a separate system for the approval and support of carers and a separate specialist team. In December 2003 the service had 73 approved carers.

The Mainstream service has discreet specialist carers within the following categories: Time-Limited, Respite, Youth (adolescent) Care, Youth Care Challenge (alternative to specialist residential care), Long Term and Permanent Fostering and Kinship (Friends and Family) Care.

The Mainstream service is organisationally merged with the County Adoption service and share administrative functions as well as being line managed by one Fostering and Adoption Manager. The Mainstream service provides experienced and qualified social workers responsible for the assessment and support of carers. The Link Service provides social workers for the assessment and support of its own approved carers and also shares administrative functions with the mainstream service. Both services employ non-social work staff to undertake specific pieces of work such as family support and duty.

Full details of the facilities and services offered by the Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Service and the Link service are contained within the respective services' Statement of Purpose.

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 Link and Mainstream fostering services provided valuable and professional services to the foster carers, the children placed with them and their families.

The inspection team saw evidence of high quality care being provided to children by committed and skilled foster carers. The majority of carers seen during the inspection were providing care in line with the children's assessed needs.

The support services working alongside the Mainstream fostering service provided valuable input into the children's care needs and into service development.

The Link service would benefit from having routine access to an Occupational Therapist and a LAC nurse.

The management of both services was effective in ensuring good quality service delivery and the infrastructure of the services was largely conducive to the needs of the carers, children and wider children's social care services. Both services would benefit from having closer links with one another to pool knowledge and skills and enable each other to develop further.

The fostering services were staffed by able and committed social work staff as well as sound and efficient administrators and family workers.

The fostering manager for the Mainstream service was a highly motivated and innovative, professional and committed to developing the service positively. The fostering manager for the Link service was a very experienced and knowledgeable, professional and committed to effective service delivery for children with disabilities.

There are issues and points of practice raised in the main body of this report for both services to work on over the coming months. The inspection team were confident that both services would continue to develop positively and effectively.

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:

YES

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:

No significant welfare issues arising from the inspection.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	10	31	The local authority should appoint one officer to manage its fostering services.	12 months.

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Lindsey Blickem **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Jacqui Barry **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Malcolm Thompson **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 and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	10	31	The local authority should appoint one officer to manage its fostering services.	12 months.
2	Schedule 7 (3) Children Act 1989.	17	The fostering service should review the number of children placed with individual foster carers. This has exceeded the 'usual fostering limit' of three children as stated in Schedule 7 (3) Children Act 1989. Additionally the fostering service should employ appropriate risk strategies for those placements where foster carers exceed their approval.	3 months
3	22	25	The system for recording accidents to children within the foster home should be clearly evidenced.	3 months

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	9	The service should develop and implement an anti bullying policy.
2	10	Carers should positively encourage contact between children and their families.
3	24	Records maintained within the foster carer's home should be reviewed and improved.
4	22	The system for recording foster carer supervision records should be reviewed and amended.
5	12	The Link service should consider employing an Occupational Therapist and accessing a looked after children dedicated nurse.
6	19	The fostering service should consider developing a service specific training plan for staff.
7	22, 24 &30	The system for recording the outcome of foster carer annual reviews should be improved.
8	8 & 29	The skills level payment scheme for carers should be reviewed.

* 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	22
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
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	NO
• 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	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	26/01/04
Time of Inspection	09.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	176

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Link and Mainstream services had a separate statement of purpose. Both documents were fully compliant with Regulation 3 Fostering Services Regulations (FSR) 2002. The Mainstream service's statement of purpose had been formally approved by elected members, although the Link service hadn't. Neither document had been widely distributed to stakeholders. Both fostering managers reported that this was work being undertaken.

Neither service had a children's guide in operational use at the time of the inspection. The Mainstream service had recently developed a guide in consultation with the 'Just Us' group (Cambridgeshire's looked after children consultation group) and at the time of the inspection the guide was going to print.

The Link service had produced a guide not suitable for the use by its service users. It was accepted that the service had a difficult task in producing a guide suitable for all the children using the service and that this was an area for further development.

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
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Both fostering managers were appropriately qualified and demonstrated the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a fostering service. Both managers had extensive experience in children's social care.

The Link service manager had in-depth knowledge of the issues pertinent to disabled children and the Mainstream manager had sound knowledge of the issues relevant to the mainstream service and for looked after children. There was an obvious benefit in having separately line managed services for the Link and Mainstream service, particularly given the respective manager's level of expertise in each area.

The Link manager held the CQSW and the Diploma in Management. The Mainstream manager held the CQSW and had applied to undertake NVQ level 5 in management.

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
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The two fostering manager's personnel files were seen as part of the inspection. Both files contained a majority of the information required by Schedule 1 FSR 2002 although the evidence of a Police check having been undertaken was unclear.

All appropriate references and information pertaining to the manager's employment and suitability to run the fostering service were in place.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Mainstream service had three section managers exclusively managing one discreet service apiece; Youth Care, Time-Limited and Permanence. The section manager role included duties and responsibilities to the wider service and there was evidence of good, constructive and open communication between the management team. It was unclear how the Kinship service would settle into the existing structure, although the fostering manager had this issue under consideration and it was accepted that the Kinship service was still a new service for the Mainstream service.

The Mainstream fostering manager had good overall control and knowledge of the service and despite being relatively new in post, had identified areas for development for the future.

The Link service had one section manager overseeing a majority of the day-to-day activities of staff and the service and demonstrated sound skills and knowledge in undertaking these management duties. The Link manager was operationally responsible for four other disability services and this had affected his ability to manage the Link service day to day. This had been addressed through the employment of a section manager to line manage three of the other services and effectively free time up for the Link manager.

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

1

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 foster home.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

The evidence available during the inspection concluded that both the Link and Mainstream fostering services were generally managed effectively and efficiently. The management structures within each service were conducive to workload and the division of labour between day-to-day and strategic management.

The mainstream fostering manager was energetic, enthusiastic and highly motivated as well as knowledgeable and skilful. The feedback from other professionals from within the service and from wider services was that the management team were open, flexible and supportive.

The Link service benefited hugely from being managed by two highly experienced and knowledgeable individuals. The Link carers spoken to during the inspection had high praise for the service and management team.

Both fostering services would benefit from having closer strategic and day-to-day operational links with one another. The Link service could draw upon the experience of the more established Mainstream service whilst both services would benefit from the pooled knowledge and expertise from within the respective services. The services shared administrative resources including staff, although there was apparent distance between the administration functions. It is not suggested to merge the various functions, particularly if they work well, although it would be advisable for there to be closer links in this area.

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>A majority of the foster carers seen and spoken to as part of the inspection provided a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for the young people placed there. There were some excellent examples of caring and committed carers caring for highly vulnerable children and young people. The foster carer's homes were comfortable, warm and conducive to the needs of the children placed there.</p> <p>There were two placements that were less conducive to the needs of the young people. The issues present in these placements were known to the fostering service and were being addressed. One issue had not been highlighted in the child's care or placement planning and consequently there was a lack of shared information between the service, the placing social worker and the carer.</p> <p>There were two potential safety issues present in two homes; these were raised with the service at the time of the inspection.</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>A majority of the placements seen during the inspection provided a supportive and encouraging environment for the children to achieve their unique potential. There were excellent examples of carers providing opportunities for the children specific to their ability and understanding. Children were generally encouraged to develop their own interests and were provided with the necessary support to do so by the carers.</p> <p>Two of the three children cared for by the link service did not have a designated placing social worker and the information concerning the child's social, health and emotional development was limited. This was due to there being no central coordination of the services used by, and available to the child and their family. There is no ongoing review of the child's assessment of need outside the looked after (LAC) review system. Despite this, the carers looking after children placed by the Link service had excellent knowledge of the child's needs and were caring appropriately for them.</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?

3

There had been significant developments to the systems for matching children to placements within the Mainstream service since the last inspection. By far the most positive development was the introduction of a dedicated duty worker whose main responsibilities were to have an oversight of all foster care placements, both occupied and vacant, and to deal with emergency and routine referrals from placing social workers. The information trail at the point of referral was good and the expectations on placing social workers in terms of information sharing were clear. The documentation used to evidence specific elements of the matching process was good although the duty worker had wanted to develop these further in light of her own experiences whilst having undertaken the role for a period of time.

There was scope to develop the information systems further using the IT available, although both the fostering manager and the duty worker were mindful of implementing change at an acceptable pace.

The placements seen during the inspection largely met the needs of the children placed there. There were three examples where children had not been entirely appropriately matched to the particular skills of the foster carers. One of the examples was due to the Link service having been given inaccurate information as to the assessed needs of the child. Each case was known to the fostering service and were being addressed.

The information available about specific elements of the matching process for the children in Link placements was limited and largely due to the limited involvement in the cases by the placing social work team. Despite this, the placements were considered sound and well matched.

It was unclear how the skills level payments to carers benefited the fostering service in terms of being able to match children to a carer at a specific skills level, particularly as there was no corresponding system in place by the placing social work teams. It was apparent that a carer could demonstrate or offer particular skills from the various levels whilst theoretically being paid the minimum available. An example of this discrepancy was where a carer was in their first year of approval but with the expectation that they would undertake complex contact arrangements. Also, there was a consensus among the fostering team and inspection team that children who were coming into the care system presently had more complex needs than children entering the care system five years ago. The skills level payment scheme required reviewing and amending where necessary.

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

The child protection training available to staff and carers was undertaken by the majority of individuals. The carers and staff spoken to were aware of potential issues relating to child protection that may arise during placement and knew how to handle these issues and where to go for advice and assistance.

Children and young people who completed the inspection questionnaire reported that they were appropriately sanctioned; no children interviewed during the inspection reported being mistreated in any way.

One issue arose during the inspection relating to a young person missing from home. The system for informing the fostering service and other appropriate professionals of the young person being missing had not been used; this led to a delay in the issue being dealt with. The service manager reported that the local authority were in the process of implementing a new centralised system for reporting children in foster care missing from home.

There had been a delay in the service implementing a bullying policy to ensure the input of all stakeholders in the construction of the policy.

The 'Best Evidence' training provided for staff and carers did not make specific reference to issues relating to children with disabilities.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers seen as part of the inspection generally had a positive and committed attitude to contact between the children in placement and their families. There were examples of carers being involved in complex contact arrangements and carers reported having clear expectations upon them in relation to contact. The expectations on carers in relation to contact were generally high.

Some, more experienced carers had different ideas about expectations and issues in relation to contact and comments raised by placing social workers reiterated this issue. The fostering service had developed considerably since some of the carers had been originally approved and the expectations in relation to contact may have increased over time. However, contact arrangements should be made explicit in the foster placement agreement and the child's care plan which the carers would have a commitment to.

Foster carers were not routinely recording contacts between children and their families and the service should consider making this activity a requirement upon carers.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The local authority's commitment to consultation with looked after children was commendable. The most successful medium employed by the authority was the 'Just Us' group coordinated by the children's participation officer (CPO). The CPO reported that the fostering service had a clear and constructive commitment to 'Just Us' and that the relationship between the service and 'Just us' had improved and developed purposefully.

The Just Us group had a core membership of approximately forty young people rising to fifty periodically. The group meet in three localities across Cambridgeshire and had been involved in policy and practice, as well as being involved in holding events and participating in on-going consultation with the local authority. The CPO reported that the group sets its own agenda and that issues are never forced upon the group to consider.

The comments made by children in the questionnaires (issued by NCSC) included that they felt consulted with by carers. It was less clear whether they felt they had been appropriately consulted with by the fostering service; this may have been due to the style of questioning within the questionnaire.

The Link service had, for the purposes of the inspection, constructed their own questionnaires for children and young people to complete. The results were that the children and young people reported being well cared for by their Link carers.

The Just Us group had made some very valid points about the inspection process and consultation exercise undertaken by the NCSC and were very critical of the format of the questionnaire. These comments were accepted and the inspection team agreed to take the comments forward to the new commission (The Commission for Social Care Inspection).

The CPO's role in supporting and facilitating the Just Us group provided an excellent bridge between the local authority and the looked after children. The approach taken was active and meaningful and had affected significant changes in children's and fostering services. The Just Us group is valued by those who attend and recognised on a departmental level for the positive contribution they have made to the development of service provision.

A similar or shared service for children looked after by the Link service was not operational although some consultation between the Link service and the CPO had been undertaken in relation to consultation.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A new system for assessing the health needs of looked after children had been constructed by the Looked After Children (LAC) nurse. An example of the new assessment tools was seen during the inspection and the improvements were positive. The LAC nurse reported that the new system was working well and that the sharing of information inter-departmentally had also improved. This had increased the likelihood of the LAC nurse to reach the target of completing a health assessment for each looked after child within 28 days.

The links between the fostering service and the LAC nurse were very strong and mutually supportive. The LAC nurses had provided a central contact point for carers and young people with health related queries or issues. The managerial links between health and social services beyond the fostering manager and the LAC nurses were unclear. The professional links between the LAC nurses and the fostering service were constructive and sound.

Children placed by the Link service had specialist health care professionals involved with them, although it was unclear whether these services provided a holistic health care assessment, outside of the specific health input. The Link service did not have defined arrangements with the LAC nurses and should consider the ways in which practice could be developed to provide children with disabilities access to this user-friendly service.

The Link service did not have routine access to an Occupational Therapist (OT) to provide specialist advice to carers, children, their families and the Link social work team, the practice had been to access OT advice and assistance on an adhoc basis. The Link services' access to this specialist advice and support was vital and the service should consider employing its own OT.

The carers seen during the inspection had a sound commitment to the health needs of the children placed with them. The Link carers' knowledge and ability in dealing with the children's health needs was particularly impressive. The expectations on carers to promote and support the children's health needs was clear and well known to the majority of carers.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There were good examples of carers promoting and accessing education for the children in their care. There were some good examples where carers had acted as advocates for the children, whilst making representations to the child's school and education service.

The fostering service and looked after children continued to benefit from input by the Education Service for Looked After Children (ESLAC). The service was proactive and responsive in ensuring looked after children received or had access to suitable education.

The two ESLAC teachers spoken to during the inspection reported that their role had had a beneficial effect on the looked after child's educational arrangements. They had provided advice and support schools in dealing with the child's unique circumstances, and sought to minimise the stigmatising effect that being looked after can have on children. The ESLAC team benefited greatly from having employed highly experienced teachers.

The ESLAC team continued to provide sound support and guidance to social workers responsible for completing the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP). It was unclear whether a similar system for monitoring PEPs was in place as it was for health assessments.

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

There were good examples of carers promoting independent life skills of the children in their care that did not necessarily form part of a pathway plan.

The case responsibility for looked after children transferred automatically to the 16+ service once a child was nearing to or had attained the age of 16. It was difficult to measure how this affected the outcomes for the child given that the sample of cases tracked during the inspection did not include children receiving a service from the 16+ team. From the fostering service's point of view, there was a strong commitment to supporting children beyond their eighteenth birthday within their foster home. There was an issue about what status the carers would have in these cases. There was a distinct difference to foster carers between being a substitute family or providing supported lodgings to a young person; there should be clarity in relation to this matter.

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?

3

Five personnel files were seen during the inspection and a majority of the checks required by Schedule 1 FSR 2002 were in place. On three files, the evidence of a Police Check having been undertaken was unclear. The other two files had written confirmation from the designated Human Resource Adviser that a Police/Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check had been undertaken. No original or copies of CRB certificates were kept on the personnel files. Original written references and a transcript of verbal references were in place, as were health assessments, original completed application forms and documentary evidence of any relevant qualifications. Copies of the individual's birth certificate or marriage certificate or passport were on file including a photo (although not always recent).

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The infrastructure within each of the fostering services was sound and suitable in terms of service delivery and to ensure effective management within each discreet foster carer specialism. The section managers had good day-to-day knowledge of the running and functioning of the service and there was a wealth of experience and expertise to draw upon. The professional relationship between the day-to-day management of the Link service and the Mainstream service was vague. As previously stated, there were obvious benefits to the service having closer links and the respective fostering managers should consider how this would be best achieved. The administrative functions of both services also had little day-to-day contact with one another yet formed part of the same organisational structure.

Given that kinship care was relatively new to the service, consideration must be given to how this would best sit in the existing organisational structure. The Mainstream fostering manager was developing ideas around how kinship care could be most appropriately supported and this was an area of practice to be further developed in the coming twelve months.

Administratively, the services functioned well and the service was accessible and response to referrals, largely due to the efficient duty system.

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

The recruitment and retention of fostering staff had been successful during the preceding twelve months. The evidence available during the inspection suggested that the staffing complement was adequate to meet the workload demand.

The sample of foster carer assessments were good in quality, some of the assessments seen were several years old. New carers were being assessed using the BAAF competency based assessments. Some carers were routinely operating beyond their original approval and exceeding the “usual fostering limit” of three children per household. Although there was evidence to suggest that some placements for children had been successful despite this, the service should employ a risk strategy to each placement where carers are required to go beyond their approval to ensure that the outcomes for children in placement are closely monitored with contingencies in place for potentially unstable placements.

There was a recognised shortfall in the number of foster care placements available and the service was developing a placement strategy to address this.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Local Authority’s (LA) employment practices and organisational structure provided a stable and secure working environment for employees. Staff had access to employment policies and procedures through the County Council’s intranet.

There were adequate arrangements for staff and carer supervision, appraisal and support evidenced by supervision records.

All staff and carers spoken to during the inspection reported being generally happy with their employment arrangements.

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**

Staff spoken to reported having attended a number of training events and were generally content with the availability and accessibility of training opportunities. However the service did not have in place a training plan specific for fostering staff. There was a great deal of 'in-house' experience and expertise to draw upon from both the Link and Mainstream services. The Mainstream fostering manager had considered developing an in-house training programme for staff and this would be a welcome development. Both fostering services should consider undertaking a training audit to identify any shared areas of training needs.

The County Council's commitment to staff undertaking the Post-Qualifying award was established and being made available to all social work staff across the county.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

All staff spoken to during the inspection reported that they received regular formal supervision and appraisals from their line manager. The agenda for each supervision session was shared and a written account made of those meetings.

Staff generally reported that the management teams within both services were supportive and accessible.

All staff were aware of the lines of accountability within the service and their own specific responsibilities.

The administrative staff reported that their pay was not representative of their role and responsibilities; the fostering manager reported that a review of the administrative team's pay was underway.

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**

All carers spoken to during the inspection spoke highly of the support they receive from the respective fostering services and that they received regular supervision by a designated social worker. They confirmed that services were accessible in the absence of their named worker.

The support of carers remained a clear priority of the fostering services and the respective managers balanced the needs of the children, carers and families well in the face of conflicting demands.

The expectations on carers were mainly clear in relation to their responsibilities to the child and to the service. Some more experienced carers had a different understanding as to the extent of their role and this issue could be addressed through participation of training based current good practice. The majority of carers worked well with the service sharing a child focused agenda and having good lines of communication.

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

Carers were receiving a good level of support from the respective fostering services and visits made to the foster carers recorded. The format for recording supervision sessions ranged from using a daily record sheet to a specifically designed form for supervision. It was difficult to draw out key issues relevant to the child's care and the carer's needs when the record was one long narrative. The specifically designed form did allow the reader to draw out the relevant issues more affectively and efficiently and would theoretically focus supervision sessions to include relevant identified areas of work with the child and carer. A good use of these forms would be to draw attention to areas of need such as the child's contact arrangements, as well as focusing of foster carer records.

The annual review process for carers was generally good although the audit trail for information going to the Fostering Panel and the discussion held and the outcome was not always clear. The format used for foster carer reviews should be reviewed and amended to address this information gap.

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

The Mainstream fostering service had provided 28 courses, excluding the pre-approval training, for carers between April 2003 and December 2003, against 34 during the whole preceding year. The attendance at these courses was 266 against 233 for the whole of the preceding year. Most notably there had been an increase in the number of kinship and link carers attending.

The new developments to foster carer training were a 'Preparing for Independence' course run by the 16+ service, a new pre approval training package called 'Skills to Foster' was being introduced using both social work staff and foster carers as trainers.

Childcare and mileage costs were being paid by the Mainstream fostering service when carers had undertaken training.

Carers spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they were informed of training courses available to them. However, many carers stated that they had not attended courses due to the inconvenient location and time at which they were run. These issues were known to and acknowledged by the management team.

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

The children's case files for those children cared for by the Mainstream service were well maintained and provided good in-depth knowledge of the child's care needs and relevant information about his or her social, emotional, behavioural and health development. The LAC paperwork had been completed and used to good effect by the placing social workers.

The children's case files for those children cared for by the Link service contained much less information relating to the child's care needs. The only document consistently updated was the LAC Review. There was no evidence of a 'Child in Need' plan having been completed for any of the children. The Children's Disability Team and Area Placing Teams were operating a system of 'Open to Review' for a majority of the children placed by them with no identified social worker acting for them. The lack of up to date, in-depth information about the child's care needs was a notable gap in service delivery.

As previously mentioned, the system in place for annual reviews of foster carers was at times poorly evidenced in the foster carer files. The lack of output information following a panel meeting should be rectified.

The foster carer files were generally well maintained with relevant information being available although not always easily accessible, (see comments with reference to supervision records).

Foster carers were not routinely recording day-to-day or significant information within the foster home about the child's care experience; this was a significant gap in service delivery. The expectations on foster carers in relation to maintaining records within the home was unclear and the service should make specific requirements on carers in relation to recording information about the child in their care.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)			
The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.			
Key Findings and Evidence		Standard met?	3
<p>The Fostering service was gradually being introduced to the social service's database 'SWIFT'. The Mainstream fostering manager was being familiarised with another database system 'Business Objects' which could theoretically hold the information required by Schedule 2 Fostering Service Regulations 2002 (FSR 2002), in a simplified and accessible format. The majority of information required by Schedule 2 FSR 2002 could be accessed from various locations, either within the service or with the personnel department.</p> <p>There was no system in place for separately recording accidents occurring to children in placement; this should be rectified.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			215
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		X	Maximum £
			X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The accommodation used by the fostering service was unchanged since the previous inspection. The relevant extract from the last inspection report read:

“The fostering service works from two sites, one based at the Butts Grove centre in Huntingdon and the other at Signet Court in Cambridge.

Both sites have security measures in place. There is a reception area in both with access to the building via this. Entrance to the building in Cambridge is through a phone link to the reception desk. Number locks are used internally to provide added security.

Across both sites there are secure cabinets for all files. Keys are locked in a key cabinet. Butts Grove fostering service is located on the first floor in several small offices. Signet Court is housed on the first floor but in three open plan areas.”

Planned work in 2004 to the Butts Grove site to remove asbestos would mean some disruption to the operation of the service.

All premises used by the service were conducive to the work undertaken by staff.

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

The service manager spoken to during the inspection reported that the fostering services were, and continued to be financially viable.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The financial processes differed slightly between the two fostering services. Payments to carers were actioned using two different systems and both were reported to be operating successfully. The Mainstream service was having to duplicate information across two database systems in order to progress payments to carers. The fostering manager reported that this should change when SWIFT became fully operational.

The Area Placing Teams held the budget for, and processed payments to carers. Logically, the payments to carers was best processed through the fostering team given that the service worked closely with carers, and queries in relation to payments would be more easily responded to by the fostering service. Although it was accepted that to change the current system would be an enormous task, consideration should be given to the merits of any proposed change.

The evidence available at the time of the inspection was that the services operated using sound financial processes and systems.

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

The Mainstream fostering manager reported that the payments to carers would be within the Fostering Networks recommended rates by April 2004.

Foster carer payment slips were not itemised and for those carers who accommodated several placements this had been a source of frustration. The Mainstream fostering manager reported that changes in this area were underway.

As reported previously, the skills level payments to carers did not correspond with a similar system being used by placing social work teams. The NCSC would support carers being paid well although the skills level payments did not accurately represent the tasks carers were being required to undertake. Carers were routinely caring for children with complex needs with complex case history; the skills level scheme did not reflect the current looked after climate. The fostering service should review this payment system and in the process, advise the Link service prior to them introducing any proposed skills level payment scheme for Link carers.

Carers reported being paid promptly and accurately by both services.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Link fostering panel and the Mainstream fostering panel were operated separately; both were observed during the inspection.

The Link panel's membership and functioning was within accordance with Regulations 24, 25 & 26 with the exception of the identified 'vice chair', who was the fostering manager. The chair of the panel is prohibited by Regulation 24 (2) (a) from being a person "responsible for the day to day management of any person carrying out assessments of prospective foster parents". The impression was of a well-established and smooth running panel despite it being relatively newly established. The input from all members was clear, concise and highly professional. The panel members may benefit from observing the Mainstream fostering panel periodically to enhance their own knowledge and skills in relation to their panel member duties.

The Mainstream fostering panel functioned efficiently and effectively and within Regulatory requirements. A strong and efficient administrator supported the panel, although being required to minute a whole days meeting was considered too onerous. The input from panel members was constructive, measured and balanced and panel members worked well together and addressed areas of conflict appropriately. The panel chair provided strong and efficient leadership ensuring the meeting maintained focus and purpose. The temporary panel advisor was one of the service's section managers and the presence of this individual was valuable in being able to respond practice issues and points of clarity. The advisor was able to feedback to the fostering service issues coming out of panel. There was a proposed change to whom the panel advisor would be and it is hoped that the successor will be supported in maintaining the valuable bridge between the service and the panel.

Carers were routinely invited to attend the Mainstream panel as part of their annual review; this was not the case for the Link panel.

It is suggested that both panels would benefit from having joint training to pool the knowledge and experiences of members and share good practice.

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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The Link service did not have as high a profile as the Mainstream service and indeed this was the first time the service had been inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000.

As stated previously, the Link service was line managed separately from the Mainstream fostering service and in clear breach of Regulation 10 FSR 2002. However, there were clear benefits from having the Link service separate from the Mainstream service given that the area of work was highly specialised and operating successfully. The Link service provided an extremely valuable service to the children it cared for and those families it was supporting. A great deal of the Link service's activity was very similar to the activities of the Mainstream service and there was scope to develop closer links between the two services. There was an overlap in what the two services offered in terms of what the care needs of children with disabilities and challenging behaviour are and this was an area the two services should work more closely on.

The commitment and care given to the children and families receiving a service from the Link service was excellent. The main body of this report details some areas for development for the service particularly in relation to standards 12, 29, 8, 17 and 24, although it was recognised that the Link service did not have responsibility for the case records for children.

The Respite Care offered by the Mainstream service had a clear commitment to working in partnership with parents and recognised the unique position of carers offering respite to families and other foster carers.

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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Since May 2003, the Mainstream fostering service had assumed responsibility for formal kinship placements where the children become 'looked after' by the Local Authority or as a result of a court order.

Kinship carers were being assessed and approved using the same assessment tools as for prospective foster carers. One kinship placement was seen as part of the inspection and the carers reported being well supported by the fostering service.

It was considered a highly positive development to see kinship care being formally given status within the fostering service and the fostering manager had clear and well thought out plans and ideas in how to develop this service more effectively. The link into family group conferencing was logical and it would be encouraging to see these developments more systematically linked.

The fostering service had plans to recruit social workers whose primary responsibility would be to kinship placement.

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 26th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Refer to Standard	Recommendation Action
1	9	<p>The service should develop and implement an anti bullying policy.</p> <p>The current anti bullying policy is being revised following consultation with a range of stakeholder e.g. ESLAC, foster carers and young people. This piece of work will result in the new policy being implemented from July 2004.</p>
2	10	<p>Carers should positively encourage between children and their families.</p> <p>The report makes clear that it is a minority of carers who are not seen to always positively encourage contact. The service will continue to work with carers and placing social workers to ensure that carers are clear about the positives of contact between children / young people and their families.</p>
3	24	<p>Records maintained within the foster carer's home should be reviewed and improved.</p> <p>All staff will attend a fostering service day on 26/4/04 at which the need for foster carer records will be reviewed and confirmed. There will then be updated training for all existing foster carers at the end of which they will receive written guidance, the necessary logs and a lockable container. All new carers from May 04 will attend an induction session at which they will receive all the above.</p>
4	22	<p>The system for recording foster carer supervision records should be reviewed and amended.</p> <p>As part of the fostering service day, staff will discuss and agree one supervision format, which will draw out the relevant issues and identified areas of work. These records will be regularly audited by the relevant section manager during supervision.</p>
5	12	<p>The Link service should consider employing an</p>

		<p>Occupational Therapist and accessing a looked after children dedicated nurse.</p> <p>Line Manager will negotiate with County OT services to work co-operatively and to purchase services as required internally and externally. Link Section Manager will begin planning with LAC Nurse how service can best access existing service and expertise.</p>
6	19	<p>The fostering service should consider developing a service specific training plan for staff.</p> <p>As part of the fostering service day an audit of training needs to be undertaken and an action plan drawn up.</p>
7	22, 24 & 30	<p>The system for recording the outcome of foster carer annual reviews should be improved.</p> <p>The Head of Service and the Operations Manager will conduct a review the current system for recording carer reviews that all foster carer files contain full information.</p>
8	8 & 29	<p>The skills level payment scheme for carers should be reviewed.</p> <p>The service will review the skills level payment scheme taking into account the needs of children, the skills of foster carers and the available budget.</p>
	30	<p>Link service to appoint a Vice-Chair who is not directly responsible for day-to-day management of the service.</p> <p>Panel adviser to approach panel member for expression of interest.</p>

I believe that the report accurately reflects the current Fostering Service in Cambridgeshire. I welcome the recommendations, some of which have already been acted upon, and I am pleased that the Inspectors recognised the contributions on both carers and staff to a high quality service.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 23rd March 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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