



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service**

Lincolnshire County Council  
Social Services Directorate, Orchard House  
Orchard Street  
Lincoln  
LN1 1BA

3rd March 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**

Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service

**Address**

Social Services Directorate, Orchard House, Orchard Street, Lincoln, LN1 1BA

**Local Authority Manager**

Mr Philip Hunt

**Tel No:**

01522 552222

**Address**

Social Services Directorate, Orchard House, Orchard Street, Lincoln, LN1 1BA

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		3rd March 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Ms Jane Barton	134550
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Mr Mark Ryder	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	Ms Bridget Betts (NCSC consultant)	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>			

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**  
**Inspection visits**  
**Description of Fostering Service**

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**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**  
**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**  
**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**  
**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

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

- 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**
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- D.1. Provider's comments**
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- 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 Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.

Lincolnshire Local Authority Fostering Service sets out within its Statement of Purpose the aim to 'provide a range of foster carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, religious and ethnicity needs of all the children looked after by the local authority'.

These placements include the following types of carers:

Task centred; Respite Care, Permanent, Specialist Carers for children with disabilities, Placement Plus Carers for children with challenging behaviour, and Kinship Carers. It is currently developing specialist provision to provide emergency placements.

The number of Approved Foster Carers provided by the service was 234 and the number of placements being provided was 323 at the time of inspection.

The service operates within Lincolnshire County Council, Social Services Directorate. This is split into three geographical areas, South, West and East. The County Manager for the South has specific responsibility for the Family Placement Services and is the Local Authorities nominated manager of this service.

The Family Placement Staff are based in a number of Social Service Area Offices throughout Lincolnshire. The service has a dedicated duty system, based in the Lincoln Area Office to deal with enquiries. The family placement staff are responsible for undertaking the foster carer's assessments and taking these to the Fostering Panel.

The Fostering Service also employs a number of Placement Support Workers who provide direct support, including some respite day care, to carers.

## **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.)

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

##### **This standard was not met**

A Statement of Purpose was in place, which addressed the aims and objectives of the service. The Local Authority had not provided information to children and young people which was accessible to all across ability and age ranges.

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

##### **2 of the 2 standards assessed were met**

The nominated manager has all required relevant qualifications and experience, and all required checks and references had been carried out.

#### **Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)**

##### **1 of the 2 standards assessed was met**

There was no consistent data system being operated across the 3 area offices. Managers and staff described clear lines of communication and accountability. Processes to monitor quality assurance were about to be implemented at the time of inspection.

#### **Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**

##### **6 of the 9 standards assessed were met**

Annual reviews, health and safety checks, unannounced visits and risk assessments were being carried out appropriately. Children and young people were observed to be provided with caring, supportive and stimulating placements, which enabled them to pursue hobbies and develop their talents.

There was a duty system in place, which was well managed and efficient. Carers were positive about matching processes for long-term placements. There was little evidence found that the safe caring guidelines were rigorously promoted with carers being generally unfamiliar with these. A new Foster Carer's Handbook was available at the time of inspection in draft form, but had not been distributed to carers.

Carers demonstrated a robust level of commitment to contact arrangements between children and their families and friends. Both carers and children stated they were consulted in respect of their care within placements. There are comprehensive measures for meeting the health needs of young people in placements and the Local Authority has worked positively with colleagues across the county council directorates to ensure that education provision is in place for all children and young people, and to support carers in enabling them to access these. The Foster Carer's handbook does not contain policy and guidance in respect of preparing young people for independence.



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

**3 of the 9 standards assessed were met**

The nominated manager provided evidence that appropriate checks had been carried out and documentary evidence within the staff recruitment processes was seen.

A distance learning modular training programme was in place for carers, although records did not evidence the progress carers were making on an individual basis, and the programme was not linked to appraisals, nor outcomes monitored.

Staff were positive about the administrative support provided within the service.

A draft strategic review of placements identifies various methods of developing recruitment of a range of carers in future. Fostering staff turnover is low. A research project to examine how to improve the quality of assessments is under way. Staff were clear about their duties and lines of accountability. Team Meetings were regularly held. No formal supervision strategy was in place for carers at the time of inspection, however the majority of carers stated they felt well supported by the fostering service. Some carers accessed training enthusiastically, however others did not acknowledge the need for, or benefits of developing their skills through a training programme.

**Records (Standards 24-25)**

**1 of the 2 standards assessed were met**

A written policy on recording was in place. Facilities for confidential storage of paperwork has been provided to carers. Evidence of monitoring of files by managers was in place.

**Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standard 26)**

**This standard was met**

Premises in Louth, Sleaford and Lincoln were inspected and found to meet the standard.

**Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)**

**These standards were not inspected as the service is a Local Authority provision**

**Fostering panels (Standard 30)**

**This standard was met**

The fostering panel sits jointly with NCH Action for Children, an independent fostering agency, who form part of the membership. The panel was observed to be effectively chaired and provide an appropriate quality assurance function.

**Short-term breaks (Standard 31)**

**This service is not provided and was not inspected**

**Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)**

**This standard was met**

The fostering service demonstrated sensitivity in their recognition of the particular issues pertinent to this group of carers.

## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

**This is no longer required.**

## 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	3 & 4	FS1	<p>Statement of purpose and children's guide</p> <p>(3) The fostering service provider shall produce a written guide to the fostering service (in these Regulations referred to as 'the children's guide')</p> <p>The children's guide had not been produced at the time of inspection. The LA is required to produce this document and send a copy to the NCSC on completion.</p> <p>The Statement of Purpose is required to include the information as set out in NMS 1.4. Some of these details were missing.</p>	31.10.04

2	17	FS23 FS19	<p>Support, training and information to foster parents</p> <p>17 (1) the fostering service provider shall provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.</p> <p>(2) The fostering service provider shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the policies established in accordance with regulation 12 (1)</p> <p>Whilst the LA has produced a distance learning training package for some foster carers, and provides additional training for its placement plus carers, the LA is required to review the expectations of all carers training and ensure all carers have ongoing training related to their specific needs in relation to the service provided. Each carer's annual review should include an appraisal of training and developmental needs.</p> <p>The areas of training should include topics covered within the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and NMS. This includes 'safer caring' training for all members of the household.</p> <p>A comprehensive foster carers handbook including the policies and procedures of the LA fostering service is also required.</p>	31.10.04
5	21(4)	FS18	<p>Employment of Staff</p> <p>(4) The fostering service provider shall ensure that all persons employed by him (a) received appropriate training, and supervision.</p>	31.10.04

**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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      **Jane Barton**                      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**   **Mark Ryder**                      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**   **Rachel Cook**                      **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	21(4)	FS22 FS7 FS21	<p><u>Employment of Staff</u></p> <p>(4) The fostering service provider shall ensure that all persons employed by him (a) received appropriate training, and supervision.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <p>The fostering service ensures that training is available to enable foster carers provide care which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background (NMS 7.4)</p>	31.01.05
2	15 (2) (c)	FS7	The fostering service ensures that each child with a disability received specific services and support to help him to maximise his potential and to lead as full a life as possible (NMS 7.6)	31.01.05

3	17	FS16 FS9	<p>The fostering service ensures safe caring guidelines are provided, based on a written policy, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household. The guidelines are cleared with the child's social worker and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child. (NMS 9.3)</p> <p>The fostering service ensures that foster carers are aware of the particular vulnerability of looked after children and their susceptibility to bullying, and procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instance of bullying and to help foster carers cope with it. (NMS 9.6)</p> <p>The fostering service ensures that carers undertake on-going training and appropriate professional and skills development. Carers maintain a training portfolio (NMS16.9)</p>	31.01.05
4	28 (5) (b) Sch 5	FS22	The fostering service ensures that a Foster Care Agreement addressing the matters identified under Schedule 5 of the Regulations is in place in respect of each carer (NMS 22.4)	31.01.05
5	18 (2) (e)	FS4	The fostering service ensures that information about the procedures for dealing with complaints and representations is widely available, and complaints records are clear (NMS 22.8)	31.01.05

#### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS4	The fostering service to rationalise data systems to enable consistency across the area offices (NMS 4.1)
2	FS14	The fostering service ensures that foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person preparing to move into independent or semi-independent living (NMS 14.3)

3	FS18	It is recommended that out of hours management and support to foster carers be formalised (NMS 18.3) The fostering service ensures that carers are made aware of the whistleblowing policy (NMS 18.7)
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\* 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 (NB fieldwork only)

12
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Survey of placing authorities

NO
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Foster carer survey

YES
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Foster children survey

YES
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Checks with other organisations and Individuals

- Directors of Social services
- Child protection officer
- Specialist advisor (s)
- Local Foster Care Association

NO
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YES
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YES
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NO
----

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements

YES
-----

- Interview with children
- Interview with foster carers
- Interview with agency staff
- Contact with parents
- Contact with supervising social workers
- Examination of files

YES
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YES
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YES
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NO
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YES
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YES
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Individual interview with manager

YES
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Information from provider

YES
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Individual interviews with key staff

YES
-----

Group discussion with staff

YES
-----

Interview with panel chair

YES
-----

Observation of foster carer training

NO
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Observation of foster panel

YES
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Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES
-----

Inspection of records

YES
-----

Interview with individual child

YES
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Date of Inspection

03/03/04
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Time of Inspection

10:00
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Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

90
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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?**

**2**

Records evidenced that a Statement of Purpose was in place, which stated the aims, objectives and principles of the fostering service. Some of the information within the Statement was not up to date, for example: numbers of children and foster carers. The Statement recorded the numbers of complaints, but not their outcomes.

The Service is using the BAAF booklet 'Fostering, what it is and what it means' as an interim Children's Guide. This guide provides useful information but is not accessible to all ages and abilities, and contains no information about local initiatives and resources. Leaflets are available for children that inform them about how to access an independent advocate. No leaflets for children explaining how to make a complaint are currently available, however the manager stated that these are currently being produced. 6 out of 9 children responding to the inspection survey questionnaire stated that they had not been given a Children's Guide or a leaflet telling them about the fostering service.

## 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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Records evidenced that the nominated manager had all the relevant qualifications and experience required within this standard.

### 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 Manager's personnel file was examined during the last inspection and it was found that all required checks and references had been carried out. It was stated that no changes have taken place in respect of these since the last inspection.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Discussion with staff and records revealed that the area offices used different data systems, and a number of methods operated in respect of the process for tracking referrals and applications. It was not possible to ascertain how data from the individual offices could be pulled off to inform cohesive service planning.

Discussions with Managers and staff, and records revealed that roles are clear and lines of communication and accountability are in place.

The information relating to the number of complaints was supplied - 4 complaints received by the fostering service. 4 out of 11 children responding to the inspection survey questionnaire stated that they would not know how to make a complaint if they needed to. 24 out of 30 placing officers responding to the questionnaire stated that they had been given information about how to make a complaint. It was not possible to ascertain from information provided which complaints were about a foster carer.

The nominated manager has devised a process for the monitoring of quality assurance, with lines of accountability clearly stated, although at the time of inspection the process had not been disseminated throughout the staff group.

The information relating to child protection enquiries was provided to inspectors. Of the four investigations two are ongoing, one set of carers have been deregistered and one was found not to be substantiated.

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

NA

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.

2

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.

4

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

There were clear lines of accountability and records revealed that the scheme of delegation within the service was clearly defined. Staff interviews evidenced that they felt well supported. Discussions with the management team, and inspection of records and files revealed that the contribution of the Development Manager in her role within the service was particularly positive in terms of her specialist knowledge and experience.

## 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

Inspection of files evidenced the carrying out of annual reviews, health and safety checks, unannounced visits to foster homes and risk assessments in respect of transport and any animals/pets residing at the placement. 5 foster homes were visited as part of the inspection. All the homes were warm, clean and offered an appropriate standard of accommodation for the children and young people placed there. Carers were observed to have positive supportive relationships with the young people placed with them, and to offer a stimulating environment that met the developmental needs of the children. Several young people stated on their questionnaires that they wanted their carers to be thanked in this report for the care they have been given.

### 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?

2

Lincolnshire Fostering Service foster carers and children placed were predominantly white, European. On the few occasions that placements have been requested for children from ethnic minorities the Service has used consultants with the appropriate expertise needed to advise on how the children's needs could best be met.

Records revealed that Placement Plus carers had received specific training which included sexuality and self esteem. Training to value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination was identified in the Training Strategy for Foster Carers, however this is contained within Module 4 of the distance learning programme and, at the time of inspection, had not been made available to carers, who have, so far, received modules 1, 2 and 3.

Staff interviews evidenced an awareness of issues specific to diversity and special needs, and how to access services to meet them.

One young person spoken to has moderate learning difficulties and has no allocated social worker or access to any specialist services.

Records evidenced that religion, language, and ethnic origin were not always recorded clearly in children's files.

Children spoken to were enthusiastic about the wide range of activities available to them within placements, and said they were supported by their carers in pursuing hobbies and interests.

**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**

The duty system was seen in operation, covering the whole county. Discussions with the duty officer, and examination of records and processes evidenced that the system was well managed and efficient. The duty officer demonstrated an extensive knowledge of available carers which is used to inform decision making in the matching process in conjunction with other relevant professionals.

Feedback from some fieldwork social workers indicated that there were examples of difficulties in accessing placements through the duty system, however in the questionnaires sent to placing officers, 22 out of 25 respondents said the fostering service works in partnership with them very well, and a further two said fairly well.

Staff interviews highlighted some restrictions in placement choice, and a tendency for task-centred placements to evolve into permanency, although it was acknowledged that these can be extremely successful, and this was evidenced from discussions with carers. Carers spoken to described receiving support through the matching and introduction process while the child became familiar with the placement. Carers particularly highlighted planning and matching for long term placements as being thorough and effective.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

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

The Fostering Service follows the Lincolnshire Area Child Protection Committee Code of Practice. Child Protection training is provided on the preparation for fostering courses, however discussions with mainstream carers and file records did not evidence ongoing training, Placement Plus carers had received recent training in this area and described it as useful and effective. Discussions with staff, carers and examination of files revealed that carers generally were not aware of safe caring guidelines, and it was not evidenced that the policy was promoted.

16 out of 17 foster carer respondents to the questionnaire stated they were adequately informed about children placed in order to provide appropriate care.

Some carers spoken to were not aware of the anti bullying procedure. There is clear guidance contained within a new Foster Carer's Handbook, but this had not yet been distributed to carers at the time of inspection. This handbook also contains guidance in respect of safe caring and behaviour management, which includes prohibited forms of punishment. The Foster Carer's Handbook does not contain specific guidance in respect of Child Protection, although it refers carers to the LACPC Code of Practice.

Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information in respect of allegations of neglect or abuse of children and young people in foster care, and managers demonstrated a thorough knowledge of ongoing issues.



The newly-designed questionnaires completed by children and young people in placement did not address the issue of bullying, this has been fed back to the group responsible for monitoring methodology within CSCI. Several young people made the point that they feel safe in their placements.

**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

No contact policy or guidance is contained within the Foster Carer's Handbook, however discussions with carers evidenced a high level of support, commitment and involvement in the arrangements for contact with friends and family. 20 out of 24 Placing Officers in their questionnaires reported carers work well with child's family, with 1 stating that the carer was critical of birth parents.

Young people spoken to described their wishes and feelings being consulted and listened to in respect of contact.

Files evidenced that carers record outcomes of contact visits and any impact on the child.

Carers stated that there is sometimes difficulty accessing expenses incurred through contact arrangements. Some carers expressed the view that they did not understand why parent's wishes in respect of their children were perceived as more important than their own.

**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

File records evidenced that consultation with children takes place within the Looking After Children care planning and reviewing process.

All of the children who responded to the questionnaires stated their foster carers ask for their opinions and ideas, 8 of the 11 who responded said they had been asked their opinions about their foster carers by the service, however 9 stated they had not been asked their opinions about how the fostering service could be made better. 18 foster carers out of 19 who responded said they are consulted about important decisions in the lives of the children they care for, and they all stated they attend reviews and are listened to there. Carers spoken to were aware of the scheme for providing an independent advocate for children and young people.

Inspectors were also given the opportunity to observe the Tunnel Light Project, which is an

internet service and website set up in 2001 to enable internet technologies to strengthen contact between family placement staff, carers and looked after children provides opportunities for children and young people to develop and maintain supportive links with carers, each other and the directorate, and also provides an educative and recreational function, offering safe access to the internet.

**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 Designated Doctor is provided in conjunction with Lincolnshire Health Trust to address the health needs of Looked after Children. Two CAMHS posts are designated to work to support foster carers. Carers spoken to stated they were involved in the planning process in respect of the health of the young people in placement and provided with information to ensure these needs were met. In respect of children receiving specific therapeutic techniques during their placement, 5 out of 6 placing officer respondents stated they are satisfied with the carer's involvement in these and that they are proving effective for the child. Examination of children's files reveal clear assessment of health needs, and records how they are to be met.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

4

Discussion with staff across the service evidenced a high level of commitment to addressing this area. A leaflet for carers explaining the different roles in respect of professionals involved in supporting the education of looked after children has been produced. There are 3 posts for Education Officers whose role is to provide guidance and assistance on issues which impact upon a child's learning potential.

Discussions with foster carers revealed that school places for children and young people placed with them were more accessible, and they described positive relationships with education professionals and regular attendance at school meetings. No children or young people were excluded from school at the time of inspection, however files revealed that support was available to carers of excluded pupils. Discussions with carers evidenced that support within the education setting has been provided by placement support workers. Carers stated that young people were engaged in regular out of school activities and one young person was away on a school trip at the time of inspection.

Work with the library service to promote access to books has resulted in a scheme for a free service to looked after children which commences on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004. LAC will no longer receive fines for overdue books nor be expected to pay for reservations.

All carers homes have PCs. Records revealed that carers are encouraged to develop IT skills in order to support children in placement in accessing educational information and research on the internet.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

The new Foster Carer's handbook does not contain policy and guidance in respect of preparing young people for independence. Discussions and inspection of records evidenced that Module 6 of the training programme addresses this area, however this has not yet been made available to carers, who reported no training in respect of leaving care and promoting independence.

Interviews with a placement plus carer revealed excellent work in respect of 2 young people being prepared for independence, and discussion with a group of carers evidenced a good understanding of the issues.

The Manager of the service stated that carers attended a Roadshow provided by NCH Action for Children which addressed leaving care, the provision of services to support young people, and how to access them.

## 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

Records revealed clear staff recruitment and selection procedures which are carried out in respect of the fostering service. Staff recruitment files are held by Hyder Business Services, and the 6 files examined were disorganised but contained most relevant and appropriate documentation with the exception of 2 CRB checks and evidence of qualifications of workers. Examination of the staff register of the fostering service evidenced, however, that the manager of the service was satisfied that all appropriate checks had been carried out, and documentary evidence of relevant qualifications were included.

Of 30 qualified social workers in the service, 7 have PQ1, and 2 are currently undertaking this. 2 have PQ2 and 1 is undertaking it. Of 6 unqualified family placement assistants 3 have been seconded by the local authority to commence the BASW in 2004.

Interviews with practice managers, and records evidenced that family placement assistants carry out discrete parts of assessment work under the direct supervision of qualified social workers.

Total number of staff of the agency:

54

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

10

### 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?

2

Family placement officers, assistants and Practice Managers interviewed all stated they had regular supervision and that this was recorded in written form. Several staff stated they had undergone appraisal. File recording evidenced that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers took place appropriately. Staff interviewed (including those with extensive fostering experience) reported high workloads.

An ongoing modular training programme for carers is in place, however discussions with carers revealed a lack of commitment to the programme with some carers clearly not recognising the benefits or relevance of training to the foster care task. Some carers stated they felt that the skills required to carry out the fostering task could only be acquired through life experience. Respondents to the carers' questionnaire gave examples of training in a

wide range of areas, although 4 stated they had received none.

Discussions with Practice Managers and family placement officers revealed that a high level of effective administrative support was provided within the service and this was supported by observation during the inspection. Staff also described good working relationships with fieldwork colleagues.

Records and discussions with staff evidenced that enquiries were dealt with promptly.

#### **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 directorate have published a draft strategic review of placements for children looked after with special emphasis on family placement services, which identifies a variety of options to address the acknowledged difficulties which have been experienced in recruiting foster carers, particularly in the east of the county, including a restructuring of payments system. Staff spoken to described existing recruitment strategies enthusiastically. Observations, discussion and examination of records evidenced that contingency plans were in place where staffing vacancies existed and although staff reported high workloads, there was an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the children for whom it provides a service. Staff recruitment files confirmed that staff turnover was low. Clear policies were in place in respect of staff induction, supervision, appraisal and training. As stated above, some carers expressed reluctance to engage in training.

Interviews with staff identified an ongoing research project which has been commissioned to address an improvement in the quality of family placement assessments. Files revealed that the new BAAF form F was in use.

#### **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?**

**2**

Interviews with staff revealed that out of hours management and support services are not specific to the fostering service, and consist of Emergency Duty Team cover, On-call managers and informal networks provided by family placement staff. Carers spoke very highly of the support provided to them informally.

There is no formal process currently in place for supervision and appraisal of carers.

Carers spoken to stated they were not aware of a whistleblowing policy, although they accurately described action to be taken in the event of such a need.

Records revealed that current Professional Indemnity Insurance is in place.

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
See comments under Standards 15 and 16 in respect of training for staff.		
While a training plan is in place in respect of staff in the fostering service as a whole, there was no evidence of individual programmes of training for mainstream carers, linked to appraisals and with monitored outcomes.		
Some staff stated they had attended joint training with carers. Joint training is not specifically addressed in the Training Strategy		
Records and discussions with carers evidenced that Placement Plus carers have regular opportunities for group learning experiences.		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
See comments under Standard 16 regarding supervision and support. All staff spoken with were clear about their duties and responsibilities. Records revealed that team meetings were generally held regularly and well attended.		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
Staff interviews and records evidenced no strategy in place for the formal supervision of carers at the time of inspection. The Foster Carer's handbook, available in draft at the time of inspection, did not contain information about the process and expectations in respect of the supervision of carers.		
Observation of panel evidenced annual review reports available for consideration.		
18 out of 19 respondents to the carer's questionnaire stated that they felt supported by the fostering service. 24 out of 25 respondents to the placing officers questionnaire stated that they felt the fostering service works well in partnership with them.		

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

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

2

File records evidenced that foster care agreements were not current. A new agreement format has been devised but was not in use at the time of inspection.

Discussion with carers and staff evidenced that carers are supported by named, appropriately qualified social workers, and have access to appropriate professional supports. File records evidenced that regular visits, including unannounced visits were made to carers by family placement staff.

Basic information about the procedures in relation to allegations is available in the foster carer's handbook, although this is not yet available to carers. See also comments under standard 21 in respect of the handbook.

See comments under Standard 4 in respect of complaints. One carer interviewed stated she had made a complaint, but was unsure about the process and had received no feedback in respect of the outcome.

Discussion with a group of carers elicited positive views about support available through carer's groups, with some carers finding they were unable to access them due to geographical distances involved.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

2

Records and discussions with staff and carers evidenced that pre-approval and induction training took place.

There is a distance learning training programme in place, with modules 1 – 3 disseminated to some carers. Managers stated that 166 carers were in receipt of module 1, 20 carers were in receipt of module 2 and 14 carers were in receipt of module 3. The remaining 5 modules were in the process of being prepared for dissemination to carers at the time of inspection. Discussion with staff and carers revealed a mixed response to progressing work through the modules, with some carers expressing ambivalence to training in general and the modules in particular. There was no formal written evidence showing to what extent carers had completed the work that they had received, and no information available in respect of the carers who had not received the modules.

File records, and discussion with staff and carers evidenced that training on safe caring had not taken place, nor was it provided for all household members.

Carer's files evidenced that discussion in respect of training had taken place at the annual review, and record kept of training undertaken during the year, however evaluation of effectiveness of training and future training needs was not clear.

## 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

There is a written policy on recording in place, and foster carers have been provided with a secure case for storage of confidential materials. Discussion and file records did not evidence ongoing training in life story work or recording.

Inspection of offices confirmed that foster carer's files were stored with the family placement teams, while children's files were maintained by the child's social worker. All files requested were made available for inspection.

Foster carers stated that in general they were provided with information in respect of the legal status and the reason for accommodation/placement of children. During visits to carer's homes inspectors were shown photographs and memorabilia kept by carers for the purposes of compiling a life story book.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Separate records are kept as required under Standard 25.2. Files inspected evidenced regular monitoring by practice managers. Files were observed to be kept in a confidential and secure manner. Children's files were inspected and found to be satisfactory, and congruent with the Looking After Children System. See comments under Standard 7 also.

Records in respect of complaints were inspected. The complaints officer provided statistical information in respect of complaints received by the service. It was not possible to elicit which complaints were made against foster parents.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	323
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	234
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	216
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<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	88
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<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months: April 2003 – November 2003</b>	26
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<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	60.50	<b>Maximum £</b>	307
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## 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

Offices in Louth, Sleaford and Lincoln were inspected and the premises were found to be secure and the administrative systems effective.

## 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?

9

This standard was not inspected due to the service being a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This standard was not inspected, as the service is a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44.

### 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?

9

This standard was not inspected due to the service being a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44.

However, evidence on records revealed that foster carer's allowances are published and reviewed annually.

## 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
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The fostering panel is a joint panel with NCH independent fostering agency who form part of the membership.

Clear written policies and procedures in respect of the operation of panel are in place. This policy does not cover the decision-making process when members are not in agreement. (NMS 30.2).

Observation of panel evidenced a wide range and depth of knowledge and experience of panel members. Discussions with staff revealed that ongoing research into the assessment process will address the quality of assessments and link with panel's provision of a quality assurance function to the review and assessment process. Panel were observed to identify and address issues in a fair, thorough and rigorous manner.

The fostering panel operates separately from the adoption panel.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This standard was not inspected. The fostering service does not provide this type of placement.	
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## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Records evidence an increasing number of this category of carers being approved. Carer's within this category spoken to stated they felt well supported by their family placement officers, and also consulted and dealt with sensitively in respect of their assessments. One set of carers were particularly positive about their involvement with the local authority.

**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 03<sup>rd</sup> March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

YES

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan within 28 days, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other:

NO

**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 Mr Matthew Bukowski of Lincolnshire County 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(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 Mr Matthew Bukowski of Lincolnshire County 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(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.