



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Portsmouth City Council Fostering

Merefield House

Nutfield Place

Portsmouth

Hampshire

P01 4JE

21st February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Portsmouth City Council Fostering

Address

Merefield House, Nutfield Place, Portsmouth, Hampshire,
PO1 4JE

Local Authority Manager

Vanessa Courtney

Tel No:

023 92839111

Address

Merefield House, Nutfield Place, Portsmouth, Hampshire,
PO1 4JE

Fax No:

023 92875503

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

Date of Inspection Visit		21st February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lynda Mosling	074953
Name of Inspector	2	David Coulter	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Rod Smith	

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The fostering provision of Portsmouth City Council is located within three separate teams, each providing different types of foster care. The largest of these is based at Chaucer house and provides approximately 100 foster families offering 175 placements.

There are three levels of foster carers and these levels are clearly defined in terms of expected tasks, skills and payments made. The majority of the carers come within the Level 1 and 2 categories. Foster placements can be short-term (up to two years), long-term and respite. Many placements are made in response to emergency situations.

The Beechside unit arranges short-term breaks for children with disabilities, and the Skye Close project manages the carers in the Level 3 category.

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 inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over 4 fieldwork days. The fostering services at Chaucer House was the main focus of the inspection, although the inspection included a visit to the Skye Close Project. Inspectors spoke with managers, staff, foster carers and their family, and fostered young people. Visits were made to six foster homes across the three levels of carers. Questionnaires were sent to carers and young people. The inspectors were welcomed with openness and co-operation. The service appeared responsive to the needs of the young people they are caring for and there was evidence of a commitment to improve and develop.

The staff group presented as committed and knowledgeable. There were a wide variety of carers who were providing good quality placements. Young people were generally positive about their fostering experience.

The service and the support systems were child focused and the majority of the standards were met.

Statement of Purpose, Fitness to provide or manage a service, Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 1 – 5)

5 standards were assessed and all were met.

Each part of the service has a statement of purpose setting out the service offered. Young people are given a leaflet that covers what to expect and includes information about making complaints. The strategic manager has the appropriate qualifications and experience to manage the service. Appropriate recruitment procedures are used. The lines of accountability are clear.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

9 standards were assessed. 7 were met, 1 was partially met and 1 was exceeded.

Visits to carers demonstrated a good understanding of the needs of the young people. Carers were providing safe placements in a wide range of homes. The service struggles to recruit enough carers to make careful matches of child to placement. This leads to professional frustration and some inappropriate placements. Policies and procedures with regard to child protection are in place. Training is given regarding appropriate behaviour management. Young people are supported to remain in contact with relatives and friends. The service is developing ways of involving young people in service planning. Young people reported that they are listened to. Attempts are being made to work closely with other agencies to meet health and education needs.

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

9 standards were assessed. 8 were met and 1 was exceeded.

There are appropriate recruitment processes in place. Lines of accountability are clear. Individual skills are recognised and made use of. Appropriate information is gathered to assess carers. It is recommended that the health and safety checklists are presented to

panel. Staff training is supported with courses provided by the authority. Carers have named support workers and are provided with supervision on a monthly basis. A range of support groups are available. Training for carers is particularly well organised and monitored. Training covers a wide range of relevant issues.

Records (Standards 24 – 25)

2 standards were assessed and both were met.

There are clear recording processes in place and good administration support. Carers' files would benefit from review to ensure all necessary information is available on each file.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 26)

1 standard was assessed and met.

The premises are suitable for the service. Some changes in working arrangements may occur as a result of the re-organisation of children's services.

Financial Processes (Standards 27 – 29)

3 standards were assessed and all were met.

The service is financed by the local authority process. There are budgets for each service and these are well monitored. Carers reported that they receive the correct amount of allowances and these are paid on time.

Panel (Standard 30)

1 standard was assessed and met.

A fostering panel was observed and met the standards. Appropriate information was collected in order to make careful decisions. It is suggested that a pro-forma be designed to record any conflict of interest of panel members.

Short Breaks (Standard 31)

1 standard was assessed and met.

The dedicated family link service was not inspected on this occasion. However, respite placements were seen and were assessed as meeting the standard.

Family and Friends (Standard 32)

1 standard was assessed and exceeded.

The service has a high number of family and friends providing placements to young people. The service understands the importance of family relationships and promotes such placements as a first consideration. The promotion of this service and the support given to family and friends exceeds the standards.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

All standards, except one are met by the service. The one exception is partially met.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1.	FS6	Devise child specific safe caring plans for each placement.
2.	FS6	All health and safety checklists are presented to panel at the time of consideration of suitability of carers
3.	FS25	Review all carer's files to ensure the necessary information is included and easily accessed.
4.	FS30	Devise a pro-forma for recording panel members expressions of conflict of interest

* 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
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The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	9
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	21/02/04
Time of Inspection	12:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	56

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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"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

Each of the fostering provisions has a statement of purpose relating to the specific service they provide.

The statement of purpose provided by the largest provision covers the aims and objectives of the service, states the number of carers it supports and the number of placements made. It records the guiding principle of the service as 'placing the child's needs as the permanent concern and focus for service delivery'.

A list of the staff involved in the delivery of service is attached providing names, qualifications, experience and hours worked. This was updated in January 2004.

The complaints procedure is summarised in the statement of purpose and includes the name and address of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

There are clear instructions of how to access other related procedures.

A newly produced leaflet 'Children and Young People's Guide to Foster Care and Family Placement' is given to children and young people at the start of a placement and covers information about the service in a question and answer format. It includes information about what to do if the young person is not happy with their placement.

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 strategic manager of the fostering services has a social work qualification and diploma in management. She has a great deal of experience of managing provider services for children and young people. In an interview with the inspectors she demonstrated a clear understanding of the needs of looked after children and young people and explained the attempts being made to raise the profile of looked after children and to progress the notion of the corporate parent. This included involvement in a number of inter-agency groups and projects. She was also aware of the pressures and gaps within the service and had plans to address these.

In addition to the overall manager, the inspectors met with the team manager at Chaucer House and Skye Close. In each case there was a clear understanding of their role and responsibility and a desire to provide a good quality service. The managers were qualified and experienced and met the standards.

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

The inspectors sampled a number of personnel files, at random, and were able to view appropriate recruitment procedures, CRB checks, interview arrangements and written references. There was evidence that the service had considered the suitability of the staff it employs to work with children. There were checklists on the front of the files detailing the checks received and the date of necessary renewed checks.

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

Each of the managers, and the staff members were aware of their particular responsibility within the service. The lines of accountability are well known and the inspectors were told that there was no bar in approaching a manager further up the line of accountability if the line manager was not available. This provided staff with a confidence in the line of accountability.

Since the new computer system (Swift) was introduced it is easier to track issues and information. The inspectors were able to ask to look at particular records i.e. complaints against foster carers and track the process used to record action taken and decisions made. The team manager of each service have responsibility for the budget and were able to see what the current financial situation was. There were recorded procedures for spending. Carers told the inspectors that they generally received their allowances on time and were able to see what period of care they covered.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated: (1 still under investigation)

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Each manager has a clear job description and is clear about the lines of accountability. The fostering team social workers were positive about the management structure and felt they were able to access appropriate advice and get decisions in a timely fashion.

At Chaucer House (the largest service) a senior practitioner has recently been appointed. She will deputise for the manager in his absence. This was a role supported by all of the staff spoken to.

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
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The inspectors were able to visit six foster homes and felt that in each family the needs of the fostered children/young people were well understood and were being met. The homes were very different but all were comfortable and children were welcomed as a member of the family. Some of the homes were quite small, with young people sharing their bedrooms. In each of these cases there had been a risk assessment and the young people were agreeable to the arrangement. The inspectors were told that where the assessment showed there might be difficulties with sharing this would be respected. However, the reality is that the shortage of carers has some influence on these decisions. The local fire service are providing a helpful service by undertaking visits of foster homes and providing advice on fire safety. The inspectors were welcomed by the foster families in every case and carers were happy to openly share their experiences. The level of care seen by the inspectors was of a high standard.

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
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The service has made continued attempts to recruit both carers and staff from a range of backgrounds. This continues and it is hoped that there will be some success in the future. The managers have met with the main ethnic groups in the community to raise the profile of fostering and are aware that it could be a long process before any changes are made. There is the opportunity for interpreters to be arranged where needed. The service can provide translation of leaflets in variety of languages. The recent posters and leaflets produced use positive imagery. The inspectors visited carers who were caring for young people who were asylum seekers and were impressed by the understanding shown. Advocacy and protection of the rights of the child was clearly demonstrated in all of the placements visited.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

In common with many other local authorities the service struggles to recruit sufficient carers to meet the needs of the children they place. Despite continued, targeted, recruitment there are not enough carers to make careful matches. All of the staff spoken to were aware of the principles of matching and were saddened and frustrated that they were unable to put their knowledge into practice. In the completed questionnaires from carers there were frequent issues raised about the lack of choice and the resulting inappropriate placements. Carers understood and were sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by the staff but sometimes felt under pressure to take placements that they felt were not really suitable.

Many placements are made in an emergency and these do not give staff a chance to arrange introductions. Young people told the inspectors that they rarely had a choice of placements, but felt they had been placed with caring families who helped them make the placements work.

In some cases there was good matching and the inspectors saw families who were committed to the young people on a long-term basis. Some placements had worked 'against all odds' and demonstrated the carers and staff attempts to put the young person's needs first.

The lack of available placements in the city has led to placements being made with independent agencies, often some miles outside of the area. The effects of this was well known by the staff and managers and a matter of regret to them. This standard was only partially met.

A recruitment strategy group is currently looking at the gaps in matching in order to inform the targeting of recruitment.

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

There are clear policies regarding child abuse and allegations of abuse by carers are dealt with by the child protection investigation process. Records of the action taken are now available on the computer system.

Questionnaires from young people and carers confirmed that they knew of the acceptable punishments and accepted these. One carer stated that the clear direction from the fostering service regarding punishments had positively changed the way she disciplined her own children.

Young people spoken to were aware of their rights and confirmed they would tell someone if they felt they had been inappropriately treated.

The managers shared with the inspectors that they have been working with staff and other professionals on reviewing their safe care policy. This is in response to an acknowledgement that young people who have attachment disorders may require personal care that falls outside of the guidelines. Carers felt this was a positive move. The inspectors were able to see the general safe care policy but recommend that the service consider devising child specific safe caring agreements for each child fostered and ensure these are

up-dated at regular intervals. This would make the arrangements for the care of a particular child clear and hopefully protect everyone within the placement.

Training on safe care, child protection and management of challenging behaviour is provided for carers, and the training officer demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the issues.

Information provided to carers about the young people is improving, with the introduction of the Swift computer system. This is due to the access social workers from the fostering team have to the child's records.

The recruitment to the fostering team of social workers who have previously had experience of child protection work has helped keep the issue of children's protection central to the work undertaken.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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All of the carers and young people spoken to had contact with friends and family. They were able to explain to the inspectors the boundaries of these arrangements and why they had been made. Carers spoke positively of the birth families and understood the importance of remaining positive for the child. A range of contact arrangements were being supported by the carers, many of whom provided transport and supervision. The expectations of contact is made clear to prospective carers during training and assessment. In some cases carers had gone to great lengths to provide contacts to young people that would keep their culture alive for them and showed a real understanding of identity issues.

Questionnaires from carers and young people demonstrated contact of some sort was happening in all cases of those who responded. Training covered issues of contact and helped carers develop strategies to cope with contact arrangements.

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
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The fostering service clearly recognises the need to consult with young people and their families over day-to-day decisions affecting their lives. Young people told the inspectors that they felt listened to and were involved in discussions about their placements and the planning for their care. On a strategic level the department were attempting to involve the views of young people and made use of feedback from questionnaires, focus groups and the young persons' (C3) group. This group is a committee of young people who meet with elected members and managers from social services to discuss issues and share views. This is a positive development that demonstrates The Service's desire to involve young people in the planning of services process. The leaflet provided to young people at the point of placement gives information about how to complain about the services provided to them and includes addresses and telephone numbers of independent agencies and the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

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

All young people were registered with a GP and felt they could access appropriate health care. Foster carers were able to demonstrate their attendance at specialist clinics, where necessary, and usually took the lead in ensuring the young peoples' health needs were met. Medicals for looked after children were routinely arranged and foster carers spoke of the training they received regarding children's development. Foster carers felt supported by social workers on issues such as sex education, drug awareness etc. The questionnaires completed by young people mentioned healthy eating awareness. There had recently been interagency training/discussion about the needs of young people with attachment disorders and the special challenges this provided to the 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

The inspectors heard of a number of schemes and projects set up to improve the educational attainment of looked after children. These included good links with local schools and colleges, and for the older age group, there were opportunities to make use of the young people's interests to motivate them to learn new skills. The inspectors spoke to young people who had been in and out of schooling for many years but who are now happily attending training courses in hairdressing, child care, plumbing and car mechanics. There was also evidence of young people who had returned to mainstream schooling since being in foster care and some who were moving on to university. Whilst this was very rewarding and positive the inspectors also heard from carers of younger children who were struggling with school and carers felt there were few alternatives to provide education to these children. There were also examples of children being placed in schools who were unable to meet their special needs i.e. asylum seekers who have very little understanding of English language. Corporate parenting groups and interagency work was being developed to address the issue of education and the inspectors felt it was an area of continuing development.

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

Individual foster carers were working on developing skills for independence, and young people were positive about the plans being made for them. The creation of the young person's support team has also had a positive effect on the planning for young people's transition from the looked after service. The team helps with accommodation including supportive lodgings, tenancy agreements, work experience and continuing education. The post 14-year reviews for looked after children identify the needs of the individual young person and how those needs will be met. The inspectors spoke with young people who were feeling very proud of their achievements and optimistic about their future. Carers made it clear that their commitment to the young people continued beyond the time they were in the looked after system, even though this can cause difficulties regarding benefits for both carers and young people. Managers were aware of the tensions regarding this and were attempting to address this with the relevant agencies.

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

The inspectors looked at a random selection of staff files and found them to contain the appropriate checks and references. The recruitment process is managed by the personnel department in consultation with the manager responsible for the vacancy. The personnel files included: C.V's, application forms, copies of certificates, letters relating to the interview, notes by interviewers, letters offering the post, job descriptions and terms and conditions. Where already employed staff applied for a different post the agreed process was used, references renewed and equal opportunities followed. There was evidence of probationary periods being monitored and clear records of any disciplinary processes. Assessments of foster carers are undertaken by qualified staff as required by the regulations.

Total number of staff of the agency:

22

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

3

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are clear lines of accountability and staff reported that they feel well supported. Each member of staff has supervision on a regular basis. They experience this as a helpful process. Staff were clear about the lines of accountability but stated that they can also access other managers if it is more appropriate, or if their line manager is unavailable. This gave them a sense of security and value. Delegation was defined and the recent appointment of a senior practitioner within the team had given all staff an opportunity to look at roles and responsibilities within the team. All staff were busy and felt well occupied. The staff were generous in their support for other team members and the inspectors did not pick up any feelings of inequality or competitiveness within the team. Individual skills were recognised and used to the best advantage of the team/service. Each foster carer has a named fostering worker to support them and to undertake reviews etc. Most fostering social workers are also involved in recruitment. The service has a service agreement with two independent fostering agencies and monitors the use of these placements and the cost implications for the service. Children placed with independent agencies are visited by their individual social workers. The foster carers spoken to had a clear view of the different roles

of the fostering social worker and the child's social worker, although there was indications that this was less clear when children placed with foster carers did not have allocated social workers.

Staff had job descriptions and were clear about their rights as employees.

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 service is a busy one responding to the changing needs of a local authority responsible for statutory childcare provision. There appears to be an adequate number of staff employed to meet the needs of the service, although it is acknowledged that all workers were busy and having to work to agreed priorities.

The number of carers does not meet the need of the referred young people – this is covered in standard 8.

The carers recruited provide good quality placements and those visited were meeting the needs of the young people placed. The inspectors saw the assessments of foster carers and confirmed that they generally meet the standards. The fee-attracting Form F writers are supervised by the manager of the service and the Panel chair confirmed that any quality issues were feedback through him. One of the assessments presented to the Panel observed by the inspectors did not have accompanying health and safety checks with the papers although the manager confirmed that these would have been available on the file. It is recommended that health and safety issues are routinely considered by the Panel alongside the Form F assessment.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The staff had access to employment policies that covered whistle blowing, sickness absence, leave, grievance procedures etc. The staff spoken to were positive about their choice to work for the City Council and did not raise any issues of concern with the inspectors. There was evidence of managers introducing new practices and ideas sensitively and of the need to consult with staff over major changes. The successes in one area were used to inform practice in others and there was an expressed understanding of people management.

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
<p>Staff told the inspectors that training was encouraged and supported. Some had completed post-qualifying training and all had an individual plan for their training needs. Training courses are provided by the City Council Social Services and additional specialised training can be accessed by application to the training officers. Staff expect to feedback any learning to the team and appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other. The manager is undertaking management training and is keen for individuals to make the most of training opportunities.</p> <p>The training offered to staff is also available to carers if relevant.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Staff at all levels were supervised and records of supervision were kept. The recruitment of a senior practitioner has helped manage the delegation of the supervision task. Staff felt that the opportunity for one to one supervision had improved in the last 12 months. There is an open door policy to the manager and the inspectors witnessed staff getting advice from the manager on an ad-hoc basis. This was appreciated by the staff as it enabled decisions to be considered and made in a timely way.</p> <p>Team meetings were held regularly and were felt to be helpful and supportive.</p>		

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

Each foster carer has a support social worker allocated to them at the point of approval. The carers spoken to were aware of who that social worker was and spoke very positively about the support they receive. The completed questionnaires used words such as 'excellent', 'brilliant' etc. Inspectors were told that there are monthly visits made by the support workers and more frequent telephone calls. The children of the foster families said that they could access the support workers and feel valued and involved in the process.

Some carers said that support has not always been good, depending on the staff shortages and staff sickness, but that it had greatly improved. One set of carers felt that they had not been given support from their worker and had taken this up through the management system. The majority of carers felt that the support given was one of the main reasons for remaining as carers for the authority.

Support from children's social workers was seen as more variable. Some carers and young people said they had so many changes of social worker that they could not remember who it now was. Some said the children had been unallocated for many months, making it very difficult to put plans into action. The inspectors saw evidence on the carers' files to back up this view, with children being without a social worker for months. This led to children feeling de-valued and the carers feeling vulnerable. Managers told the inspectors that the re-organisation and creation of a looked after children team should greatly improve this situation.

In addition to the individual support provided to carers there is a range of support groups set up by carers to provide support for other carers. There is also a 'buddy scheme' to help new carers manage the task .

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**

Supervision of carers is undertaken on a monthly basis and is recorded on the carers' files. Supervision sessions are used to look at how the placement is going, issues arising, matters of concern and training needs. Carers are able to place things on the agenda and to use the sessions to discuss management of behaviour strategies etc.

Each carer has a foster care agreement that sets out the responsibilities of the service as well as the expectations placed on the foster carers.

Carers are provided with a handbook that covers policy and procedures as well as helpful advice. This is currently being up-dated.

Carers are aware of the complaints procedure and of the procedures regarding allegations against carers. Whilst the experience is always distressing and unsettling the carers were able to see the need to take all allegations seriously and thoroughly investigate them.

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?**

4

The service has a dedicated training officer who co-ordinates the training for foster carers. This includes preparation to foster courses and on-going training. The current programme includes: safer care, child protection, education for looked after children, sex and relationships for looked after children and health of looked after children. In addition they are able to access training provided by Portsmouth that includes dealing with challenging behaviour, issues of attachment and separation, identity and heritage, caring for abused children, preparation for independence and preparation for adoption.

The training programme sets out the aims of each course and clarifies the target group. It also links the competencies for NVQ and Service Standards.

The booklet has the procedures for applying for a course. There is the opportunity for carers and social workers to undertake joint training.

Carers said that they could also get support for any relevant training they undertake on an individual basis.

The training officer keeps records of attendance and feedback about the course that is used in future planning.

Each carer has a training pathway form on which they can demonstrate their learning and plan future courses.

There is a group guideline document for use with groups that outline rules of confidentiality, expectations etc.

The training opportunities for carers exceed the standards.

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 majority of the information regarding children placed in foster care is held with the child's social worker and was not accessed by the inspectors. The information relating to referrals, reviewing processes and placement agreements were seen on some files. The new computer system will enable the social workers in the fostering team to access information about placed children, including up to date actions, contact information for parents etc. It is hoped that this will help to provide good information to carers at the start of placements. Carers reported that they keep records regarding the children in placement which they pass on to the relevant social worker. They also provide reports for reviews and/or information for court reports. Carers were aware of the need to keep the information about the child and their family confidential and safely stored.

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

There are clear administrative systems in place. The administrative officer provides management information to the manager on a weekly and/or monthly basis to ensure appropriate monitoring. Separate records are kept for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations. The inspectors did not see the children's files as they are held by the children's social workers. The carers' files were audited on an annual basis. The records were thorough and clear to read. The new computer system should make recording easier and more consistent throughout the service. There is an access to record policy. The inspectors asked to see the register of allegations against carers and, through the computer system, was able to see all action taken regarding each allegation. The carers' files seen for the Skye Close project were of a high standard, with photographs of carers, clear placement plans and health and safety checks. The files held in Chaucer House were less consistent in their content, especially where carers have been approved for many years. It is recommended that the general fostering service aim to up-date their foster care files to ensure all of the information required by the regulations is included.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			291
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 £	108.49	Maximum £	366.24

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 main fostering service is based in Portsmouth City Council offices in the centre of the City. There are parking facilities and good access to public transport. The office space is shared with the Social Services Finance Department. There are adequate desks for staff and appropriate filing facilities. The service is well supported by administrative staff. There has recently been a new computer system installed (Swift). This will potentially give access to systems and information to support the functions of the team. Currently staff are receiving instruction in the use of the system and there is the need to change systems and enter data. Once this has been completed there should be much better communication and sharing of information.

The childcare services are due to be re-organised later in the year. Within this process there may be some changes in accommodation for various teams. Some staff are hoping that this will lead to them sharing office space with social workers from the looked after children team, but this is not yet decided.

The foster carers raised the issue of having a resource that they can use to get together, provide training, have support groups etc. This was discussed with the managers who are currently working on the provision of such a resource.

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 finances available to the service are dependent on the local authority resources and are therefore subject to limitations and budgetary controls. The service is carefully monitored and any short falls in resources are fed back through the management system. The service appears to be managed efficiently within the set budgets.

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

Each of the fostering services has a budget that it managed by the team manager. On a day-to-day basis decisions can be made by that manager using the written policies and procedures. The budget is monitored on an on-going basis, assisted by the records kept by the administration officers. All staff were aware of the financial processes and felt decisions were made in a timely way. Decisions about major spending, or placements outside of the service are referred to the overall service manager. The budgets are reviewed annually as part of the local authority processes. There are regular audits that are open to public inspection.

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 inspectors were told that carers received their allowances on time. They are made aware of the allowances/fees at the start of the recruitment process and did not raise it as an issue of concern with the inspectors. They were clear about what the allowances covered and of the possibility of applying for other allowances as set down in the allowances policy. The majority felt that the payment of the discretionary allowances were fair and appropriate. There was a general acknowledgement amongst carers that the allowances do not meet the full cost of the care of the child, but this was accepted as part of the job.

There is a three-tier system of carers, each receiving different allowances/fees. There are clear job descriptions for each of the levels and this appears to help carers feel that it is fairly calculated. Carers can also apply to move between the levels and therefore feel they have some choice over the type of placements they provide. The allowances paid are now in line with the Fostering Network minimum recommended allowances. The carers spoken to showed a loyalty to the service and said they were not tempted to move to independent

Agencies despite the much higher allowances paid.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspectors observed a fostering panel and confirmed that it had been set up according to the Regulations. The panel chair was also separately interviewed. The inspectors noted that the information provided to the Panel was thorough and well presented. Appropriate questions were asked of presenting social workers and applicants. The panel members sought to gain enough information to make considered decisions and were careful to record individual decisions and the reasons for that decision.

There is a panel procedure made available to all panel members and there was evidence that the procedures were being reviewed in order to make them more 'applicant friendly', this will include photographs and information on all panel members being published in a booklet for applicants attending panel. Applicants and other visitors to the panel were treated with consideration and respect.

The panel have regular training and can request training in particular issues. They are kept up to date with changes in practice and legislation by the manager of the fostering team at Chaucer House who acts as an adviser to the panel.

Carers spoken to said they appreciated the opportunity to attend panel, although they all found it a daunting experience. However, no-one was able to say how it could be improved, but felt that as it is an important occasion it is likely that any arrangement that met the standards and regulations would feel daunting.

The membership of the panel met the Regulations but the inspectors felt it would be enhanced by the involvement of an ex-looked after child. Carers and young people also felt this would be a good idea.

The members of the panel stated any conflict of interest at the start of the proceedings and it was appropriately dealt with. Inspectors recommend that a simple pro-forma is provided in each set of panel papers on which any conflict of interest can be recorded. This can then be appropriately filed with the decision.

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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There is a dedicated short-break scheme for children with disabilities based at Beechside. There are policies and procedures in place for this scheme. The inspectors did not assess this service on this inspection, but the previous inspection confirmed that the standards were met.	
--	--

Respite arrangements are provided within the main fostering service and the inspectors were advised that the same policies and procedures are used for respite placements.	
--	--

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?	4
<p>The use of family and friends as foster carers is high within the service. There is an expectation that kinship placements will be considered before other placements and this acknowledges the success that these placements can achieve. The inspectors heard from kinship carers that they are well supported, given appropriate, comparable allowances and are valued as foster carers. The managers and staff have positively promoted kinship care and have a social worker within the team who specialises in kinship care. Expectations of carers fostering their relatives are made clear i.e. punishment issues, even if they conflict with the family norms. However, in many other areas the relationship issues are considered and compromises are made (in issues relating to record keeping etc). This has led to kinship carers feeling they have a voice and can influence decision-making.</p>		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 21st February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<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 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 CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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