



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Trafford Fostering Services

4th Floor

Waterside House

Sale

Manchester

M33 7ZF

25th October 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

Trafford Fostering Services

Address

Stretford Public Hall, Chester Road, Stretford, Manchester,
M32 0TH

Local Authority Manager

Mr Leonard Pilkington

Tel No:

0161 912 5039

Address

Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, M33 7ZF

Fax No:

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

19/1/04

Date of Inspection Visit		25th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Chris Tucker	074724
Name of Inspector	2	Lolly Warren	074725
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		Matthew Brazier, Head of Services for Looked After Children.	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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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

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Trafford Fostering Services. 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.

Trafford Family Placement Team provides fostering service for the authority. It provides short-term, long-term and permanent placements for children “looked after”. It also provides short-term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being “looked after”.

The Service was responsible for recruiting, assessing and approving foster carers as well as supporting them. However, friend and family carers (kinship carers) were at the time of this inspection assessed by social workers based in the area teams.

The Family Placement Team is based in Sale, in a new local authority building which houses a number of other council services. However, some of the administrative support to the Service was still based at other sites.

The Family Placement Team is made up of the Family Placement Team Manager (post currently vacant), 1 Senior Practitioner, the Children with Disabilities Team Manager, 6 Family Placement Workers, and 3 administrative staff. Two of the Family Placement Team Posts were filled by agency staff and there had been recent recruitment to fill the vacant positions.

There is no requirement under the Care Standards Act 2000, to register a local authority Fostering Service.

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)

The Service had a Statement of Purpose that met the requirements of the regulations and a Children's Guide that is illustrated and written in straightforward language.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-5)

At the time of inspection the post of manager was vacant though has now been filled. Management responsibility was being undertaken by the Head of Service. Staff clearly understood their role within the service and there were clear lines of accountability.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

With the exception of "Kinship" carers a full assessment was carried out before children were placed. Diversity appeared to be valued by the service. The demands on the service meant that it was not always a choice of placements for children, particularly older children. Child Protection concerns were seen to have been addressed. Contact between children and their families was viewed as a normal part of their lives. There was an active Children's Rights Officer who encouraged consultation with children. Health needs appeared to be addressed. It was noted that Personal Education Plans were to be seen on the children's files. Support is provided for young people moving on to independence.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15-23)

All the necessary checks were carried out when recruiting staff. The staff team were positive in their outlook and felt well supported. Administrative support was provided though was spread over three offices. Steps had been taken to recruit to the vacant posts in the team. BAAF Form "F" was used to assess all foster carers with the exception of "Kinship" carers. An appraisal system for staff had been started and the induction of new staff was described by staff as good. Foster Carers understood the different responsibilities of different teams within the Children and Families Service. There appeared to be dissatisfaction among the foster carers with the amount of information provided about the children placed with them and the consultation about plans for the children future and care arrangements. Recently recruited foster carers described the induction training as good but foster carers were less happy with the programme of training after their approval/

Records (Standards 24-25)

Foster carers commented that it was not unusual for a child to be placed without the necessary documentation. It would appear that there needed to be continued vigilance within the placing social work teams with regard to the provision of information to foster carers. There were policies and procedures with regard to confidentiality, record keeping and the storage of records.

Fitness of Premises for the Use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

The Family Placement Officers and their admin support were based in a recently constructed office which house a number of the services run by Trafford Borough Council. The offices were spacious and provided good quality accommodation. Lockable filing cabinets were provided for the records and files and access to the building was by the use of a key pad system during the day.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

The Service is funded out of the budget allocated by Trafford Borough Council and the Service operated to Local Authority financial policies and procedures. Payments to foster carers were made regularly and on time.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

The fostering panel had a recently appointed chair and was seen to be undertaking its approval and scrutinising responsibilities effectively. In some instances fuller information needed to be provided to the panel.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

The authority operated a "Home from Home" scheme designed to support children with disabilities. Foster carers were positive about the support provided. However, the workload of the member of staff running the scheme was high and increased staffing needed to be considered.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

Social work teams undertook the assessment and support of friend and family carers. The assessment support and administrative systems for these carers was different to that provided to other foster carers and a number of requirements were made in respect of this.

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:

There is no longer a requirement to make such a notification.

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	28(5)(b)	FS23	The Service must provide appropriate training for Kinship Carers.
2	27	FS32	The recruitment procedures relating to kinship carers must be revised. The recruitment of kinship carers must be the same as that of other carers.

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	
NOT APPLICABLE		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Chris Tucker **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Lolly Warren **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Elizabeth Williams **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	17	FS22	The Service must explore with its foster carers the sources of dissatisfaction expressed during this inspection, particularly in relation to consultation and the provision of information, so that they and their colleagues responsible for the children placed, can address these dissatisfactions.	31/3/05
2	17	FS23	The Service must provide appropriate training for Kinship Carers.	30/6/05
3	17	FS23	Training for existing foster carers must be expanded.	30/6/05
4	27	FS32	When an assessment report on proposed foster carers, including Kinship carers, is presented to panel for approval, the report must contain all the matters listed in Regulation 27, including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and written reports of interviews with referees	28/2/05
5	27 & 28	FS32	The approval and assessment procedures relating to kinship carers must be revised to bring them into line with that of other foster carers.	31/3/05
6	30 & 38	FS32	A case record must be set up for each "kinship" carer from the date on which the "immediate" placement is approved.	28/2/05

7	38	FS32	When an emergency placement is made with a “kinship” carer the written agreement specified in Regulation 38 must be made	28/2/05
8	29	FS32	When a “kinship” carer is approved by the fostering panel, the notices specified in Regulation 29 must be sent.	28/2/05
9	19	FS31	The size of the staff team responsible for the Home from Home service must be sufficient for the size of the Service and numbers and needs of the children/young people placed by the Service.	30/6/05

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	FS24	The Children and Families Service should continue to check that foster carers are provided with written background information (for example the LAC documents) about the children placed with them.
2	FS32	In order to improve the consistency of assessment reports a link worker from the Family Placement Team should be nominated for each “kinship” carer assessment
3	FS30	When the Fostering Panel is asked to consider a long-term match for children, panel members should be given a copy of the assessment of the foster carers to assist their decision making.

* 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	4
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	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	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	25/10/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	27

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Service has a Statement of Purpose which sets out the aims and objectives of the fostering service. It will need updating once a new manager is appointed and new staff have taken up their posts.

There is a guide for children and young people, called "The Family Placement Team, Who they are and what they do". This is written in straightforward language and was illustrated. It includes information about how to contact the Children's Rights Officer for Trafford.

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

At the time of the inspection the manager's post was not filled, the previous manager having moved to another post in summer 2004. The manager's post had been advertised and since the inspection took place an appointment had been made.

In the interim, the Head of Services for Looked After Children, Matthew Brazier, had temporarily taken on the responsibility for the direct management of the team. The team was part of his line management responsibility and he had been the previous chair of the fostering panel. He is a qualified social worker and had 15 years experience of working with or being responsible for looked after children.

The Head of Services told the inspector that he based himself in the Family Placement Team's Office once a week and was in regular phone contact. The team also reported that, while day to day matters were handled by the team members, the Head of Service was accessible to them and they were able to discuss any matters of significance with him and refer on to him any major decisions.

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?

0

There was no manager in post at the time of the inspection. Management responsibility was undertaken by the Head of Services.

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

Staff clearly understood their role within the service and their comments to the inspectors indicated that there was a well understood and established lines of communication, even in the temporary arrangements that were in place in the absence of a manager.

The service had proper financial procedures.

The Service was not required to notify the Commission of the matters listed below.

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:

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 within the service and all staff spoken to knew who was responsible for different parts of the service.

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

A full assessment of foster carers was undertaken before the carers were approved by the fostering panel. As part of this assessment the standard of accommodation was assessed and a health and safety check of the house undertaken. The exception to this was kinship carers where the children might have been living with the carers before a decision was made that they should be approved as foster carers. The matter of Kinship Carers is covered in Standard 32.

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

A random selection of foster carers who were selected from a list provided by the service, was noted to be diverse in their individual backgrounds and lifestyle. The publicity and recruitment material produced by the service makes it clear that the service will consider carers from different backgrounds and with different lifestyles. A specific reference was made for the need for Black foster carers although the inspector was informed that the percentage of black carers (20%) was similar to the percentage of Black looked after children.

A match presented to the Fostering Panel observed by the inspector demonstrated that the issue of cultural and religious identity was sensitively addressed and arrangements made that would meet the emotional and cultural needs of the children.

The Children and Young People's Service had a Policy and Practice Guide entitled "Towards Racial Equality" which includes a section specifically related to family placement.

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
<p>The inspectors was told that whereas at the time of the inspection there were some placements with carers available for children aged under 10 and therefore some choice in matching, it was more difficult when it came to placing teenage young people. There had recently been a recruitment for carers for older children and this had been quite successful. The team were also developing a system for putting together more positive profiles of older children requiring placement, asking current carers about the young people's achievements rather than emphasising the challenges they may present.</p> <p>A reading of some of the carer and children's files indicated that where possible introductory visits had been arranged.</p>		

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
<p>The Fostering Team had a record of incidents that had been brought to their attention in which there had been apparent child protection concerns. The records seen indicated that the information was acted on promptly and appropriately.</p> <p>The initial training for foster carers included child protection and safe caring. The Foster Care Agreement included detailed and practical guidance on safe caring practices. The agreement also makes a very clear statement that physical punishment was not permitted.</p> <p>The questionnaire used as part of the inspection does not ask about bullying so the percentage below cannot be given.</p>		
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
<p>The files read by the inspector gave a clear indication that contact with families was a normal part of the arrangements for a child's care. Comments made during the meeting with a group of foster carers also showed that contact was part of the task of caring for children. Young people in foster care also spoke of contact with their own family in a manner that indicated that this was seen as a normal part of their lives.</p>		

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

Trafford Children and Young People's Service has a Children's Rights Officer, a copy of whose annual report was seen by the inspector. He also arranged for the inspectors to meet with young people who were living in foster care. His annual report for the year 2003 to 2004 gives information of a variety of national and local consultation exercises in which the Children's Rights officer and young people took part. In 2003 a questionnaire was sent out to all looked after young people aged over 10. This questionnaire covered various aspects of living in care.

The action plan for 2004 to 2005 included setting up a group for young people in foster care. This had been done and the inspectors met members of this group.

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

It was part of the Foster Care Agreement that carers were expected to attend to the health needs of the children placed with them. Trafford had a full time Clinical Nurse for Looked After Children who was available to assist and offer guidance to carers and young people. There was also a post of clinical psychologist with responsibility for offering support to carers with the emotional well being of the children placed, particularly as displayed in their behaviour. The previous occupant of the post had provided training for carers in such areas as child development, attachment theory and childhood diseases. Training in sexual health had also been provided.

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

At the last inspection a requirement was made that a system must be introduced for monitoring the educational progress and attainment of children and young people. The inspector noted during this inspection that Personal Education Plans (PEP) were to be seen on the young people's files or a record made of action taken to have a PEP completed.

The previous holder of the post of Co-ordinator for the Education for Looked After Children now dedicates one day a week to this task. There was a plan to recruit a Senior Learning Mentor for Looked After Children by May 2005. The inspectors were told that a multi-agency steering group had been set up to coordinate actions and to monitor progress in respect of

the education of looked after children. The Children and Young People's Service has an agreement with the National Teaching Advisory Service (NTAS) to provide individual support for young people.

As part of the Accommodation Strategy for looked after children that has been agreed by Trafford Council, it is proposed that the arrangement with NTAS should be developed to provide support for young people with complex educational needs who are placed in foster care.

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

The foster carers who spoke to the inspectors had positive comments to make about the support provided by the After-Care Team. Young people were also positive about this support. The carers clearly saw it as part of their task to help young people moving towards independence, though the extent of their involvement would depend on what the young person wanted.

Foster carers spoke of how difficult it was at times to move a young person on who had reached the age of 18 when the authority no longer supported them financially to stay in the foster home. They were aware of the support available for young people who continued in further education.

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 authority was in the process of recruiting new social work staff to fill existing and new posts on the team. The personnel department made available to the inspector the records of the process being followed. This showed that all necessary checks were being carried out. There was a record of the interview and two references were obtained or were in the process of being obtained. All staff who have responsibility for assessment of foster carers were qualified social workers.

There were two agency workers on the team at the time of the inspection. The Head of Services for Looked After Children told the inspector that he had personally looked at their references and their CVs.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The development of the fostering service formed part of the Looked After Children Strategy that had been approved by the Council. This envisioned an increased role for fostering in providing accommodation for young people looked after in Trafford. In spite of the reduced size of the fostering team as a result of staff vacancies, the team, when speaking to the inspectors, were clear about their role in that strategy. They spoke of approaches they were taking to increase the placement of older children. It was to the credit of the team that they maintained this forward looking approach in spite of the reduced size of the team.

The team stated that they felt well supported and were aware of a new supervision policy that was being introduced.

The administrative support for the team was spread over three separate offices, but systems appeared to have been developed for managing this separation.

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
<p>The staff team was reduced at the time of the inspection. Two temporary staff from an agency had been taken on to fill vacancies until the posts had been filled. The process of filling these posts was nearing completion with the appointment of new staff.</p> <p>The team told the inspectors that a recent recruitment drive for foster carers for older children had been quite successful.</p> <p>The assessment of carers followed the lines of the BAAF form "F" which covered all the matters set out in the standard. The exception was the assessment of "Kinship" carers and this matter is covered in standard 32.</p>		

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
<p>The team told the inspectors that they felt well supported and that even with the absence of a manager, they had ready access to a senior manager. A new staff appraisal system had just been started.</p> <p>Since the previous inspection, the corporate "Whistleblowing" policy had been adapted, albeit slightly, to cover issues related to child protection which was a requirement of the previous inspection.</p>		

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>The temporary agency staff told the inspectors that they felt that had received a good induction into the team. As stated in standard 18, an appraisal system for staff had just been started.</p>		

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

The staff team confirmed that they were supported and the newest team members stated that they found the team very supportive. There was an evident good morale among the staff team, with evidence of mutual support.

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**

Foster carers were clear in their understanding of the different roles of the Family Placement Officers and the children's social workers. They were aware that the team had been reduced in numbers recently.

Annual reviews were carried out, though not all were being completed annually.

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**

Responses from individual questionnaires received and from conversations with carers indicated that carers were satisfied with the support they received. In conversations carers commented that they were aware that there had been a shortage of staffing in the team and this delayed at times a response to their messages, however, they were not critical of the quality of the support from the Family Placement officers.

However, a discussion with a group of foster carers reveal a general dissatisfaction with the way they feel they were regarded within the Department. They expressed the view that they are insufficiently informed about significant matters relating to the child they are caring for. For example, carers were not told until late in the process that the plan for a child had been changed, and in some instances, were informed at very short notice when contact arrangements have been changed. They commented that there was no consistency about receiving background information about a child and that LAC documents either took some time to be received or had still not been received. They felt that their views about a child were not valued. Carers felt that if you did raise issues with the department, then the carer would be "punished" by not having a child placed with them. The word "punished" in this context was used a number of times. There was a general feeling of not being valued and their opinions and experience not being respected by the social workers who supervise the children placed with them. The inspectors were struck by the strength of feeling on this

issue, which was not restricted to a minority of those at the meeting.

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

Foster Carers who had recently gone through the assessment process told the inspectors that they had found the induction training to be good. A report prepared for an assessment of foster carers included in the list of the training modules “Child Development”, “Who are the Children?”, “Separation Loss and Attachment”, “Child Protection” and “Behaviour Management”.

In their meeting with a group of foster carers, the inspectors were told that training had not been as frequent as they would wish and that they were not aware of any programme of available training. For some foster carers the lack of a creche facility limited their ability to attend.

As noted in the previous inspection, no training was being provided for “kinship” carers. The requirement made at the last inspection has been reiterated.

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?

2

The LAC (Looked After Children) documents were seen on the files read by the inspectors. This was in contrast with the absence of documentation seen on some files at the previous inspection

However, in their meeting with the inspectors, foster carers commented that it was not unusual for a child to be placed without the necessary documentation. One carer visited by the inspector had received no LAC documents at all, although they were fully aware of the plans for the children placed. It would appear that there needed to be continued vigilance within the placing social work teams with regard to the provision of information to foster carers.

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

Policies and procedures were in place dealing with record keeping, confidentiality and access to records. Information relating to these matters was also noted to be included in the Foster Carers' Handbook. Appropriate systems were in place concerning security and storage of information.

Separate records were being maintained for staff, carers and children/young people. There was evidence to indicate that the appropriate checks were being undertaken in respect of the carers.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Family Placement Officers and their admin support were based in a recently constructed office which house a number of the services run by Trafford Borough Council. The offices were spacious and provided good quality accommodation.

Lockable filing cabinets were provided for the records and files and access to the building was by the use of a key pad system during the day.

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 Family Placement Service was funded out of the budget allocated by Trafford Borough Council for the management and operation of its Children and Young People's Service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Service operated to the Local Authorities policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. There had been no significant changes in the administrative system since the previous inspection 9 months earlier when the administrative staff spoken to appeared organised and discussed with the inspectors the current systems in place for tracking placements and payments. Payments were made on the basis of the information received from the Family Placement workers. Payments to Home from Home, Kinship carers etc were made at different intervals.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster carers confirmed to the inspectors that payments were made on time and regularly.

A review of the payments was nearing completion at the time of the inspection but this had not yet been presented to the Council for their approval.

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 inspector observed the Fostering Panel on 3rd December. Since the previous inspection a new independent Panel Chair has been appointed, The Director of Education and Early Years for Trafford MBC. The panel on the 3rd was the second time she had undertaken the role of chair.

The Panel was quorate and its membership included four independent members included the required number of independent members, an elected member and two social workers employed by Trafford MBC. The independent members included members with specialist educational and health knowledge.

The panel members raised relevant questions about the applications and subjected the assessments presented to scrutiny. The meeting was effectively chaired and organised. The minutes of the previous meeting were detailed and informative. Questions were raised by panel members that raised general matters relating to the undertaking of assessments and the type of carers that were available within the Borough. The panel was seen to be undertaking an appropriate monitoring function in respect of family placement within the Borough.

The assessments for kinship carers that were presented to panel did not use the BAAF form "F" that is used for all other carers. Some of the assessments presented did not have information about satisfactory CRB checks of written reports of the interviews of referees. These had been requested but not yet obtained. As Regulation 28 requires there to be a completed assessment before the Fostering Panel approve a carer and Regulation 27 requires a CRB disclosure and written reports from referees to form part of the assessment, a requirement is made that the fostering panel must only give approval to a carer when they have received all the required information.

The panel were asked to consider a long term match for two children but were not presented with the form "F" of the carers. A panel member requested that these Form "F"s be presented to panel in the future . It was agreed that this would be future practice and this reports supports this in its recommendation.

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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The authority operated a Home from Home scheme designed to support children with disabilities. This scheme was under the management of the Children with Disabilities Team, although the Family Placement Team Manger was accountable for compliance with fostering regulations. The Home from Home link officer attends all Family Placement team meetings.

As noted on the last two inspections, the caseload of the Family Placement Worker responsible for supporting the carers was high. At the last inspection a requirement had been made that the authority reviewed the staffing of this aspect of the Service. This requirement has been reiterated.

Where necessary appropriate aids and adaptation would be made available and the carers received training covering a range of issues from First Aid, Child Protection, Safe Caring, Management of Difficult Behaviour, Community Infection Control, Health and Safety etc. The inspectors were told that disability awareness training was provided.

The annual reviews of a number of Home from Home carers were presented to the panel observed by the inspector. In their written contributions to the review, the carers made positive comments about the support provided by the scheme organiser. The score of "2" on this Standard relates to the level of staffing not the quality of the service.

The authority also provided a range of link/respice carers.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

The social work teams undertook the assessment of friends and family carers. The Head of Services for Looked After Children commented that the Family Placement Team was not sufficiently staffed to take on the responsibility for the assessment of kinship carers. How this aspect of the service was to be managed in future was a continuing discussion within the Department.

From reading randomly selected files relating to kinship carers, it was evident that changes were needed in the procedures relating to kinship carers in order for the department to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

- At present the records relating to the kinship carer are held in the same file as the looked after children. Separate files must be set up.
- No written agreements appeared to have been made when the decision was taken to accept the "immediate" placement of the child with the kinship carers. Regulation 38 requires this to be done.
- Health and Safety checks did not appear to be part of the assessment process.
- There was no notification from the service to the carer that they had been approved by the fostering panel.

The assessments for kinship carers did not use the Form "F" which is the practice for all other carer assessments. The assessments broadly covered the areas set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations but were written in a different style, with little written contribution from the carers themselves. If Kinship carers continue to be assessed by the area teams, then greater consistency would be achieved by allocating link workers from within the Family Placement team.

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 25 October 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We are working on the best way to include provider responses in the published report. In the meantime responses received are available on request.

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 Julie Newsham of Trafford Fostering 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 Julie Newsham of Trafford Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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