



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## Fostering Services

### **NCH Foster Care**

Community Placement North East

3 River Court

Brighthouse Road

Riverside Park

Middlesbrough

TS2 1RT

10th - 14th January 2005

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO

**Name of Authority**

**Address**

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES

**Name of Agency**

NCH Foster Care

**Tel No**

01642 249452

**Address**

Community Placement North East, 3 River Court,  
Brighthouse Road, Riverside Park, Middlesbrough, TS2 1RT

**Fax No**

01642 241496

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

B010000262

**Name of Registered Provider**

NCH

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

Keith Frederick Miller

**Date of first registration**

1st April 2003

**Date of latest registration certificate**

17th May 2004

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

03/11/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		10th January 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Stephen Smith	073899
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Darren Hobson	073895
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		No Lay Assessor	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		No Specialist	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mr Keith Miller	

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**Inspection visits**  
**Description of Fostering Service**

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**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**  
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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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- 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**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
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- 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 NCH Foster Care. 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.

Foster Care NCH, Community Placement North East is an independent fostering agency operated by NCH. It is based in Brighthouse Road in Riverside Park in Middlesbrough and offers task centred foster care placements to young people aged between 8 and 17 years. The agency also has offices in Hull and Sheffield that are supporting its activities in these areas. At the time of the inspection the Hull office had been operational for over a year and was providing a local base of support of 6 foster carers in that area. Work was undertaken as part of this inspection to ascertain the status of this office in terms of its need for registration as an independent branch. The outcome of this consideration is set out in the summary of findings in this report. The Sheffield office is in its earliest stages and NCH recognises that it will require registration as an independent fostering branch at some point in the future. In Middlesbrough the service aims to provide placements for those young people for whom the alternative may have been secure accommodation or specialist residential provisions, whereas in the Hull area the service has developed as a more mainstream fostering provision. The fostering service is, in addition, working with Durham County Council Social Services Department to provide a treatment foster care scheme for that authority. At the time of this inspection NCH had 22 approved foster carers and was supporting 21 children and young people in foster placements.

## 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.)

It is evident from this inspection that Community Placement North East offers an effective and efficient fostering service that is delivering positive outcomes for the young people it has placed with foster carers. Particularly commendable is the effectiveness of the management and staff team of the service and the high quality support and supervision of the foster carers, which supports the delivery of these positive outcomes for the young people.

During the inspection four foster carers were case tracked including two "mainstream" supported from the Middlesbrough office, a foster family supporting two young children in East Yorkshire supported from the organisations sub-office in Hull and a foster carer for the treatment foster care scheme operated with Durham County Council. This scheme is clearly producing positive outcomes for the young person fostered with the carers care tracked who made very positive comments about her placement and carers.

Examination of the work undertaken by the sub-office in Hull showed that, at the time of the inspection, it was not independently undertaking enough of the core functions of a fostering service to be considered a branch in its own right. However the service intends to recruit a supervising social worker and administrative support to work with the deputy manager in Hull and to take more responsibility for the recruitment, assessment, support and training of foster carers. Once these positions are filled discussions will be arranged between Community Placement North East and the Commission for Social Care Inspection regarding the separate registration of this service.

**The outcomes for children have been identified in this report are set out below in accordance with the five outcomes in 'Every Child Matters' published in 2004 by the Department for Education and Skills.**

#### **Being Safe:**

The fostering service undertakes comprehensive assessments of all prospective carers, considering their competencies as well as their attitudes. Robust recruitment checks including enhanced CRB disclosures are undertaken in respect of all staff and prospective carers. The service provides good quality child protection and safe caring practice training to its carers and safe caring issues are given a high priority within the service with all carers having a safe caring policy for their own home. Written guidance in the foster carers' handbook provides detailed information covering health and safety, health promotion, identification of abuse, drug and alcohol awareness, sexual exploitation and sex education, bullying and managing challenging behaviour and training is provided in these areas. The service has taken appropriate action in responding to allegations and complaints with the action taken being clearly focussed on maintaining and promoting the emotional and physical well-being of the young people concerned. All of the children and young people consulted during the inspection said that they feel safe in their foster homes.



**Being Healthy:**

An examination of foster carers' and children's files confirmed that appropriate health information is maintained in respect of children's health needs. Children receive annual health assessments and information about children's health is available to carers and children in placement. Monitoring during foster carer supervision and preparation for young people's reviews gathers information and ensures that health needs are met and clear information is provided to foster carers in their handbook. Sexuality and sex education training is provided to foster carers. Foster carers interviewed said that the service helps them to meet the young people's health needs and the young people consulted, in person or by questionnaire, during the inspection described how their carers help them with their health needs.

**Achieving and Enjoying:**

Children interviewed said that they received support from their carers in respect of doing homework and their school attendance and those who completed questionnaires confirmed these statements. The fostering service has outreach support workers who are able to support educational activities where necessary and clear information and support is given to foster carers relating to liaison with schools. Evidence was available, from case tracking visits to foster carers, of carers working hard to ensure that young people are able to receive the best from their education. All of the children with whom the inspectors had contact stated that they were happy within their placements and were engaged in social and leisure activities and discussion with foster carers, staff and examination of records showed the wide range of activities undertaken by foster children.

**Making a Positive Contribution to Society:**

Children interviewed and those who completed questionnaires showed that they are involved in a range of community activities based on their own preferences including attending out of school activities and leisure pursuits. It is noteworthy that all young people spoken to and 7 out of 8 who completed questionnaires said that foster carers ask and take account of their opinions. Additionally the vast majority of young people spoken to said that they are consulted about their foster carers and about the operation of the fostering service and one young person had taken a lead in the development of the young person's guide. All of the children interviewed commented positively on their fostering experience.

**Social and Economic Well-being:**

It is apparent from the inspection that young people placed in foster care through Community Placement North East are supported well and that a great deal of effort is taken to recruit, train and manage foster carers that will provide them with the care and nurture which will promote their personal and social development. Foster carers are well trained and supervised and said that they are very well supported by an experienced and well-qualified team of social work practitioners. Clear arrangements and support is in place to assist young people to retain contact with their families where this is possible. Children's records examined during the inspection were well maintained and clear, and would, if they were to be examined by a child, contribute to the understanding of his or her background. All young people consulted during the inspection said that they are happy with their foster carers.

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

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			There are no requirements outstanding from the last inspection of this service.	

**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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
There are no statutory conditions of registration imposed on this fostering service.	
<b>Comments</b>	

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<b>Stephen Smith</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<b>Darren Hobson</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	<b>Christine Wharton</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> April 2005</b>		

## 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	
			There are no requirements arising from this inspection of the service.	

### 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	FS15	It is recommended that the organisation develop a system to ensure that full dates of applicants' previous employment history are sought prior to employment.
2	FS16	It is recommended that the manager ensure that the all staff members are clear about the expectations and limits of their role as supervising social workers.
3	FS17	It is recommended that NCH examine its process for filling staff vacancies in order to identify whether it is possible to address any perceived delay in the process.
4	FS17	The service should ensure that all changes in the nature of placements are reflected by a change of the terms of approval wherever this is necessary.

5	FS18	It is recommended that the fostering service consider what any action can be taken to ensure that communication with placing social workers remains effective following on-call notifications that are not received by the usual route.
6	FS22	The fostering service should continue to give attention to developing methods of providing foster carers with support giving regard to the wide geographical area covered by the service. This recommendation was made at the service's last inspection and remains only partially addressed.
7	FS24	It is recommended that, where siblings are in placement together, information about each young person is retained in a separate record for confidentiality purposes.
8	FS30	The fostering service should continue to explore the possibility of recruiting an ex-foster child or the parent of a foster child to its fostering panel as vacancies to panel come available. This recommendation was made at the service's last inspection and remains unaddressed.

\* 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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	10/01/05
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	74

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?

3

NCH has a statement of purpose in place that meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and contains all the information set out in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The document is written and presented in a clear manner that makes the information contained easily accessible and straightforward yet gives useful and detailed information about the service provided by the agency. Staff members spoken to were aware of the content of this statement and it is evident that it is reviewed whenever changes occur and is agreed formally agreed by the responsible individual. The statement of purpose has been updated to reflect the increasing range of service provided by the agency.

Foster carers spoken to said that they have received a copy of the statement of purpose and that it accurately reflects the service's practice. Policies and procedures examined during the inspection reflected the statement of purpose.

The agency's children's guide has received further attention since the last inspection and is now divided into two parts to endeavour to make the information contained more accessible. It contains a great deal of useful information for young people and summarises the statement of purpose. The guide is presented in such a way as to be as accessible as possible to young people and using a question and answer format and includes space for young people to record any information about themselves or any questions they might have. The guide is printed in colour and uses appropriate pictures to make the information more attractive to read.

## 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?

4

It is evident from this inspection that Community Placement North East is effectively and efficiently managed. The manager is appropriately qualified and has a significant levels of experience and the organisation provides effective line management support and close oversight of the service. Financial information examined during the inspection, including the organisation's statement of accounts and the annual budget, showed that the agency is operated on a sound financial basis.

As in previous years, the manager demonstrated, during the inspection, a thorough and insightful knowledge of the operation of the agency and an open awareness of its strengths and areas for development. And foster carers and other professionals interviewed commented very positively on the management skills and style of the manager. In the 12 months preceding the inspection the service had experienced some staff turnover and sickness that had left it short of staff for a significant proportion of this period although the recruitment process had addressed this situation by the time of the inspection. During this period the service has experienced a time of significant growth with an large increase in the number of approved foster carers and children placed as well as new developments taking place in Hull and Sheffield. Foster carers generally reported that the support provided, to them and the children in placement, by the agency is excellent and the best thing about the service and the majority said that they had not experienced a reduction in the quality of support during this period. The manager and staff team of the service deserve particular commendation for the work they have undertaken during this period to maintain support to foster carers and young people at such high levels. One foster carer said, "They're excellent, you can contact them anytime day or night, they're always there for you."

One foster carer raised concerns, in her questionnaire responses, about the support provided by the service but it was clear that this is an isolated view brought about by an extremely difficult situation and it was evident that the manager was attempting to deal with this issue during the period of time that the inspection was undertaken. All other views received as part of the inspection process, from foster carers, foster children, placing social workers and the a local authority that the agency contract with, were that the service provides a very high quality service to the young people placed with foster carers.

**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**

It is clear from the inspection the organisation and manager are suitable to run a fostering agency. The agency's recruitment records contain the evidence set out in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and observation of records and discussion with staff members showed that prospective staff members undergo a rigorous selection procedure with telephone enquiries being made to follow up written references

## 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?

4

It is clear from all records examined and from discussions with the manager, staff, members, foster carers and external professionals that the manager has a clear understanding of the operation of the agency and is careful in monitoring and controlling its activities in order to deliver a quality service. The manager has continued to operate a formal regular system of monitoring many of the activities of the fostering service to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the work and the record keeping as well as day-to-day more informal monitoring methods.

Foster carers spoken to said that the manager is very well informed about all relevant issues and is a great source of support as well as their senior practitioner. It is clear from discussion with the manager that he is well aware of the individual work being undertaken with foster carers and young people by the service. All people spoken to said that communication within the organisation is effective and that the manager works “hands-on” providing support where necessary. One foster carer said, “Keith (the manager) has been out at mine at midnight.”

An established and well-developed staff supervision and appraisal system is in place, team meetings take place on a regular basis and there is a clear identification of roles and responsibility within the service. The manager is responsible for the agency’s budget and clear procedures are in place to monitor financial arrangements. Information packs are available setting out the services provided and the charges made and a system is in place to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of significant events under Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Clear evidence of careful work and liaison with other agencies taking place was available in relation to the two recorded complaints against foster carers with prime consideration being given to the emotional and physical wellbeing of the young people concerned throughout the process.

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

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

<b>Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.</b>	2
	0
<b>Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	0
<b>Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:</b>	0

<b>Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4) The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Community Placement North East provides an effective and high quality fostering service. Foster carers, young people, placing social workers and other agencies working with the agency, provided this view. It is apparent that the manager works hard ensure that the service is of this quality and is aided in this by the competence of the deputy managers and senior practitioners within the team. Clearly defined job descriptions are in place for all staff including the level of delegation and responsibility and the arrangements for the management of the agency in the registered manager's absence. Staff members interviewed were aware of their own roles and responsibilities and were all knowledgeable about the operations of the agency, the service provided and expressed their satisfaction with the management arrangements.</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>During the inspection process four foster carers who had young people placed with them were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors welcome in their home and cooperated fully with the inspection process. It was clear from these visits and discussions that foster carers provide warm, comfortably furnished accommodation that reflects the needs of the young person placed and that supervision and support by the fostering agency is of high quality and supports the quality of the young people's placements. Careful work is undertaken at the time placements are made to ensure that foster carers have the necessary skills and abilities to meet the needs of the young person to be placed.</p> <p>Examination of foster carers' records and discussion with staff members and foster carers demonstrated that the foster carer assessment, approval and review processes are commendably thorough and represent good practice in these areas. Foster carers' records show that appropriate risk assessments take place within the approval and review processes but also at the beginning of new placements or when changes occur. Health and safety and safe caring issues are given a priority by the service and foster carer induction training covers issues of health and safety and information is provided about this issue within the foster carer handbook. Foster carer assessment and review processes include checks on any transport provided to ensure its safety.</p> <p>Clear evidence was available of multi-agency discussion and working in relation to an issue about a foster carer. Careful risk assessment, planning and monitoring was taking place while this issue was being considered and it is evident that the emotional and physical wellbeing of the young person concerned had been the prime emphasis of any work and action taken.</p> <p>All young people spoken to had their own bedroom and commented favourably about their foster carers and their accommodation. One young person, said in the questionnaire that he returned, the best thing about the fostering service is that he feels "safe, happy, looked after and spoilt" with his foster carers. Another said that foster carers "make my life feel happier". Seven of the eight young people who returned questionnaires stated that their foster carers ask their opinions on things and that the fostering service asks their opinions about their foster carers.</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

The Foster Carer Guidelines and agreement set out the need for foster carers to value and work positively to address each individual child's needs and foster carer training in anti-discriminatory practice and inclusiveness supports this. The agency encourages and welcomes diversity amongst the foster carers working for it. Evidence is available to demonstrate that special efforts are made to meet any particular needs arising from young people's background.

Foster carers, agency staff and the young people's social workers commented on the careful consideration given to each young person's needs and the close working relationships between all parties to ensure that each child's needs are met and detailed work takes part during the matching process to ensure that young people are placed, as far as possible, with carers who will be able to meet their needs and understand their background. All young people spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that they were happy with their foster placement and their carers and said that the placement met their needs. Evidence was available to demonstrate that young people are encouraged to develop friendships and become involved in clubs and activities based on their interests. The overwhelming majority of young people consulted said that foster carers ask their opinions on matters concerning them and take these into account; they also said that the service asks their opinions about their foster carers. The great majority of young people said that the service asks their opinions about how it operates.

**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?**

4

As in previous inspections of this fostering service it is apparent that great care is taken in ensuring a suitable match is made between the young person and foster carer based on the needs and wishes of the young person. All foster carers said that care was taken during this process and that they felt their views were taken into account. Placing social workers consulted said that matching arrangements had been carefully explored before placements had been made. One placing social worker explained that the circumstances of the placement meant that there was not opportunity to consider various matches but said that a great deal of work had been done to ensure that the placement was supported to meet the young people's needs and that she was certain that NCH would not have offered a placement that was not suitable. She said that the match had turned out to be ideal. All parties described the sound professional relationships that exist between placing social workers, agency staff and foster carers and which assist the matching process with communication being described as very good and effective.

The examination of documentation in the young people's and foster carers' files relating to these placements provided evidence of extremely thorough, careful and detailed practice taking into account the needs and wishes of the young people and including close working with all agencies involved and the foster placement agreements used by the agency contain specific reference to all the elements of matching taken into consideration in agreeing the placement. The work of the fostering service, foster carers and other parties involved in this situation is highly commendable.

The young people consulted during the inspection made positive comments about their foster carers. One said, "They make my life happier." Another said, "They are brilliant carers."

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The agency places a high priority on safeguarding and protecting the young people it places with foster carers. Foster carer agreements and guidelines set out acceptable and unacceptable punishments and all foster carers spoken to were familiar with these and said that their practice was in line with the requirements. This was confirmed by the responses from the young people, none of whom cited any punishments that are unacceptable taking place. Six of the eight young people who returned questionnaires said that they consider the punishments they receive to be fair. Foster carers have received training in behaviour management since the last inspection and the service has developed a new policy and information for carers in this area. Safe caring information and guidelines are in place in the foster carers handbook as is information relating to bullying and unauthorised absence. The organisation has clear policy and procedural guidance relating these issues. Foster carers said that they had received training in this area and examination of the service's training records confirmed this. Appropriate management systems are in place within the agency to collate any information relating to child abuse or neglect.

The Foster Carer Agreements used by the agency meet the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and require foster carers to comply with the organisation's policies relating to child protection, behaviour management and unauthorised absence.

The young people spoken to said that they felt safe and those who completed questionnaires reflected this view in their comments. Placing social workers interviewed all said that they were satisfied that the young person they were responsible for was safe. When asked, none of the young people spoken to said they were being bullied but information regarding the percentage of children placed by the agency who report never, or hardly ever bullied is not available for this report, as it is not gathered in the young people's questionnaire and therefore there are not enough responses to be statistically valid.

**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**

Information in young people's records contained clear information about contact arrangements with families and foster carers interviewed were aware of this information and complying with it. The fostering service has developed its own placement agreement documents to ensure that these agreements clearly set out the specific arrangements for contact with family and gain the signatures of all concerned agreeing these. In situations where contact takes place, carers were clearly working hard to support this and evidence of examples of very good practice by foster carers was noted in this area including detailed recording of each contact and any events preceding or following it.

Information given to foster carers and training during induction covers issues relating to contact with families and the agency's policy and procedural guidance relating to contact has been developed further since the last inspection.

**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**

Evidence from discussion with young people, foster carers and placing social workers as well as staff from the fostering agency showed that the young people's opinions are sought and acted on and that where possible and appropriate their families opinions are taken into account. Young people's records viewed evidenced their involvement in reviews and records showed that visits to the foster home by staff of the agency include talking to the young person in private. Information is given to young people within the children's guide about how to raise concerns or complaints, including how to access advocacy services and records held in the fostering service and discussion with staff members showed that action is taken promptly when any concern is raised. Eight questionnaires were returned by young people of which seven said that they are asked their opinions by their foster carers and that the service consults them about their carers and the care they receive. Six of the eight respondents said that they are consulted about the way the fostering service operates.

**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**

The examination of young people's files showed that the health care needs of young people placed are given appropriate consideration by the agency. This was confirmed by interviews with staff members, placing social workers, foster carers and young people. Foster carers receive full Looked After Children (LAC) information on the young people they take, including health information. This information is shared as part of the careful matching process undertaken and the foster placement agreements set out the health needs of young people and clearly identify who is responsible for addressing these needs along with any consent necessary. Young people's care plans examined contained information about the child's health needs and evidence of links with health professionals was apparent. Foster carers maintain daily records including health information which are used as part of the planning and review process. Foster carers interviewed were able to demonstrate their awareness of the health needs of the young person placed with them, the action taken to address these needs and situations in which they would require consent to arrange treatment. All young people, whose foster carers were case tracked, were appropriately registered with the necessary health professionals and their ongoing health is monitored during their LAC reviews. Young people spoken to and those who returned questionnaires described how they are assisted by their foster carers in terms of their health needs. The agency has policy and procedural guidance in place relating to the health needs of the young people and foster carers receive guidance and training in health and health and hygiene issues.

**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**

Foster carers interviewed said that their induction training covered issues about young people's educational needs and all those spoken to explained how they work with young people and schools to promote educational achievement. Carers cited examples of hard work and commitment in working with schools and other services to promote the educational needs of the young person placed with them. Young people spoken to said that they receive help with their education and two young people who returned questionnaires said that assistance with schooling is one of the best things about being fostered with the agency.

The foster placement agreements examined set out the actions needed to meet the educational needs of the young person placed and clear evidence was available in the young people's files inspected of work carried out with other professionals to arrange educational services and promote educational achievement. The agency has outreach workers to support the young people and is able to use them to support educational achievement as necessary. The fostering service has procedural guidance relating to education in place and includes comprehensive about the promotion of educational achievement in the foster carers' handbook.

**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**

It is clear from the inspection that appropriate information is made available to foster carers regarding the promotion of skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Foster carers interviewed spoke knowledgably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood. Evidence was available to show that induction training covers the promotion of skills and age appropriate care. Foster carers have been provided with training in leaving care issues and the promotion of independence.

## 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?

2

It is apparent from the examination of social work staff members' files that the people concerned are appropriately professionally qualified and continue to undertake training appropriate to their role. Those staff members interviewed during the inspection process demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role. Each was able to talk about examples of their work that demonstrated their high levels of competence in their role and examination of Form F assessments and approval and review reports gave further evidence of the high quality of the work carried out.

It is evident from the inspection that staff recruitment practices within the agency are thorough and comply with the agencies recruitment policy, which was examined during the inspection. All staff members' files examined contained evidence that Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures at enhanced level had been received in respect of the staff members and all contained proof of the person's identity and a photograph evidence that telephone enquiries were made to follow up written references.

The organisation's application form does not require applicants, specifically, to include the exact date of previous episodes of employment and, consequently, in some instances only the years of previous positions are recorded. In such cases it is not possible to ascertain whether any gaps in employment might exist. It is recommended that the organisation develop a system to ensure that full dates of applicants' previous employment history are sought.

Total number of staff of the agency:

11

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**

It is evident from information gained during the inspection that the fostering service is organised and managed in such a way as to provide an effective service to young people and foster carers. A clear management structure is in place with the manager having two deputies, one for the Middlesbrough office and one taking a lead on developments in the Hull and Sheffield area. Staff members interviewed said that lines of responsibility, accountability and the level of delegation are clear and there is evidence of regular, structured and minuted team meetings taking place was available at the inspection, as was evidence of a formal and well documented supervision system. All staff members' files examined contained evidence of clear job descriptions and contracts of employment. The management of the service is effective with clear quality monitoring systems in place. The inspection team noted the high quality of the foster carer assessment, approval, training supervision and review processes

Interviews with staff members and discussion with the manager demonstrated that staff members are appropriately managed and that the organisation provides an efficient and effective service and this view was confirmed by the views of foster carers and young people. Foster carers interviewed generally spoke extremely highly of the staff and manager of the agency, particularly in terms of the support they and the young people receive. One foster carer made negative comments about the running of the service and the support provided in the questionnaire she returned. This was an isolated view however and discussion took place with the manager about the issue and it was clear that he was well aware of the circumstances that lead to this issue as was attempting to address the situation with the foster carer concerned.

The service's senior practitioners demonstrated their comprehensive understanding of their roles and those of the young people's social worker though one situation was noted in which the roles of a senior practitioner and a placing social worker had become confused in one instance. It is recommended that the manager ensure that the all staff members are clear about the expectations and limits of their role as supervising social workers.

The agency has clerical and administrative support, which is clearly effective and appreciated by the staff team. Since the last inspection an additional administrative employee has been recruited and all staff members interviewed during the inspection said that this additional support has been essential, as the volume of work undertaken by the agency has increased.

Discussion with the manager and the deputy manager responsible for the service based in Hull identified the fact that, as the number of foster carers in that area is increasing and the range of fostering activities there increases, the provision there will, at some point become a branch in its own right. A plan was agreed with the inspector to discuss the next stage of this process when an additional social worker and administrative support is recruited to this base.

**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**

It is evident from discussion with a range of people during the inspection and observation of records that the agency provides an effective fostering service that is producing positive outcomes for the young people placed. Foster carers and placing social workers interviewed said that they thought they agency's workforce enables it to carry out its functions effectively and that it is, generally, sufficiently well staffed by appropriately qualified people. Evidence of planned staff training was available that showed a development plan for each staff member and clear evidence of planned, recorded staff supervision and staff members' terms and conditions are such that training and regular support are provided. All staff members spoken to said that NCH is a supportive organisation to work for. In the twelve months period preceding the inspection two staff members left the agency and comments were made to the inspectors that the organisation process for filling these posts had been slow resulting in a prolonged period of time during which staff had to work very hard to maintain the quality of the service. In the light of these views it is recommended that NCH examine this process to identify whether it is possible, in future, to address this perceived delay.

Observation of records of foster carer assessments demonstrated that these are commendably thorough and detailed. The work undertaken assesses competence and aptitude as well as exploring applicants' attitudes and their motivation for applying to foster children. Evidence was available of all appropriate people being contacted regarding their views of the applicant and any identified issues being explored. All foster carers spoken to said that they thought the recruitment and assessment process was thorough and appropriate. Clear evidence was available in foster carers' files of the full assessment process, the consequent approval report for panel, the minutes of the panel's deliberations as to their suitability and the recommendation made to the agency decision maker. The high quality of the supervising social workers' panel approval reports and the detail of the panel deliberations are noted as being particularly commendable and there is clear evidence in foster carers files of the final decision by the agency decision maker and their specific terms of approval.

One situation was noted in which a change in the nature of one young person's placement with foster carers had not been appropriately covered by a change in the terms of the foster carer's approval, although this change was noted as being positive for the young person concerned. The service should ensure that all changes in the nature of placements are considered in terms of whether a recommendation needs to be made to panel for a change of the terms of approval.

The foster carers files examined were well maintained, comprehensive and structured in such a way as to make information in the file easily accessible. It was noted during the inspection that all entries were clearly signed and dated and monitoring checklists were fully completed.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

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

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

The agency has well developed staff employment procedures and evidence available during the inspection showed that the service operates within these.

The supervision system for foster carers is well developed and effective with foster carers being visited, as a matter of policy, on a weekly or fortnightly basis and receiving formal supervision once per month. All foster carers spoken to said that they value the high level of support they receive. An effective out of hours support service is provided by staff members on an on-call rota basis and foster carers spoke very highly about this facility and the sense of security it brings. During the inspection an issue was noted whereby an unusual and unlikely set of circumstances had led to a placing social worker not being informed, by the fostering service, of a child's admission to hospital following the foster carer's notification of the agency. It is recommended that the fostering service consider what any action can be taken to ensure that communication remains effective in a similar situation.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place as is a health and safety policy and whistle blowing procedure of which carers and staff are aware. Appropriate insurance arrangements are in place for the service and for foster carers with these arrangements being set out in the Foster Carer Agreements.

**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**

The fostering service provides a structured induction and foundation training programme and training continues based on individually developed plans drawn up by the staff member concerned and his or her supervisor during supervision. A clear record is maintained of training undertaken and progress towards people's individual plans is monitored. Evidence from the examination of team meeting minutes showed that this forum is used to inform staff of changes in legislation or guidance and that these are explored and discussed to identify the implications for the agency. Some training is available jointly to staff members and foster carers if appropriate and all parties spoken to about this said that this is of benefit. Staff members interviewed said that training provided by the organisation is of good quality and that a great commitment is shown towards staff training and staff involvement. At the time of the inspection a new supervising social worker was in post and it was evident that an internal induction training programme was operating as well as the organisational programme.

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

Evidence available at the inspection showed that a formal, structured supervision system exists for all staff. This takes place regularly, is minuted and records include the agenda and details of the discussion. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members. Specific arrangements are in place to ensure that the staff working in the Hull and Sheffield areas are able to attend team meetings on a regular basis and to receive regular supervision.

**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?****4**

The area of support for foster carers by the service was identified during this inspection as the agency's most positive aspect. Foster carers consulted spoke almost unanimously about the high levels of support provided by the agency. This level of support is reflected in the comments of placing officers who expressed the view that the young people they are responsible for are provided with a very positive service by competent and well managed foster carers. Support is provided with practical issues such as transport arrangements and plans and assistance with promoting the health and education of the young people placed with them. Additional support in terms of advice, training, respite care is provided. Foster carers comments about the support provided include, "Excellent support, nothing is too much trouble and excellent courses about different things." "They're excellent, you can contact them any time of day or night, they're always there for you." "Excellent support staff." "Great level of support from link worker in supervision or by telephone." "Keith has been out at mine at midnight." "They keep the (young people's) social workers on side and make sure that they support you as well. They make sure the social workers attend monthly progress meetings."

Reviews of foster carers take place annually and were noted to be very detailed and comprehensive. All reviews are taken back to fostering panel for consideration.

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

All foster carers operate within a comprehensive foster carer agreement and have a comprehensive handbook for reference. Supervision takes place regularly with the aim of occurring on a monthly basis. Clear records of these sessions take place and outcomes and actions from one session are followed up at the next. Foster carers said that they are visited by their supervising social worker on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Foster carers commented positively about their supervising social worker and evidence was available to show that carers are able to change their supervising social worker where this is deemed to be beneficial and to reflect different personalities.



An effective out of hours support service operates and this is greatly appreciated by foster carers and paid respite care is arranged for foster carers. Clear information is provided to carers about how to make and respond to complaints and regarding the procedures for investigating any allegations made including the support available to them.

A view was expressed by a foster carer living some distance away from Middlesbrough that access to support and training was somewhat hampered by this distance. This was identified at a previous inspection and, though some work had been done to address this difficulty, it is recommended that efforts continue to address this. During interview with the manager it was clear that he is aware of the issue and is considering plans to improve the situation.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

Evidence was available at the inspection to demonstrate that all foster carers including joint carers from the same household undertake comprehensive and thorough induction training as part of the recruitment and assessment process and that this training continues for foster carers either as identified individually or as mandatory training. Training includes diversity and equality issues and safe caring training is provided within a specific course but is also emphasised during other training and through supervision. Foster carers reviews include the identification of training needs and foster carers said that they are involved in identifying their own training needs. The agency's business planning process includes an evaluation of the training provided. Training records showed that a great deal of training has been undertaken since the last inspection including anti-bullying, leaving care training, challenging behaviour, equality and diversity and healing young lives and this was confirmed by foster carers. Commendably a number of carers are undertaking NVQ 3 in childcare. Foster carers comments about training include "You're offered training all the time.", "Its better than (the previous) training I did." and "excellent courses about different things."

## 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

All records examined during the inspection were seen to be well maintained, clearly structured and contained the information necessary regarding the young person. Policy and procedural guidance is in place in the organisation regarding the purpose, content and structure of young people's files and evidence was available to show that appropriate levels of information are made available to foster carers regarding the young person in their care. Files examined contained evidence that the manager monitors their content and recording to ensure the quality of information retained.

Foster carers interviewed said that they were well aware of the identified needs of the young person in their care and were involved in reviews and case conferences appropriately. The view was expressed that in some situations there is not sufficient information about a young person when they arrive but that this was an issue for the young person's social worker rather than the fostering service who, they felt shared as much information as there was available. Evidence from observation and discussion showed that carers work with young people to make a record of their life events and that this information is shared with the fostering service who maintain copies of the record on young people's files. Arrangements are in place to ensure that information in the carers' households is retained confidentially. It was, however, noted that a foster carer is recording information about a pair of siblings within one record and it is recommended that information about each young person be retained in a separate record for confidentiality purposes.

### 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?

4

At the time of the inspection the agency's administrative records were comprehensive and well maintained. The children's register and register of foster carers, included all the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and foster carers' records included details of every child placed with the carers. Young people's records held were observed to be congruent with the Looked After Children recording system. Recording in files was noted to be clearly evidence based and records of the approval process showed a clear separation between facts and their interpretation.

Evidence was available within the files of foster carers and young people to show that the manager regularly monitors the files to ensure their quality and completeness. Policy and procedural guidance regarding record keeping and recording are in place as is information about the requirements managing confidential information.

The service has a system to record any complaints made to the agency and any allegations made. Clear recording was evident of the actions undertaken to investigate and respond to any issues recorded. Management systems within the organisation are in place to identify, collate and analyse any complaints or allegations made both within the service. The manager has implemented a thorough and effective system to monitor the quality of the records maintained regarding complaints, allegations accidents, unauthorised absence, medical treatment of foster children, notifiable events and the use of the on call support rota provided by the service. This degree of monitoring and the manager's detailed and up-to-date knowledge and effective management of the service is commendable.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	21
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	14
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	7
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	12
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	2
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	471.00
<b>Maximum £</b>	471.00

## 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 premises used by the fostering agency are easily identifiable as office premises with appropriate access arrangements. The agency is equipped with IT and communications systems that meet its needs and appropriate security measures are employed with relation to the computer system. Lockable and secure storage facilities for confidential information are available.

The premises comprise sufficient space for the operation of the fostering agency and include office and meeting accommodation as well as a training room. The premises are used for foster carer support groups, foster carer training and have space to allow young people to meet when necessary. The premises are appropriately insured.

## 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

At the time of the inspection the manager of the agency was able to provide a detailed annual budget for the agency that showed that it operates on a secure financial footing. Evidence from interview with the manager and responsible individual and from examination of the agency's business plan showed that the financial situation is monitored and reviewed by the organisation regularly.

### 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 agency has a clear statement of its charges and works with a number of local authority social services departments. Information about charges is provided to placing social workers in a pack that includes the statement of purpose. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that the organisation's accounts are properly audited and that a detailed budget is produced annually. The registered manager and responsible individual are in regularly informed of the state of the budget and have control over the budget appropriate to their roles.

**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

Evidence gained during the inspection showed that foster carers receive an allowance that covers the full cost of caring for the young person placed with them and that this is paid regularly and promptly. Clear information is provided in the foster carer agreement about foster carer payments.

## 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 agency's panel is constituted in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and includes a person with education experience and a person with medical expertise as set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The panel make up does not, however, include an ex-foster child or the parent of a foster child as recommended by the National Minimum Standards. This was identified at a previous inspection of the service and th fostering service should continue explore this possibility as new vacancies on panel become available.

Evidence from the examination of panel minutes showed that the agency's panel engages in a thorough consideration of the information presented to it and has a clear, structured decision making process and that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. Written information sent to newly approved foster carers by the service is very clear regarding the specific details of their approval categories.

The agency's policy underpinning the functioning of the panel is well developed and comprehensive.

## 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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Community Placement North East does not provide a service offering short-term breaks for children.	9
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## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Community Placement North East does not provide a service arranging or supporting foster care with family or friends.	9
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**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 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Providers comments and an Action Plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.**

**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 5<sup>th</sup> April 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

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

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of NCH Foster Care 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 NCH Foster Care 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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