



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Sandwell Local Authority Fostering Agency

Kingston House
438 High Street
West Bromwich
West Midlands
B70 9LD

26th, 27th, 28th 29th 30th, 31st January &
13th 18th February 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

Sandwell Local Authority Fostering Agency

Address

Kingston House, 438 High Street, West Bromwich,
West Midlands, B70 9LD

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

0121 569 5771

Address

Hollies Family Centre, Coopers Lane, Smethwick,
West Midlands B67 7DW

Fax No:

0121 565 2697

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

NA

Date of Inspection Visit		26th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Linda Elsaleh	077704
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Pat Pollocks	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms Norma Broadstock	

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 Sandwell Local Authority Fostering Agency. 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.

Sandwell Fostering Service is based in Smethwick and has a large number of experienced and highly committed foster carers. It provides foster care placements with approved foster carers for children and young people who are looked after by Sandwell Local Authority. It supports foster carers and placements of children/young people through the provision of a supervising social worker and can call upon specialist staff and services within social services, health and education fields, as appropriate. All prospective foster carers complete the Fostering Network 'Choosing to Foster' Programme. The service is currently being reviewed. It has recently recruited a person specifically to co-ordinate and plan the post training programmes for foster carers and staff.

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 first report carried out on this service under the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards. As a result, it may contain a substantial number of requirements/recommendations. If so, the number of these should fall significantly at the next inspection when the service will have had time to take account of the legislation and standards and to take action to meet them.

The inspector sought comments about the service from the children/young people, foster carers and other professionals. Those who chose to comment expressed their general satisfaction with the service being provided.

The inspector would like to thank everyone who participated in this inspection.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was not met

The service has produced a draft Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide. It is in the process of producing the documents in 'user friendly' format, which must be appropriately circulated in order for this standard to be met.

Fitness to provide or manager a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

None of the 2 standards assessed were met

The local authority is required to appoint an overall manager to its fostering service.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

None of the 2 standards assessed were met

Once the review of the service has been completed, all policies, procedures and job descriptions must be revised to reflect its Statement of Purpose.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

4 of the 9 standards assessed were met

Foster carers provide support to the children/young people with their religious, cultural, health and educational needs. They often participate in assisting children/young people to maintain their family contacts, where applicable. The children/young people are consulted on their individual situations. Foster carers must be provided with written documentation on the service's policies and procedures. Information must also be provided, in appropriate formats for foster carers, children/young people and their parents, on how to make a complaint. Supporting social workers need to ensure that assessments on health & safety issues concerning the foster placements are regularly carried out, and recorded, using a consistent approach.

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

2 of the 9 standards assessed were met.

All staff must be subject to appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, which meet the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Appropriate records must be kept of this process, including satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks. These must be renewed every three years. The review of the service must include the allocation of workloads and planned training programmes must be produced for staff and for foster carers. These training programmes must meet the needs of the staff team and its individuals and cover relevant issues for foster carers, as detailed in the body of this report.

Records (Standards 24-25)

One of the 2 standards assessed were met.

Placement plans for children/young people must be developed further giving details of how her/his individual needs are to be met on a day to day basis. Information kept by the service on children/young people and foster carers are securely stored, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard was not met.

The accommodation and facilities provided is not suitable to meet the service's Statement of Purpose and does not provide a satisfactory working environment for staff.

Financial Requirements (Standard 27-29)

The one standard assessed was met.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was not met.

The service needs to provide detailed written policies and procedures of functions of its fostering panel.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was not met.

Carers who are providing care to a child/young person who is related to them must be allocated a supporting social worker from the team of the manager responsible for the fostering service and assessments on carers must commence within six weeks of the placement.

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?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the 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 Linda Elsaleh **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Pat Pollocks **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Mike Gerard **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	3	1	<p>The local authority must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make available a Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide. A copy of each document must be forwarded to the Commission • ensure policies and procedures for the service are collated in a 'user friendly' format. Previous documents should be discarded to avoid confusion 	The local authority must provide an action plan with how and when requirements 1-17 will be met
2	10	2	The local authority must appoint an appropriate manager for the fostering service. Details of the name of this person and date of appointment must be forwarded, in writing, to the Commission	
3	10	5	The local authority must ensure the role of the appointed manager is reviewed in line with current regulations. A clear job description must be produced for this position	
4	27	6	The local authority must ensure a consistent approach is taken to the assessment and review of foster carers' homes in relation to health & safety issues and appropriate records are kept	

5	12	9	The local authority must ensure 'safe care' guidelines are provided for each foster home. The guidelines must be discussed with the child/young person's social worker and explained to the child/young person	
6	15	12	The local authority must ensure foster carers are provided with guidance on the safe handling of medication	
7	34, Schedule 2/3	14	The local authority must ensure its procedure for young people after her/his 15 th birthday is followed and a suitable Pathway Plan is developed	
8	10/20/21	15/20	The local authority must ensure all information required in respect of persons seeking to manage or work in its fostering service is obtained, as detailed in Regulations 7, 10 & 20 and Schedule 1 The local authority must regularly review job descriptions with the Statement of Purpose, policies & procedures and work practices	
9	19/21	16	The local authority must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the allocation and management of the service's social workers • a planned programme for the training and development for staff is produced 	
10	17	18	The local authority must ensure foster carers understand the concept of supervision	
11	21	19	The local authority must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and implement an appropriate induction programme for newly appointed staff • develop a planned training programme for staff that meets the needs of the team and individuals 	

12	17	22	<p>The local authority must ensure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foster carers are provided with appropriate information about their responsibilities for working with the fostering service • foster carers are provided with a handbook and all relevant policies, procedures and guidance 	
13	17	23	The local authority must ensure foster carers are provided with the written policy and guidance on recording and record keeping	
14	34, Schedule 6	24	<p>The local authority must ensure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed information is agreed and recorded on how the day-to-day needs of the child/young person is to be met • each child/young person's placement plan includes specific information on what action the foster carer is to take if they go missing 	
15	23	26	The local authority must ensure the premises are suitable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives of the service	
16	24	30	The local authority must provide written policies and procedures about the functions and roles and responsibilities of the members of its fostering panel	
17	38	32	The local authority must ensure the assessment process for relatives caring for children/young people is carried out in accordance to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	

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	4	The manager is advised to establish and maintain a system for monitoring and reviewing the service
2	11	The manager is advised to ensure information about how to make a complaint is provided to children/young people (and other relevant people) in a user friendly format and keep records of complaint investigations, outcomes and action taken, as part of its monitoring and reviewing of the service
3	18	The manager should give consideration to the foster carers wishes for a 'out of hours' service that is covered by staff from the fostering service
4	19	The manager is advised to evaluate the effectiveness of all the training provided
5	21	The manager is advised to provide a more detailed content list or index to the Foster Carers' Handbook
6	26	The local authority is advised to give consideration to developing a more efficient system for assimilating and downloading information

* 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	11
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	26/01/04
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	72.5

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 provides an initial information pack to people making enquiries about becoming foster carers. The inspectors were informed that work is almost complete on producing a Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide. Copies of both draft documents were made available and the inspectors are pleased to report that good progress is being made. The Children's Guide needs to contain specific details of how a child/young person can contact independent advocacy services. The inspectors were informed that consideration is being given to the presentation of these documents. The Statement of Purpose must be formally approved by the providers (elected members), as should subsequent reviews and updates. It must then be made available to all relevant persons detailed in Regulation 3(2) and a copy of the Children's Guide provided to children/young people and approved/prospective foster carers. A copy of the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide is to be forwarded the Commission. The inspectors were provided with evidence to demonstrate that the service's policies and procedures were being reviewed. The manager is advised to ensure these, and any other written guidance, accurately reflects the Statement of Purpose, are collated in a 'user friendly' format and previous documents discarded to avoid confusion.

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?

2

The inspectors were informed that the service is going through re-organisation and changes are taking place that will affect the management arrangements. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002, Regulation 10, requires the local authority to appoint one of its officers to manage the service. At present the service has two managers, both are qualified social workers and have many years experience working with children and young people. However, they have different roles and responsibilities within the service. One manager is responsible for the recruitment and training of prospective foster carers, and the other manager is responsible for the management of the approved foster carers. The National Minimum Standards states that managers of fostering agencies must hold a National Vocational Qualification Level 4 in Management, or an equivalent qualification, by 2005. The local authority is advised to give consideration to this requirement with regards to the manager of its fostering service. The name of the person appointed to manager the fostering service and the date of appointment must be forwarded, in writing, to the Commission.

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?

2

Examination of the managers' recruitment files show some omissions and shortcomings in the records kept. The managers were employed prior to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and obtained satisfactory checks in line with procedures that were in place at that time. However, the local authority is now required to obtain satisfactory checks via the CRB, which are reviewed every three years. Recruitment and employment records were discussed with a representative of the local authority's personnel section, who informed the inspector that a review was being carried out on its procedures to address the issues and to ensure compliance with the Foster Services Regulations 2002. These are reported on in more detail in Standard 15 of this report.

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?

1

As previously stated, the service is undergoing re-organisation and review. This inspection highlighted the need to develop clear procedures for monitoring and reviewing the service on a regular basis to ensure it meets the Statement of Purpose. The manager is referred to Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The records show job descriptions have not been reviewed for some time. It is important for job descriptions to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they reflect the service's Statement of Purpose, policies and procedures and work practices. From the observations made and discussions held, staff demonstrated their abilities to carry out the duties expected of them. They stated that their were clear lines of accountability and knew who to approach for information, guidance and decisions in the absence of their respective managers. However, the inspectors found incidents of inconsistencies in the information being provided and differences in practices towards similar situations. This was discussed a manager who agreed the principles for practice and decision-making needed to be more clearly defined through comprehensive written policies and procedures. The information below was made available on the pre-inspection questionnaire and details were provided during the inspection.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

X

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

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

1

As previously stated, the service has two managers who have different roles and responsibilities for managing the service and deputise in each other's absence. They both hold professional qualifications in social work and are experienced in working with children and young people. They do not hold similar positions in any other organisations. One manager has a job description that was last reviewed in July 2003. No job description was made available for the manager of the approved foster carers. The role and responsibilities of the appointed manager must be reviewed in line with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 (Regulation 10) and an appropriate job description produced.

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?

2

One inspector visited a selection of foster carers' homes. All were maintained, decorated and furnished to a good standard. The children/young people who spoke with the inspector indicated that they were satisfied with their bedrooms and were able to arrange their rooms to reflect their own personalities and interests. The inspectors were informed that foster homes are assessed against health and safety standards. Examination of a random selection of records showed that there were some variances in recording practices carried out during the assessment process. The inspectors were unable to find evidence that health and safety standards were reviewed once foster carers had been approved. Although the inspector did not observe any health and safety concerns during these visits, the manager must ensure procedures and practices for assessing and reviewing health and safety standards in the foster placements are made on a formal basis to ensure a safe, healthy and nurturing environment is maintained. Foster carers informed the inspector that guidance on health and safety issues and areas of responsibility is not provided. The inspectors are aware that some information is provided in the Foster Carers' Handbook, which has yet to be circulated. Training for foster carers in health and safety issues is reported in Standard 23 of this report.

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 service operates a same race placement policy wherever possible. The Foster Carers' Handbook emphasises the importance of addressing religious and cultural needs of the children/young people and provides some practical advice. The core training in Introduction to Fostering addresses issues of diversity. It was reported that the ACCESS (African Caribbean Education Support Service) and the Barnford Project provides resources to help foster carers with trans-racial placement issues e.g.: identity work. Children/young people with disabilities are provided with short-term placements, on behalf of the local authority, by a registered independent fostering agency. Conversations with staff and foster carers revealed that children are encouraged and supported to access as wide a range of activities as possible to enable them to lead full and active lives. Comments from some foster carers indicated that they would welcome more training on meeting cultural differences.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)		
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Staff stated that the service is finding some difficulties in providing sufficient placements for children/young people. The inspectors are pleased to report that the team have a good record with same race placements. There is evidence on the files that clear matching information is collected. The placing social workers reported relationships with the fostering service social workers are good and the placements made have been suitable and well supported. They also stated that where trans-racial placements have been necessary, these have been a positive experience and carers seem to have been well trained and are supported in managing issues of diversity. The children and young people who the inspector met voiced their satisfaction with their current placements.		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
Prospective foster carers receive training in their Introduction to Fostering on abuse and safe care. The inspectors are unable to comment update training on these issues for foster carers due to training records not being available. The manager must ensure that all foster carers receive regular training in child protection issues. Although initial training is provided in safe care and the Foster Carers' Handbook contains general health & safety guidance, there was little evidence, on the records that were examined, to show that foster carers had been provided with their own specific written guidelines. The foster carers informed the inspector that they had not been issued with written guidance on managing behaviour and acceptable sanctions, although they were aware of what is, and is not, permissible. This information is available in the Foster Carers' Handbook, which is being prepared for circulation. There are appropriate systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the number, circumstances and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child/young person in foster care. The inspectors were not informed of any issues concerning bullying and the children/young people who responded to the questionnaires did not report any such incidences. The inspectors were provided with a recent Harassment and Bullying Policy for Employees. A similar policy/procedure for countering bullying needs to be developed for foster carers and children/young people. General comments from foster carers indicated that more detailed information needed to be provided on the child/young person being placed with them, and her/his family, to enable them to protect the foster child/young person, their own children, other children/young people for whom they have responsibility and themselves. General information about what to do if a child/young person goes missing is included in the Foster Carers' Handbook. However, individual arrangements should be identified on the placement plan. The service has a whistle blowing policy for staff. The inspectors were provided with a copy of the service's Control and Restraint Policy for Foster Carers. Suitable training in this is to be provided.		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%

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?**

2

The Introduction to Fostering and Foster Carers' Handbook stress the importance for children/young people to maintain contact with their families, wherever possible, and the need to provide support for this. In discussions with staff and foster carers and the information on the children/young people's files it is evident family contact has a high profile and addressed at children/young people's planning meetings and reviews. In cases where there have been difficult contact issues, foster carers reported that they were provided with help and support in dealing with these in a positive manner. Appropriate financial support is provided to foster carers who provide transport to ensure contact arrangements take place. Foster carers were inconsistent in their responses to what information the service requires them to keep on contact and other issues. The manager stated that information on case recording for foster carers had been developed. Foster carers must be provided with training in case recording, in conjunction with being issued with the guidance, to ensure they understand the principles of good record keeping and the expectations of the service.

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

Discussions with children/young people, foster carers and staff showed that, in general, consultation takes place with children/young people about their individual situations. However, these are not fully reflected in the written records. It is the inspectors' opinion that this will improve once recording procedures for foster carers and supporting social workers are implemented. At present little written information is provided to the children/young people about the fostering service. This should be rectified once the Children's Guide is made available. This document should include information about whom a child/young person may contact if they are unhappy and how they can make a formal complaint. The inspectors were informed that all complaints are forwarded to the Consumer Care Unit. These records show that the Consumer Care Unit received 20 complaints, of which 3 were upheld. The service does not keep records of the details of the investigation, outcome or action taken. The manager needs to monitor the information kept of the outcome of complaints in order to effectively review these as part of its review of quality of care.

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
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Discussions with foster carers demonstrated that children/young people's health care needs are addressed appropriately. Foster carers promote healthy living in accordance to the child/young person's age and understanding. The Foster Carer's Handbook contains information about promoting healthy living and information on homely remedies. However, guidelines about the safe handling of prescribed medication must also be included. There is evidence available on the random selection of files that were examined to show that health information is provided to the service by the child/young person's social worker. However, foster carers reported that there have been occasions when this information has not been passed to them until later in the placement. In such cases the service has taken this up with the social worker concerned. In the absence of training records for foster carers, the inspectors were unable to assess whether first aid, safe handling of medication and health & hygiene training is updated on a regular basis.

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
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The child/young person's educational needs are included in their care plan and copies of significant reports, such as statements of educational needs, are provided. Foster carers encourage and support children/young people to attend educational placements. They discuss the child/young person's progress or any areas of concern with their allocated social worker and arrangements are made to ensure the placing social worker is kept informed. Where appropriate, a representative from child/young person's educational placement is invited to their review. Advice and guidance on progressing personal educational plans and finding suitable placements is provided by the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) team.

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
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Foster Carers' Handbook provides written information to guide fosters carers in preparing young people for adult living and the inspectors were provided with a copy of local authority's Policy for 18 year olds, Post Care, Who Remain Living with their former Foster Care Family. The policy includes details of the process to be followed immediately after a young person's 15th birthday. Files examined by the inspectors did not reflect this process and no 'Pathway Plan' was available. Training in preparing young people for independence is identified in the general training programme for foster carers. However, no evidence was available to show foster carers had received training in this area.

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

As previously stated, the local authority is reviewing its recruitment and selection procedures. Examination of a random selection of recruitment files show that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have yet to be completed on staff employed prior to these regulations. However, evidence is available to show appropriate checks were carried out under previous regulations. A representative of the local authority's personnel section informed the inspector that arrangements were being made for these checks to be carried out. All staff must be checked through the CRB every three years. Two of the files examined contained only one written reference. The local authority must ensure that two, appropriate, written references are obtained and a record kept of the telephone enquiries made following receipt of these references. The inspectors were informed that all senior staff and supporting social workers have appropriate qualifications and experience. The inspectors were satisfied from the discussions held with individual staff members that they had the necessary knowledge and skills in order to carry out their duties. However, the recruitment process must include documentary evidence that the qualifications held by prospective staff have been verified. Managers, staff and foster carers must be informed of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest. Information is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Total number of staff of the agency:

23

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

As previously stated, the service has two managers, each with different responsibilities for the service. The staff group is also divided into two teams, with different roles and responsibilities that are not reflected in the job descriptions. The records seen by the inspectors and discussions held with staff indicate that there appears to be an imbalance in workloads. The social workers designated to support foster carers appear to be struggling to provide quality support and supervision to foster carers, as well as completing annual reviews in a timely fashion. The social workers designated to the recruitment & training of prospective foster carers appears to have a more manageable workload. On examination of a random selection of foster carers' files, the inspectors found two files for approved foster

carers contained contradictory information about approval details. A file containing the details of the assessment process for prospective foster carers showed this was commenced 14 months ago. Further examination and discussions with staff indicated that there were valid reasons for this delay. In an effort to highlight delays in assessments and reviews, the manager is advised to develop a tracking/monitoring system, which may also prove useful to assessing workloads. The service's social workers receive regular planned supervision and annual appraisals. Meetings are scheduled to ensure issues can be discussed fully in appropriate settings. The inspectors were informed that the service has access to a range of advice from other professionals. However, programmes for the provision of appropriate professional and skills development and on-going training programmes and records for staff was not available. As previously stated, records were not available of training undertaken by approved foster carers and they informed the inspector that they do not keep an up to date portfolio of their own training. The inspectors were informed that the training section has appointed a person specifically to meet the needs of the fostering service. As previously mentioned, the policies and procedures are in the process of being reviewed and need to be collated in a 'user friendly' format for all workers. The administrative team has its own procedures manual. This will need to be reviewed in light of any changes made following the review of the service. All newly appointed administrative staff receives a comprehensive induction to their jobs and planned regular supervision. Individual development needs are identified at annual appraisals and a training programme developed. The records of supervision sessions and annual appraisals are well maintained. The administrative staff team work in an unsuitable environment and should be commended for their work in such circumstances. This matter is reported on more fully in Standard 26.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

In light of the findings with regards to the social workers' workloads, the inspectors are unable to comment on the appropriateness of the current staff complement. This will be reported on once the local authority has evaluated its assessment of these workloads and implemented its findings. The service provides literature and has clear processes for recruiting a range of foster carers. Workers carry out assessments in a professional and competent manner. The assessment covers the qualities, competencies and aptitudes required of prospective foster carers. Foster carers are aware of the details included in the report and provide their own written statement. The inspectors were pleased to find that statements from the birth children of prospective foster carers about their family life are included in the reports. Evidence is available on prospective foster carers' files of the discussions held with them and the processes carried out. Once approved, foster carers are allocated a supporting social worker.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

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

Staff informed the inspectors that they considered the local authority and their managers to be fair and competent employers. The Statement of Purpose, Children's Guide and Foster Carers' handbook are soon to be circulated and contain information about health and safety issues. All foster carers visited by the inspector were complimentary about the support provided to them by their allocated worker. However, some did not view the visits made to them as formal supervision and stated they were not provided with written copies of the issues discussed on these visits. The information contained in the local authority's whistle-blowing policy is for use by staff. The local authority has appropriate public liability and professional indemnity insurance for this service. Foster carers informed the inspector that they use the local authority's 'out of hours' telephone number in the event of an emergency and stated that whilst this team do try to provide appropriate advice and support, they are unfamiliar with the children/young people placed with the foster carers, and feel that consideration should be given to providing them an 'out of hours' service that is covered by staff from the fostering service.

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?****2**

As previously stated, the service does not have a clear planned programme for the training and development of staff. The inspectors found no evidence of a planned induction process for newly appointed staff. Individual training records must be kept for staff and the outcomes of all training should be effectively monitored and recorded. The inspectors were informed that joint training is arranged for staff and foster carers. However, there were no examples of joint training being provided in the near future. The inspectors were informed that the local authority has recently allocated a training officer to the fostering service. The inspectors look forward to monitoring progress in meeting the training requirements identified in this report.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

As previously stated, the service is in the process of producing its Statement of Purpose and reviewing its policies and procedures. The management structure for the service also needs reviewing, together with the allocation of work for social workers. Once these have been completed the written details of the duties and responsibilities for all staff must be revised to reflect the changes made. The inspectors were informed that staff felt supported by their managers. But also stated that in the absence of clear procedures, sometimes advice given and decisions made were inconsistent. Staff receive regular, planned supervision and annual appraisals. Records are kept of these sessions. Regular staff meetings and specific team meetings are arranged to facilitate relevant and focussed discussions to take place within appropriate settings. The discussions held at these meetings are recorded.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

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

Foster carers have yet to be provided with the 'handbook' and associated information, that covers the issue of regular, planned supervision. The handbook contains useful information and guidance on practice, however it lacks detailed and specific contact advice. The inspectors found some difficulty in accessing information quickly and therefore, they advise the manager to produce a more detailed content or index list to enable foster carers to access information more easily. In general, foster carers discuss a child/young person's progress with their allocated social worker, who in turn, provides the child/young person's social worker with regular updates. The foster carers stated that they would contact the child/young person's social worker direct on important/emergency matters. Foster carers' annual review reports are prepared and made available to the Fostering Panel. The content of the report is discussed with the foster carers prior to it being presented to the fostering panel. However, as previously stated these are not always completed in a timely fashion. The inspectors were made aware that assessments and reviews have not been completed on some relatives of children/young people. This aspect of the service is reported on in more detail in Standard 32.

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

The inspectors were informed that the Foster Care Agreement has been reviewed and is due to be implemented in the near future. The manager is advised to ensure that the agreement meets with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. As stated in the previous standard, foster carers have yet to be provided with the recently produced handbook, which covers the issue of regular, planned supervision. This and other relevant policies, procedures and guidance must be provided to foster carers. There are practical support systems in place for dealing with issues such as foster carers fees. Foster carers commented positively about the staff who are responsible for ensuring payments are made appropriately and efficiently. Issues such as supervision, complaints and allegations of abuse have been reported on in other areas of this report.

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

All prospective foster carers receive preparation training. Participation in these courses form part of the assessment process and, where two adults in one household apply to be foster carers, both partners must attend the training. The inspectors were informed that opportunities are provided to enable prospective foster carers to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing carers. The inspectors are unable to assess the service's effectiveness in providing relevant and timely training due to a current planned programme and training records not being available. General comments received from foster carers indicated that, in their opinion, more training would be welcome in areas such as managing emergency placements, cultural issues, providing support to children/young people with their education and preparing for independent living. The inspectors have identified other areas of training that must be provided for foster carers such as; health & safety, child protection, appropriate restraint, in other sections of this report.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Foster carers are provided with information about the child/young person's legal status and other relevant information is made available. Foster carers are informed of the importance of ensuring information is held secure. The service has produced a written policy and guidance on recording (this is to be issued to foster carers in the near future) and informs them of what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed to the fostering service. The service has a case file on each child/young person placed with foster carers. The information held confirms that the general comments received from foster carers, about the need for more detailed information to be provided and agreed on the day-to-day arrangements for meeting the needs of the children/young people, including the specific action to be taken if the child/young person is missing. The service provides the child/young person's social worker with regular updates on their progress. The inspectors were informed that training is provided for foster carers in recording significant life events for a child/young person and in encouraging them to make their own recordings, including photograph albums.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)			
The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.			
Key Findings and Evidence		Standard met?	3
All information is securely stored and staff are required to complete a tracker form when taking out files to work on. The Foster Carers Group informed the inspector that there were some concerns about information being accessible to other people who work in the building. The manager assured the meeting the information was secure and complied with the Data Protection Act 1998. However, she agreed to review the security arrangements and access to information during the working day. Separate files are kept as required, and compiled in a 'user friendly' format for efficient updating by workers. The standard of recording is generally good. It distinguishes between fact, opinion and third party information and handwritten entries are legible. The local authority has identified the need to update its financial policy and procedures and information about charges and fees to placing social workers and foster carers. The records kept by the administrative were found to be satisfactory.			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			X
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			27
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			23
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		X	Maximum £
			X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

The Sandwell Local Authority Fostering Service office is based in Smethwick. The property was originally used as a hospital and is now used as offices for this and other local authority services. The main car park is at the side of the building and there are a few parking spaces available on the front drive. Nevertheless, cars are regularly parked on the roadside due to the number of staff and visitors to the building. Those with legitimate business are able to access the building during normal office hours. There is limited access to wheelchair users and people with limited mobility. The fostering administrative team are based on the ground floor. The managers and social workers are based on the first floor. Both teams have very little workspace in order to carry out their duties, especially the administrative staff. There are no allocated rooms for meetings, staff facilities or suitable provision to accommodate students on placements. When additional space is required, such as a meeting room, permission to use the facilities of the other services housed in the building or venues at other locations are sought. The local authority must take action to ensure suitable facilities/accommodation is provided for this service. In general, there are adequate administrative systems in place and records are kept available. However, approved users who wish to obtain a selection of computerised data have to access each item of information they require separately by moving around the system, making the task time consuming and cumbersome. It is advisable that consideration be given to developing a more efficient system for assimilating and downloading information. Appropriate security systems fitted. As reported in Standard 25, the manager has agreed to review the security and access arrangements to alleviate the concerns raised by some foster carers.

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?
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This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

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?
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This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are administrative systems in place for running of the service, including systems for the payment of foster carers allowances and agreed expenses. Foster carers commented positively about the staff responsible for payments and stated that these are made in an efficient manner. Practical support systems are in place for dealing with any issues raised concerning these payments. The inspectors were informed that the current fostering allowances are being reviewed. Any changes in fostering allowances must be reflected in a written policy on fostering allowances.

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?

2

Eight panel members, including the chairperson, were present at the fostering panel meeting attended by the inspectors. The representation on the panel complied with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Each panel member received the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, reports and other additional information in advance. The meeting was well organised and all panel members contributed equally to discussions and the chairperson summed up the discussions held on each item. The authors of the reports were present and the child/young person's social workers. This enabled any additional information requested by the panel to be promptly provided. The inspectors were informed that foster carers are encouraged to attend the panel and this was evidenced by the attendance of one partner of a couple whose application was being considered for approval. Following the panel meeting, the inspectors were able to discuss the process they observed with the panel's chairperson. The meeting confirmed that a good working relationships existed between the fostering provision and the panel. The inspectors were also informed that discussions take place with regards to the quality of the information provided and confirmed that current fostering allowances were under review. All panel members are required to undertake a Criminal Record Bureau check. The manager is advised to ensure that these are reviewed every three years and records are kept to verify that satisfactory checks have been received. Written policies and procedures about the panel's function must be made available detailing the handling of these functions and the roles and responsibilities of the members.

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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The local authority has appropriate arrangements in place for short-breaks to be managed on its behalf by a registered independent fostering agency.	3
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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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The records show that of the 43 foster carers presented and approved by the panel during 2003, 22 were relatives of the children/young people. However, there are occasions when a child/young person has been placed with relatives in an emergency following appropriate checks. Some of these placements have continued for more than six weeks without the assessment process being commenced. The manager and staff stated that this was due to the lack of resources. It was also identified that some long-term carers continue to be supervised by the child/young person's local social services area office. In cases where the assessment process cannot be completed in the timescales identified Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, the fostering service must be able to demonstrate that it has taken all possible steps to do so. The inspectors were informed that with regards to the long-term carers managed by the child/young person's local area office, the manager was in the process of arranging for these carers to be managed by the fostering service.	2
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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 26th January 2004 of Sandwell LA Fostering 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

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 (Please see attached letter), 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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