



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Wigan Social Services Dept Fostering Service

Civic Centre

Millgate

Wigan

Greater Manchester

WN1 1AZ

14th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Wigan Social Services Dept Fostering Service

Address

Civic Centre, Millgate, Wigan, Greater Manchester, WN1
1AZ

Local Authority Manager

Patsy Bull

Tel No:

01942 827 819

Address

Civic Centre, Millgate, Wigan, Greater Manchester, WN1
1AZ

Fax No:

01942 404745

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

March
2003

| | | | |
|--|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Date of Inspection Visit | | 14th January 2004 | ID Code |
| Time of Inspection Visit | | 9.45 am | |
| Name of Inspector | 1 | Anthony Kyem | 111309 |
| Name of Inspector | 2 | Sue Easton | |
| Name of Inspector | 3 | None | |
| Name of Inspector | 4 | None | |
| Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process. | | None | |
| Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable) | | Not applicable | |
| Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection | | Patsy Bull | |

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Wigan Social Services Dept 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.

Wigan Social Services Department's Fostering Service provides both care and accommodation with Fosters Carers to a number of looked after children and young people. One hundred and fifty seven placements are provided through recruited foster carers, whilst a further one hundred and nineteen placements are provided through relative/friend carers (known as Kinship Carers). In addition to the above, the Family Network Service also provide a further 19 placements to children and young people with complex needs. (Source): pre inspection questionnaire dated 28/11/03.

The fostering service has undergone a recent restructure resulting in the formation of three separate but integrated teams, these are:

- The Family Network Team which is for the provision of children and young people with complex needs, whom require short term breaks within the fostering service.
- The Adoption and Permanence Team which provides services for children and young people looked after on a longer-term basis, whose needs are best served within long-term foster care or adoptive placements.
- The Transitional Team, which provides services to children and young people who require temporary care.

The Family Network Team is the only team based at Ince Annexe. Both the Transitional Team and the Adoption and Permanence Team are both situated within Tyldesley Town Hall.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

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

This is the second annual inspection of Wigan's Social Services Department's Fostering Service, which has been assessed against the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The service was observed to have complied with all but two of the requirements as were identified from its previous inspection, dated March 2003. It must be noted that despite the positive progress made, some work has yet to be undertaken in terms of the services ability to meet the full range of standards that apply. The service must now concentrate upon those outstanding requirements and good practice recommendations that have now been identified following this inspection.

Despite some shortfalls, many positive examples of good practice have been observed. It is hoped that the service will continue to improve upon existing practices in meeting with all of the NMS in the future. The Inspector would like to take this opportunity to thank the Manager of the service, the staff, carers and all of the children and young people who assisted with this inspection.

1. Statement of Purpose

The service has a Statement of Purpose, which is both well written and informative. However the Children's Guide to the service, although equally as well written, is not suitable for children with complex needs, which is a minor shortfall in meeting this standard. It is recommended that a separate guide be developed.

2. Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

The Manager of the service has a professional qualification in social work and plans to undertake further training relevant to meeting this standard. Currently the Manager is required to manage one field work service/transitional care in addition to the fostering service. This is unacceptable, given the demands and constraints this places upon her effectiveness to manage both services efficiently. It is understood that a separate Team Manager is soon to be appointed for the fostering service. The staff personal files examined all contained the necessary information as required by regulation in meeting this standard.

3. Management of the fostering service

Although the fostering service is being effectively managed, it is not sufficiently managed in numbers which is a minor shortfall in meeting this standard. The Manager monitors the overall service, which involves the routine monitoring of all complaints and allegations received. The Family Network Team is not directly managed by the service but is in fact managed by the Group Manager for children with complex needs. The senior social worker of the team is responsible for the teams daily operations. It is recommended that the Registered Person should consider the needs for the team to be appropriately managed.

4. Securing and promoting welfare

All recruited carers are required to cover the service's policy on safe care practices during pre approval training. Risk assessments on children placed were not available, which is a shortfall in meeting this standard. These should be made available on all case files. The internal provision available to children from ethnic minority backgrounds is somewhat limited. Evidence was directly observed which would suggest that carers do ensure that children and young people do have equal access when pursuing their individual interests and hobbies. Relative/friend carers do not currently receive the same levels of support as with recruited carers. This is concerning given that this may have a fundamental impact upon the longer-term stability of these placements which are significant in numbers.

5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers

Evidence was observed to demonstrate that all service staff have now completed enhanced CRB disclosures. The service has a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability, which are easily understood. Staff shortages have greatly impacted upon the quality of the service as a whole. A whistle blowing policy and procedure has now been introduced within the foster carers post approval pack. It is recommended that all carers should have access to the relevant training and that this be afforded during the evening in meeting with the needs of some carers. A staff supervision and appraisal policy was introduced in January 2003 for staff working in the team. No formal support groups are currently held for carers.

6. Records

Written records are kept on all staff, carers and children by the service. A sample of carer's files were examined. These were all found to be in order. Currently carer's files do not contain the required CRB checks, which is a shortfall in meeting this standard.

7. Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service

Although the services premises are fit for purpose. The premises are rather cramped and lacking in sufficient office space. No other shortfalls with the premises were identified.

8. Financial requirements

This standard was not assessed, as the Local Authority is not required to demonstrate its financial viability.

9. Fostering panels

The Chair of the panel is the Strategic Manager for Children in Public Care. Observations of the panel evidenced that independent representatives from health and education are involved. The written assessments brought before panel were examined and were found to be of a good standard in meeting with Regulation 27(1) & Schedule 3 of the (NMS). No shortfalls were identified with this standard.

10. Short term breaks

The Family Network Service is available to children and young people with complex needs. The parents of these children retain parental responsibility and are consequently central to the promotion of their health and education in meeting this standard. No shortfalls were identified with this standard.

11. Family and friends as carers

Kinship carers are not currently receiving the same levels of support as with recruited carers which is a major shortfall in meeting with this standard.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

YES

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

The fostering service is currently understaffed, which has significantly impacted upon the individual experiences of many carers. In particular, to the large numbers of kinship carers who have not received any support.

There have been a number of standards not met during this inspection and a significant proportion of these may be attributable to staff shortages and the insufficient support networks currently available to some carers.

The introduction of the Placement Support Team may alleviate some of these difficulties. However, for the service to be truly effective, it must ensure that a full complement of staff is achieved.

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 | 19 | FS17 | The Responsible Person must ensure the service has sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff to undertake its functions. | 1/8/03 |
| 2 | 17 | FS32 | The Responsible Person Must ensure that Kinship Carers are afforded the same levels of support as with recruited Foster Carers. | 1/8/03 |

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

| Condition | Compliance | |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | |
| Comments | | |

| Condition | Compliance | |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | |
| Comments | | |

| Condition | Compliance | |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | |
| Comments | | |

| Condition | Compliance | |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | |
| Comments | | |

Lead Inspector Anthony Kyem **Signature** _____
Second Inspector None **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Susan Easton **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 | 42(1)(b) | FS4 | The Registered Person must ensure that written guidance is made available to all carers regards their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interests post approval. | 1/6/04 |
| 2 | 17(1)(3) | FS6 | The Registered Person must ensure that all children placed by the service have a risk assessment completed, which is made available to carers prior to the placement of any child and that a copy is retained on the child's file. | 1/3/04 |
| 3 | 35(1) | FS6 | The Registered Person must ensure that carer's homes are annually inspected. | 1/5/04 |
| 4 | 34(1)(b) | FS8 | The Registered Person must ensure that children placed are appropriately matched and that carers are sufficiently prepared and supported. | 1/4/04 |
| 5 | 13(1) & 17(1) | FS9 | The Registered Person must ensure that a written policy is developed on permissible/prohibited methods of control and that this is made available to all carers. The policy on the use of holding/ physical restraint must be made clear. | 7/4/04 |
| 6 | 17(1) | FS12 | The Registered Person must ensure that carers training covers health and safety and first aid and that all carers attend with mandatory training. | 1/6/04 |

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|------|--|---------|
| 7 | 16 | FS14 | The Registered Person must ensure that all carers receive appropriate guidance/training in supporting young people with acquiring the necessary skills for independence. | 1/8/04 |
| 8 | 19 | FS17 | The Registered Person must enable that the service has sufficient numbers of suitable qualified staff to undertake its functions | 1/4/04 |
| 9 | 17 | FS23 | The Registered Person must provide training for carers, which is accessible. | 1/7/04 |
| 10 | 27(1)(2)(a) & Schedule 3.13 | FS25 | The Registered Person must ensure that all carer's files contain the required enhanced CRB disclosures. | 1/10/04 |
| 11 | 17 | FS32 | The Registered Person must ensure that all Kinship Carers are afforded the same levels of support as with recruited Foster Carers. | 1/4/04 |

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 | | The Registered Person should develop a separate Children's Guide is developed for younger children and for children and younger people with complex needs. |
| 2 | | The Registered Person should ensure all parts of the service are sufficiently managed at all times. |
| 4 | FS3 | The Registered Person should ensure that CRB checks for all staff are renewed very three years. |
| 2 | FS7 | The Registered Person should ensure that Foster Carers are recruited from ethnic minority backgrounds in meeting with the needs of the service. |
| 3 | FS11 | The Registered Person should ensure that a Children's Rights Officer be employed. |
| 4 | FS4 | The Registered Person should ensure that the services complaints procedure includes information for carers on who they may contact independently of the service. |

| | | |
|---|------|---|
| 5 | FS15 | The Registered Person should ensure that staff & foster carers recruitment and retention strategies are prioritised and regularly reviewed and updated. |
| 6 | FS21 | The Registered Person should ensure that regular support groups are afforded to all carers. |
| 7 | FS23 | The Registered Person should ensure that carer's files contain a record of all relevant training undertaken. |
| 8 | FS24 | The Registered Person should ensure that carers store confidential information in a secure place. |
| 9 | FS5 | The Registered Person should consider the needs of the Family Network team to be appropriately managed. |
| | | |

* 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 | 10 |
| 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 | NO |
| Tracking Individual welfare arrangements | YES |
| • Interview with children | YES |
| • Interview with foster carers | YES |
| • Interview with agency staff | YES |
| • Contact with parents | NO |
| • Contact with supervising social workers | YES |
| • Examination of files | YES |
| Individual interview with manager | YES |
| Information from provider | 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 | 14/1/04 |
| Time of Inspection | 9.45 |
| Duration Of Inspection (hrs) | 74 |

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

The fostering service has a written Statement of Purpose, which was last approved on the 23rd April 2003.

The Statement was examined and was observed to be both well written and informative, clearly describing what services the local authority intends to provide for children and young people through its fostering service. The Statement was observed to contain all of the information as required to meet this standard, in meeting with Regulation 3(1) (a) & (b) of the Foster Services Regulations 2002.

The Children's Guide to the service, although colourful and equally as informative is not considered suitable for children with complex needs which is a minor shortfall in meeting this standard.

The Responsible Person should ensure that the Children's Guide is both suitable and accessible to all fostered children, including younger children and those children with complex needs. It is recommended that separate guides be developed in order to meet this standard.

The Manager of the service was able to advise the Inspector that the requirement to supply the guide to all carers and children had been undertaken as was required from the services previous inspection.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager of the service holds a professional qualification in social work and is both suitably qualified and experienced. The Manager advised the Inspector that she planned to undertake further training (NVQ Level 5 in Management) by 2005 in keeping with this Standard. Discussions with the Manager demonstrated that although she is able to effectively manage the service she has had to undertake other duties unrelated to her current position to cover for staff sickness or annual leave. The service has been greatly affected by staff shortages which has had a fundamental impact upon the effectiveness of the service overall. Currently the Manager of the service has overall operational responsibility for one fieldwork service/transitional care in addition to the fostering service. It is however understood that the service is currently in the process of recruiting a completely separate Team Manager for the fostering service.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager of the service was directly observed to have a current enhanced CRB certificate which was made available for inspection. No irregularities were identified through visual examination of this document. A sample of five service staff's files were also examined. The necessary records required by regulation were all observed to be in place. The files observed each contained enhanced CRB disclosures, proof of identity, written references, staff qualifications, and employment history in keeping with Schedule 1 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). The Responsible Person should ensure that CRB Checks for all staff are renewed every three years.

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 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

The Manager of the service currently monitors the performance of the service by attending regular service meetings, fostering panels, obtaining service staff and foster carer feedback and by the routine monitoring of all complaints and allegations received. As part of Best Value there is an improvement plan as to review the effectiveness of the services offered to children and young people in public care, in addition to which there is also a corporate consultation strategy.

The service was observed to maintain a written record of all complaints and allegations received. Inspection of which, revealed that from November 2002 to November 2003 there had been a total of 19 complaints received and investigated by the service. Discussions with the Manager demonstrated that there had been an increase in the amount of complaints received which may be attributed to the fact that some carers had not received support as a direct result of the service being understaffed.

During the course of this inspection a number of dissatisfactions with the service were also reported to the NCSC, by a small number of carers who informed the Inspection Team of their personal dissatisfactions with the service, communicating that they felt, “ unsupported, “ and “unable to complain to the service for fear of the repercussions in doing so”. This issue was discussed with these carers who were advised of their rights to complain. The outcome of this consultation is not known. A further two complaints were also received in respect of two young people, both of which were passed onto the service for investigation.

It is unclear how carers are encouraged to declare any possible conflicts of interest, post approval, which is a minor shortfall in meeting this standard. The Responsible Person must ensure that written guidance is made available to all carer’s regards their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interests post approval in meeting with Standard 4.5 of the NMS.

The Responsible Person should also ensure that the complaints policy contains specific information for carers on who they may contact independently of the service should they feel unable to complain directly to the service as described above.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months: | 0 | | | | | | | | |
| Death of a child placed with foster parents. Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children. Serious illness or accident of a child. Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home. Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution. Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home. Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child. | <table border="1"> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td></tr> </table> | X | X | X | X | X | X | 3 | 3 |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| X | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months: | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Number of the above complaints which were substantiated: | 5 | | | | | | | | |

| | | |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4) | | |
| The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
| <p>The fostering service although effectively managed is not sufficiently managed in numbers. A separate Team Manager has yet to be appointed by the service, which is a minor shortfall in meeting this standard. The need for this position to be filled has been recognised and it is anticipated that this standard will be met in the future. Discussions with the Family Network Team demonstrated that they are not directly managed by the service but are managed by the Group Manager for children with complex needs. A senior social worker is responsible for the daily operations of the team, with management support afforded from the Group Manager for children with complex needs. The Responsible Person should consider the needs of the team to be appropriately managed as with other services.</p> | | |

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
|--|---------------|---|
| <p>The revised foster carers agreement now includes information for carer's about the NCSC powers of inspection. All recruited carers are required to cover the departments 'safe care' policy and good practice guidance during pre approval training. A health and safety assessment is also used to assess the suitability of all prospective carers homes, ensuring that the accommodation provided can safely accommodate the placements needs of looked after children and young people. Carer's homes are now annually inspected in keeping this standard. The Manager advised the Inspector that unannounced annual inspections on all existing carer's homes was being introduced as part of carer's annual reviews.</p> <p>Prior to the service placing any child a risk assessment is said to be completed which is used to inform the appropriateness of all children placed, many of whom may be required to share bedrooms. In total there have been some forty-four exemptions to placement numbers granted over a twelve-month period, which is exceptionally high. If a child has suffered abuse, then the needs of other children in placement are also assessed.</p> <p>The sample of children's files examined did not contain risk assessments which is a shortfall in meeting this standard. Some carers informed the Inspector that they had not received risk assessments when children were placed. One carer communicated that the placement of a child had to be stopped by the carer given that she had ascertained serious welfare issues concerning the suitability of this child to be placed with other children. The Registered Person must ensure that all children placed have up to date risk assessments and that these are made available to carers prior to the placement of any child. It is also recommended that a copy of this assessment be placed on the child's file for future inspections.</p> | | |

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

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

Discussions with the Manager demonstrated that every effort is made to ensure that carers do provide care which respects and values each individual child's racial, religious, and cultural needs. Foster carers training covers this, with training offered on equality and diversity. The internal provision available to children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds was observed to be limited whilst the numbers of these children requiring the service was observed to be increasing. Out of borough placements are used when necessary to meet with the needs of these children given the difficulties the service continues to experience in recruiting suitable carers. Discussions with the supervising social workers of the service spoke favourably of the support afforded to them by senior management in meeting with the placement needs of these children.

Two social workers from the Family Network Team were also interviewed. The Family Network Team provides short term breaks for children and young people with complex needs. Discussions with the social workers demonstrated that children with complex needs are provided with the specific support, including any specialist equipment required to meet with assessed needs. Specialist equipment is either purchased or loaned.

The service has access to occupational therapists in keeping with the placement needs of these children. Evidence was available which would indicate that carers do ensure that children have equal access in developing and pursuing their interests and hobbies in meeting this standard.

One set of Family Network carers were visited at home. The accommodation provided was observed to be of a good standard. The carers were directly observed to respond to the needs of the child placed. The carers spoke favourably of the service and reported that they did receive regular support. The carers also reported that it was often difficult to access any specific training in meeting the individual needs of children placed. It is recommended that suitable training be identified for carers in meeting with the individual needs of these children. Training on Makaton and BSL should be provided where this is required. The carer in this instance, had been waiting a considerable length of time to access specific training in meeting with the preferred communication needs of the child.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Whilst it is recognised that the service has had to work within the constraints of having limited resources. The placement needs of all children have to take precedence, in terms of how individual matching is achieved. Evidence was available which would indicate that the service does attempt to meet with the placement needs of all children. However, a shortage of suitable carers means that suitable placements are often difficult to find.

One example was observed where a Contract Carer had taken a younger child, which had caused the carer difficulties with the services' plans to move the child on. In hindsight this problem could have been avoided if the child had been appropriately matched with a suitable carer. The shortfall in meeting this standard is that the carer was insufficiently prepared by the service to care for a younger child whose assessed needs were adoption. The Responsible Person must ensure that all children placed are matched appropriately and that where emergency placements do occur, that the placement needs of children are regularly reviewed. It was unclear how effectively the service could achieve this task given the shortages of placements observed. From the number of relative/friend (Kinship) placements observed, it would suggest that the service does ensure, that wherever possible children are best placed with extended family. The shortfall in meeting this standard is that kinship carers have not received any support from the service, which may have had a detrimental impact upon the longer-term stability of these placements, which are significant in numbers.

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?**

1

As part of case tracking a sample of carers were visited by the inspection Team. The carers spoken to reported that they felt they had been given the necessary information required to enable them to keep children safe from harm. The carers post approval pack was observed to contain the services missing person policy together with the services policy on bullying. Pre approval training covers training on child abuse, managing challenging behaviour and safe care skills in keeping with this standard.

From the information provided, it would appear that only nine carers have attended any training on child protection over a twelve-month period. These numbers are significantly low and it was unclear what types of training for carers, is mandatory. The Manager of the service advised the Inspector that mandatory training had now been introduced for newly recruited carers.

Discussions with several carers evidenced that although they were aware of the services policy on “ No Smacking “. They were not aware of the services policies and procedures in relation to restraint, which is concerning and a major shortfall in meeting this standard. Discussions with supervising workers of the service demonstrated that the information currently provided to carers about permissible forms of control was inadequate and could be greatly improved upon as this was only ever covered during pre approval training. One carer when asked about restraint had this to say: “ No I haven’t had restraint training...I think you can just hold them, without the child coming to harm. ” The Responsible Person must ensure that written information is provided to all carers making the services policy on restraint and additional measures of control clear.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied: | 0 | % |
|--|---|---|

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|

The statutory review process is the main forum in which contact arrangements for children are discussed. From the observations of carers and through the direct feedback received, it would appear that carers are pro active in promoting contact for children, often facilitating this task themselves. The carers interviewed as part of this inspection, presented as having a clear understanding of the fundamental importance of children maintaining appropriate contacts. Where restrictions in contact did apply, the service was observed to be able to offer supervised contact with the aid of contact workers, although these are not employed in sufficient numbers. Financial support is also available to carers to ensure the services’ contact arrangements are upheld. No shortfalls were identified with this standard.

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 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|

Young people do not currently have access to an advocate or a children rights officer as none are currently employed. It is recommended that one be employed to bridge this gap in the service.

The only observed methodology used for formally consulting with young people was through the statutory review process. Less informal consultation does occur, between carers and children during daily living. As part of the overall methodology of inspection, a young person’s questionnaire was sent to all children placed who were 8 years of age and over. A total of twenty-one questionnaires were received. Only three young people reported that their views and opinions were not ascertained by the service regards their feelings about their care.

The vast majority of children and young people communicated favourably of the service. When young people were asked had the service ever asked them for their views on how the service could be improved. A uniformed sixteen reported that they had not been consulted about this. In response to their social workers consulting with them, again the vast majority of young people spoke favourably about their social workers asking for their opinions with only four young people stating that they felt their social workers never asked them for their views.

Evidence was directly observed of one young person having access to the services complaints procedure and of their complaint being investigated rigorously by the service. The outcome of which resulted in a change of placement for another child. No irregularities were identified.

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?

2

Carers are provided with the necessary information as required to meet young peoples' health needs. LAC documentation, which includes medical consent, was directly observed on files. The service ensures that carers do secure the necessary health care services for children in meeting this standard. Generally, health needs are routinely monitored during the statutory review process. The children's files examined, contained all of the required LAC documentation. The files each contained health care plans and evidence of annual medicals. It is recommended that all carers are encouraged to attend basic training on health and hygiene and first aid in meeting this standard. From the sample of thirteen carers questionnaires received, none were observed to have undertaken any training in the latter. Eight of these reported having not undertaken any further training at all, which is a shortfall in meeting this standard.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service was observed to have a joint protocol for the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care. Inspection of young people's files demonstrated that young peoples educational needs are promoted and their educational achievements are celebrated and acknowledged by the service. Special payment allowances are made available to all children requiring school uniforms, or with any other additional items of equipment required to attend with education. Personal Educational Plans were available on file.

Foster carers are required to support young people with their schooling and in providing the necessary facilities required for study. The Education Department offers a Behaviour Support Service with a post specifically created for an Education Officer to be based within the Children and Families Division of the service. No shortfalls were identified with this standard.

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

No written guidance is currently available which details the requirements of what is expected from carers in terms of preparing young people for independence. From the information provided, it appears that foster carers do not receive any formal training or support about preparing young people for leaving care, which the Responsible Person must provide. One carer provided written information to the inspector, which demonstrated that the young person did not have a Pathway Plan at the age of 16, which is a requirement under the Leaving Care Act 2000. Currently, all cases for young people age 16 years and above are transferred and case managed by the Leaving Care Team. It is at this point that a Pathway Plan must be developed in order to meet with the independence needs of young people.

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

A sample of five staff files were examined. All were observed to be order in keeping with the information as required within Schedule 1. Evidence was available to demonstrate that all staff had undertaken enhanced CRB disclosures. Clear and written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing new staff are in place, which follow good practice guidance in safeguarding children and young people. The supervising social workers, spoken during this inspection, were all conversant with their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, all were suitably qualified and experienced to undertake the work on behalf of the service. A staff recruitment and retention strategy is in place, which may require further development if the service is to recruit and retain staff.

Total number of staff of the agency:

25

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

4

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 service has a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability. The fostering service staff are managed and supervised by people who do possess the appropriate skills and qualifications to undertake this task. Some social workers communicated that they felt that the existing arrangements of "mixing staff up" had stripped them of their teams identity. Currently all three social work teams regardless of specialist experience, are required to share office space with the intended outcome of improving communications amongst the teams. It is not clear whether this has been effectively achieved from the discussions held with staff. The administrative systems, office equipment and infrastructure of the service, are all sufficient to enable staff to carry out their duties. The Family Network staff felt that they required more administrative support.

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?**

2

Currently the Manager of the service is managing both the fostering service and the fieldwork teams, both of which are effected by staff shortages, which has greatly impacted upon the quality of the service as a whole. The Manager and the service staff have both had to work under intense pressures to deliver a service, which they themselves have recognised as falling short in meeting its goals. Many of the carers spoken to reported mixed feelings about the service. Some reported that they felt very supported, whilst others clearly have not received the same levels of support. The services offered could be greatly improved with additional staff. The insufficient numbers of staff currently employed is a shortfall in meeting this standard. The service must ensure that staff retention and recruitment is given priority if it is to avoid similar staffing difficulties in the future.

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

There are sound employment practices in place in relation to both staff and carers. Out of hours support is provided to carers by the newly established Placement Support Team (PSP), which to all intents and purposes has received very positive feedback from those carers spoken to. After 11pm the Emergency Duty Team is available to all carers for advice and support. However EDT is not able to offer the same levels of intensive support currently provided by the PSP.

Comprehensive health and safety policies are in place for carers, which cover the legal requirements. A whistle blowing policy is now included within the post approval pack for newly recruited carers.

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

There is an effective training programme for staff employed by the Fostering Service. This is provided centrally at the Social Services Department's Training Section. Joint training occurs for foster carers with residential staff, some foster carers felt uncomfortable with this arrangement. The Fostering Manager has been advised to look into these comments in more detail.

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) | | |
| All staff are properly accountable and supported. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
| <p>From the discussions the Inspector had with several members of staff. It would suggest that staff on the whole, do feel supported by the service.</p> <p>Each member of staff has the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings, which are frequently held.</p> <p>The policies and procedures of the service are accessible to all staff. The supervision of staff is monthly and a written record is kept by the service. A Supervision and Appraisal Policy was introduced in January 2003. No shortfalls were identified with this standard.</p> | | |

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----------|
| Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) | | |
| The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
| <p>The Manager was able to acknowledge the difficulties the service has experienced over the past twelve months and was open and honest in doing this. Inspection of carer's files demonstrated that, despite the staffing difficulties experienced by the service, the staff have worked extremely hard under intense pressures in delivering monthly supervision to carers. This is commendable, and a positive achievement in meeting this standard. It is hoped that the development of new services will offer even greater levels of support. The Placement Support Team will play a key role in this process. Currently there are no formal support groups available to carers. However, the manager advised the Inspector that plans were already underway to remedy this. No shortfalls were identified with this standard.</p> | | |

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| 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 |
| <p>Examination of carer's files evidenced that the vast majority of carers are now being visited on a monthly basis by their supervising social workers. This is not true of kinship carers, which is one of two shortfalls in meeting this standard. See also Standard 32 of this report. Foster carers agreements have now been revised in meeting with Standard 22.4 and Schedule 5 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). Annual unannounced visits to carer's homes have yet to take place, which is a further shortfall. The departmental systems to support carers need to be regularly reviewed, in terms of manageable caseloads, unallocated cases, and the understaffing of the service.</p> | | |

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

A mentor scheme has been introduced which involves recruited carers participation in the assessment and pre approval training of prospective carers. The training provided by the service would appear to fit within the framework of equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice. One minor shortfall in meeting this standard is that training is generally provided during the day, which is inaccessible to many carers. It is recommended that training be provided during the evening in meeting with the needs of carers. The Responsible Person should also ensure that carer's files contain a portfolio of training undertaken, even though this is covered to a lesser extent during carer's annual review.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service has a written policy and procedure for recording information (dated January 2003). Further information on recording is contained within the foster carers post approval pack in relation to diary recording. A sample of children's case files was examined. These were found to be in order. The files examined each contained the necessary looked after children documentation as required. Carers were directly observed to be able to produce copies of the relevant LAC documentation, as required, to inform the care planning arrangements for children and young people. The Responsible Person should ensure that all carers are encouraged to store their diaries and other confidential information in a secure place. No written guidance on secure storage or confidentiality was contained within the post approval pack for 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?

2

The service was observed to keep separate written records on staff, carers, children and complaints and allegations in keeping with Standard 25.2. A number of these records were examined.

The carers files were found to be in order and contained the necessary information in meeting with Regulation 30. Records are kept of all checks and references.

The shortfall in meeting this standard was that none of the files examined contained enhanced CRB disclosures, although there was evidence of police checks having been undertaken. These checks, were, however outdated.

All of the files were further observed to contain the necessary foster carers agreements, evidence of approval and of annual reviews having taken place. Direct observations of panel demonstrated that exemptions are regularly reviewed in meeting this standard. Evidence was further observed as to indicate that the files had been recently audited, which is good practice.

| | | | |
|---|-------|------------------|--------|
| Number of current foster placements supported by the agency: | | | 295 |
| 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: | | | 8 |
| Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months: | | | 7 |
| Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £ | 70.49 | Maximum £ | 245.98 |

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 service's offices are located within two separate locations. The Family Network Team is based within the Civic Centre, whilst both the Permanence and Adoption Team and the Transitional Team are both based at Tyldesley Town Hall. Both facilities are clearly identifiable and accessible to the public.

The arrangements for the safe storage of files has been improved following the last inspection as all files are now stored within a locked basement.

The office space available to staff is limited but sufficient in meeting with its purpose.

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 is not applicable to local authority fostering service. Therefore this standard has not been assessed.

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 assessed.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers spoken to during this inspection confirmed they are paid promptly by bank transfer on a monthly basis. No dissatisfactions were communicated with the method of payment. The allowances payable are clearly described within the foster carers post approval pack and are normally reviewed annually. The fee payable to all foster carers should be reviewed in view of the changing needs of the service in terms of the ongoing staff retention difficulties.

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

As part of this inspection the fostering services panel was observed. The panel Chair was also interviewed prior to the panel meeting. The Chair is also the Strategic Manager for Children in Public Care, with extensive social work and management experience.

The panel meets every six weeks and has now been formally constituted. The Chair advised the inspector that the panel had written procedures in place regards the functions of the panel, which cover decision making where there is disagreement amongst panel members. The procedures in relation to the latter were not examined by the Inspector on this occasion. The Chair also advised that all panel members had been CRB checked in keeping with this standard. The Inspector did not examine these records on this occasion.

Observations of the panel demonstrated that independent representatives from health and education are included within the panel membership. Quorate numbers for panel to proceed is a minimum of five in keeping with Regulation 25(1). The panel meeting observed had seven members present. The minutes of previous panel meetings were also observed and evidenced that panel does not meet unless quorate numbers are obtained. Good practice was observed in that the carers who attended panel were made to feel welcome. Panel members were observed to be able to communicate their views openly and without obstruction from other members. The approval of two foster carers was observed. The information made available to panel was of a good standard in meeting with Regulation 27(1) and Schedule 3 of the NMS. No irregularities were identified.

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? | 3 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

Two members of staff from the Family Network Team were interviewed as part of this inspection. From these discussions it would appear that parents remain central to the promotion of their children's health and educational needs in meeting this standard. The service aims to offer completely new experiences to children, through fully approved, trained carers. A sitting service is also available to parents and children within their own homes. The senior social worker of the service communicated that the Family Network Team felt quite strongly that the Standards as they apply, were not in keeping with the services provided and that this issue was currently part of a national debate given that the care provided by this service is not the same as provided to other fostered children. This view is acknowledged and has been consequently recorded although the standards as they remain do have to be applied in the same manner.

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 |
|---|---------------|---|
| <p>Two kinship carers were spoken to during the course of this inspection. Both advocated that they had not received support or training from the service. Discussions with the Manager evidenced that kinship carers are not currently provided with supervising social workers, which is a major shortfall in meeting this standard. The Placement Support Team have consequently been given the task of undertaking kinship carers annual reviews, given that there are insufficient numbers of social workers available to complete this task. This will only be done for those carers approved after April 2002. Other kinship carers will regrettably remain shelved, until such time as staffing levels permit this process to be undertaken, which again, is another shortfall in meeting this standard. Currently there are some 157 children in kinship placements.</p> | | |
| <p>One kinship carer with two children in placement discussed her dissatisfactions of not receiving any support from the service. She had two children in placement and communicated that; " I have had to provide everything for these boys, clothes, toys, school uniforms and holidays. "</p> | | |
| <p>Another kinship carer with two siblings in placement spoke of how she went through a period of instability in managing one of the children's difficult behaviour. The carer had no experience of caring for teenagers and how to manage the children's feelings of separation and loss given they had been separated from their biological mother. The carer had no awareness that she had been approved as a carer. Clearly the service must provide training and support to Kinship Carers if they are to be treated in the same way and receive the same levels of support as with other recruited carers.</p> | | |

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not applicable

Lay Assessor N/A **Signature** N/A

Date N/A

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 14th January 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| Comments were received from the provider | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| 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 Monday 29 March 2004 , which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

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

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

Providers comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.