



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team

The Grove
38 West Street
Scawby
Brigg
North Lincs
DN20 9AN

24th November & 9th December 2003

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

North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team

Address

The Grove, 38 West Street, Scawby, Brigg, North Lincs,
DN20 9AN

Local Authority Manager

Miss Pauline Stormont

Tel No:

01652 656005

Address

The Grove, 38 West Street, Scawby, Brigg, North Lincs,
DN20 9AN

Fax No:

01652 657287

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

Date of Inspection Visit		24th November 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Matun Wawryk	074037
Name of Inspector	2		
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			

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 North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team. 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.

North Lincolnshire Council provides the service.

At the time of this inspection the service aimed to provide a range of high quality foster placements to meet the needs of the Looked after Population of North Lincolnshire Council.

The service provides a variety of foster placements including: mainstream fostering, long-term fostering, contact care, single placement care and short-term breaks.

The service operates out of premises situated in a village near to Scunthorpe. No adverse comments were received from foster carers regarding the buildings accessibility. The building lends itself to foster carer training and or formal/informal meetings and groups.

At the time of the inspection the foster care service was supporting 137 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.)

The inspection upon which this report is based focused on the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 and its associated regulations. The purpose of the inspection was to determine if the service was meeting required standards and fulfilling legal responsibilities in respect of management, organisation, accommodation, staffing, care practice, facilities, administration and record keeping. The service is provided by North Lincolnshire Council and is managed by Ms Pauline Storemont. This report refers to the announced inspection carried out between the 24th November and the 9th December 2003.

Statement of purpose (NMS 1)

The service had an up to date statement of purpose and children's guide which meet the requirements detailed in NMS 1 and Schedule 1.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (NMS 2 & 3)

Both standards were assessed, of these 1 was met

The team manager has significant child care experience and holds a recognised social work qualification. Management arrangements were found to be robust, organised and well integrated. The manager is required to obtain a management qualification by 2005

Management of the Fostering Service (NMS 4 & 5)

Both standards were assessed and met

The service had clear procedures and systems for monitoring its activities. Evidence was seen of a commitment to ensuring effective delivery of service and to ensuring quality performance.

From interviews and examination of records it can be concluded that the manager demonstrated effective and efficient leadership of the service. In interview staff commented that the service was well managed and were complementary about the support they received. In the absence of the manager, clear deputising arrangements were in place

Securing and promoting Welfare (NMS 6 to 14)

All 9 standards were assessed, of these 8 were met

Clear evidence was seen which demonstrated the services proactive approach to securing and promoting welfare. Support strategies, policies and procedures were available to staff and foster carers. Within the resources available it was evident that the service endeavours to make matched placements.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team

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(NMS 15 to 23)

The systems for recruiting, training and supporting staff and foster carers were well developed and were supported by sound policies, procedures and practice guidance.

The service has an experienced and well-qualified staff group and is supported by an effective administrative team. All staff have access to supervision and employee development reviews.

The evidence gathered from children and foster carers indicate a high level of satisfaction with services received and provided by the fostering service. Twenty-four foster carers responded by questionnaire. One question related to how well foster carer felt support by the fostering service. Ten stated they were very satisfied, nine stated they were satisfied most of the time; three stated that they were quite satisfied and two stated they don't get enough support.

The findings of the children's questionnaire (11 returned) indicated that they felt cared about and involved in the life of their foster homes. All stated that they knew how to make a complaint or raise a concern.

The children's questionnaires asked respondents to details comments they would want including in the inspection report. Comments were received as follows One young person stated that they do not want to return home, one young person commented that social services 'is a load of rubbish, they never listen to what we want', one commented that foster carers and young people should get more support.

Feedback from questionnaires and interviews of foster carers identified inadequate out of hours support and the support received from placing social workers as the least helpful aspects of support offered. Mostly because of cancelled appointments, unreturned telephone calls, lack of recognition of foster carer role and turnover of social workers, resulting in children having changes in social workers and no opportunity to subsequently develop a relationship. In interview placing and supervising social workers reported that the development of the new LAC team should go some way to resolving these issues.

Placing Social workers consulted through questionnaires (26 returned) all considered the partnership working with the fostering service was very good/fairly good, one stated it to be poor. Most rated current placements offered to be very good or good and one rated it as 'average'.

Records (NMS 24 & 25)

Both standards were assessed and met

The inspector examined several staff, foster carers and children's files. Files were maintained to a good standard and were well organised. A range of policies and procedures were in evidence concerning record keeping, confidentiality and access to files. Records were held securely and appropriately

Fitness of the Premises (NMS 26)

This standard was met

The premises are situated in a small village near to Scunthorpe and provide good facilities and are suitable for the purpose. No adverse comments were received from foster carers

concerning accessibility of the premises.

Financial arrangements (NMS 27 to 29)
All three standard were assessed and met

The Local Authority provides the service, therefore financial viability is accepted. Financial systems adopted by the service were appropriate and records were maintained in accordance with procedures. Delegated budgets were being managed effectively

Feedback from foster care interviews and questionnaires did not highlight any specific issues with payments although some foster carers stated that they were not always made aware of entitlement to certain allowances.

Fostering Panels (NMS 30)
This standard was met

Arrangements for the fostering panel were found to be satisfactory and meet all requirements. The panel had an independent chair that has considerable childcare experience.

Short Term Breaks (NMS 31)

The service provides short-term flexible breaks and respite aimed at children who have a disability in most cases but not exclusively. Short-term breaks/respite care are made to other children/foster carers where needed.

The service employs a dedicated family placement officer to support foster carers who provide placements for children with disabilities.

The service is required to produce specific policies and procedures to support the short-term/respite service.

Family and Friend as Carers (NMS 32)

This standard was met

The service recognises the contribution of family and friend foster carers and endeavours to provide for their training and support needs in a sensitive way. Similarly, the assessment and training provision for these carers is provided in ways consistent with the training and support of other 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:

YES

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:

The Service failed to fully meet the requirements of National Minimum Standards 9, 22 & 31 for Local Authority Fostering services. The failures were minor, gaining a score of 2 in every case and can be addressed easily and quickly by the service.

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	

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 _____
Second Inspector _____
Locality Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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	11/12	FS9	The responsible manager must ensure safe care guidelines are developed and agreed for each foster carer household	July 2004
2	37	FS31	The fostering services manager must ensure specific policies and procedures are developed and implemented in practice which support short term breaks and respite care	July 2004
3	17/28	FS22	The fostering service manager must revise the Foster Carer Agreement to include details of terms of approval The fostering manager should develop a clear policy framework which outlines circumstances and process of deregistration of a foster carer	July 2004

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	FS1	The fostering services manager should review arrangements for issuing the children's guide and consult with children regarding its usefulness and appropriateness
2	FS2	The fostering services manager should obtain a management qualification which matches the competencies of NVQ level 4 by 2005
3	FS19	The fostering services manager should develop a joint training programme for foster carers and social workers
3	FS22	The fostering services manager should ensure there is a clear policy which outlines the circumstances in which foster carers should/may be deregistered
4	A23	The fostering services manager should ensure training profiles are linked to the foster carer review process. Records should reflect the content and delivery of induction training and support

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s) Strategic lead – disability services	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	YES
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	24/11/03
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?

3

This standard was met

A statement of purpose was available and had been written in line with requirements detailed in this standard and Schedule 1.

A Children's services guide for under and over eight's was available and again these documents had been written in line with requirements detailed in this standard. It was not evident from interviews with foster carers and feedback from the children's questionnaire how useful the children's guide was. None of the foster carers interviewed appeared familiar with this document. Of the 11 children who returned a questionnaire 6 reported that they had been issued with a copy of the children's guide.

Policies, procedures and written guidance were available to foster carers and staff, which reflect the statement of purpose.

The fostering services manager should review arrangements for issuing the children's guide and consult with children regarding its usefulness and appropriateness

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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This standard was met.

The manager of the fostering service holds a recognised professional qualification but did not hold a recognised management qualification. In interview the manager confirmed that arrangements have been made for her to undertake management training which matches the competencies set out in NVQ level 4 programme early in 2004.

It was evident from examination of documentation, staff and foster carer interviews that systems were in place, which support effective leadership of staff and operations. Clear evidence was available which demonstrated that there was an awareness of the Regulations and the National Minimum Standards and their implications for children's services which, was understood at all levels of management.

The manager should obtain an appropriate management qualification by 2005

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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This standard was met

The manager's file was examined at the last inspection; references as set out in schedule 1 were available. However, it was not evident that a telephone enquiry had been made to follow up written references. A CRB check had been completed.

Evidence was seen in this inspection, which demonstrated that recruitment practice had been revised to take account of the need to follow up written references with a telephone enquiry.

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

This standard was met. **The service is to be commended**

In interview the manager indicated that matters to be monitored under Schedule 7 were primarily monitored through the various systems for Looked After Children/Quality Protects and national performance monitoring systems. The inspector saw evidence of this during the inspection. The manager made available to the inspector a range of performance and quality assurance monitoring information.

Within the fostering service there are clear roles, lines of communication and accountability that were clearly understood by both staff and foster carers.

The service adheres to financial procedures laid down by North Lincolnshire Council. Effective systems were in place to monitor the team's budgets. From interviews conducted with staff and records seen it was evident that the fostering service manager monitored delegated budgets.

A policy concerning possible conflict of interest was available

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.

3

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

4

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?****3**

This standard was met

The manager had a clear written job description setting out duties and responsibilities. The manager does not hold any similar position with any other organisation. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and lines of accountability were clearly defined.

Arrangements were in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.

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
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This standard was met.

Evidence seen during the course of the inspection indicates that foster homes are able to provide warm, comfortable and adequately furnished accommodation. Since the last inspection, a new health and safety checklist had been developed, which will be completed as part of the foster carer annual review process.

The inspector case tracked four children. Children placed had their own bed and accommodation. Since the last inspection the service had fully introduced new guidance on the matching of children to placements. A child's need for space and privacy is assessed and recorded as part of the matching process.

The foster carer preparation and training covers health and safety issues. First aid training is included as part of the core training programme

The service makes available to foster carers interest free car loans. In interview, the services supervising social workers confirmed that they check the insurance and Mot documentation of foster carers and, where necessary, make available funds to provide car seats for younger children. Examination of foster carers records evidenced that supervising social workers had carried out such checks.

The minutes of the foster carer support group demonstrates that foster carers were made aware of this inspection. The Foster Carer Agreement refers to the expectation that foster carers co-operate with NCSC inspections

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
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This standard was met.

From interviews with supervising/children's social workers, foster carers and the information and training materials included in the Choose to Foster programme, it was evident that the service endeavours to value diversity and promote equality.

The service provides short-term breaks/respite to support parents with disabled children and the service has recruited a number of foster cares to provide such placements. In addition the service employs a dedicated family placement officer to support foster carers who

provide placements for children with a disability.

Feedback from interviews and the foster questionnaires indicate that for some foster carers the provision of equipment and adaptations to accommodate children with disabilities was available, however some indicated that the process was very slow.

In interview the officer with the strategic lead for children's disability services reported that a grant had been made available to purchase specific disability equipment, which foster carers can access. This should make the provision of specialist equipment more accessible for foster carers.

From interviews with foster carers, supervising and children's social workers, it was established that children and young people can have support, including finance to pursue personal interests and hobbies

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
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This standard was met.

It was evident from interviews with supervising and children's social workers that lengthy discussions do take place between different professionals about the needs of children in order to make matched placements.

Since the last inspection the service has fully implemented written guidance on matching children to placements and a written record of matching considerations is produced.

Comments from interviews held with children's social workers indicated that they felt the service had difficulty in recruiting carers in the numbers or diversity to enable effective matching of children to foster cares in some cases.

Placing Social workers consulted through questionnaires (26 returned) all considered the partnership working with the fostering service to be very good/fairly good, one stated it to be poor. Most rated current placements offered to be very good or good, one rated it as 'average'

The fostering service acknowledged the need for introductions of children to placements and staff interviewed stated this happened wherever possible. Evidence seen indicated that for planned placements introductory visits do take place.

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

North Lincolnshire Council had in place comprehensive Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures and an Area Child Protection Committee. All staff employed have access to child protection training commensurate with their role.

From interviews with foster carers and evidence of the Choose to Foster programme and other training provided, it was evident that foster carer training covers children who have been abused and safe caring skills.

It was not evident from the foster carer files examined that individual safe care plans had been produced and agreed for each foster carer household.

This matter was discussed with the manager who reported that the service would be piloting a new foster carer agreement early in 2004, which should address this matter.

The training and assessment of carers includes guidance on corporal punishment and other forms of inappropriate control or punishment. In discussion with foster carers, it was evident that they had a knowledge and understanding of the issues and concerns about bullying. A procedure on dealing with bullying in foster care was available.

Foster carers spoken to indicated that they had written guidance on what to do if a child goes missing from home and understood the actions they needed to take should this occur. A written procedure on children missing from care was available.

The responsible manager must ensure safe care plans are developed and agreed for each foster carer household

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?**

3

This standard was met

It was evident from the Choose to Foster training programme and feedback from foster carers that the importance of contact is made clear to foster carers in their training and support from their supervising social worker reinforces this. Foster carers confirmed that financial support is provided to facilitate contact.

It was evident from interviews with foster carers, supervising and children's social workers that discussions do take place concerning contact arrangements. Feedback from foster carer interviews and questionnaires indicates that generally contact arrangements were agreed at the point of a placement commencing or following the initial placement meeting. It was not evident from the children's file examined what if any; consideration was sought or given to the views of the child concerning contact arrangements.

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

This standard was met

It was evident from the Choose to Foster training programme and feedback from foster carers that the importance of consultation with children and young people is made clear to foster carers in their training. Similarly, it was evident that supervising social workers actively sought out views of children who were fostered as well as the views of the foster carers own children. This was reinforced by the information received from the children's questionnaire and discussions held with children. The views of children are also sought as part of the Foster Carer Review process.

From interviews with social workers and foster carers, it was established that the service does endeavour to seek the views of children. Children are provided with written information about how to make a complaint and feedback from the children's questionnaires confirmed that they knew how to access the complaints system

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?**

4

This standard was exceeded. **The service is to be commended**

The manager confirmed that no placements would be made that would prevent a child continuing to receive any specialist health care that they might need.

Personal health plans were in evidence in 2 out of the 4 children's files examined as part of this inspection.

In interview foster carers reported that they generally received good quality and timely information concerning a child's health care needs. Foster carers are provided with information concerning consent to health treatment and in interview foster carers were able to demonstrated clarity concerning their responsibility in relation to health matters of children placed. Evidence of carers fulfilling their health care responsibilities to children placed with them was seen on files and other documentation examined.

Since the last inspection the service had facilitate a 'Health Assessment Day' attended by both children in placement and foster carers. Documentation and materials made available to the inspector evidenced that this had been an enjoyable and very useful and informative event. **The service is to be commended for this work.**

First Aid is included as part of the core programme of training available to foster carers.

The fostering service has access to specialist medical advisors to who it can refer children to for individual advice and consultation and there is medical representation on the fostering panel.

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
<p>This standard was met.</p> <p>North Lincolnshire Council has a clear protocol for improving the life chances through education for Looked After Children. Education attainment is monitored through the quality protects programme.</p> <p>Out of the 4 children selected for case tracking, 2 had a Personal Education Plan and 1 was in the process of being developed.</p> <p>In interview foster carers stated that they felt that the importance of education and supporting children in their education was prompted and emphasised by the fostering service. All foster carers interviewed were clear about their responsibilities in supporting educational development.</p>		

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
<p>This standard was met.</p> <p>Foster carers are prepared by the fostering service through training, supervision, and written information for the preparation of young people towards independent living. The foster carer handbook gives guidance on aspects of this process.</p> <p>All Looked After Children over the age of fifteen are referred to the specialist young Peoples Outreach Team. Staff employed in this team actively work with young people and their carers to prepare the young people in their consideration of accommodation and occupational needs. Pathway Plans are developed in partnership with the young person once they reach 16 years of age.</p>		

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard was met.

As a local authority service, the fostering service is subject to and uses corporate policies and procedures. Warner principles concerning the recruitment of staff are complied with. All staff and carers are interviewed and references obtained. Recruitment and selection practices appeared safe and satisfactory.

Referees for foster carers are interviewed in person as part of their assessment. Proof of identity documents were being obtained for all new foster carers.

All supervising social workers held an appropriate social work qualification

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

This standard was met.

Management structures, lines of accountability and delegations of responsibilities of the service are defined and known to staff and carers.

A structured system for triggering and monitoring foster carer reviews was in place. A system of workload assessment and allocation was also in place.

Interviews with supervising social workers confirmed staff have access to formal and regular supervision. Records seen confirmed this was the case.

All staff interviewed reported that training was available.

Comments received from the manager and administrative staff indicated that the level of administrative support to the team was appropriate. However comments received from some

supervising social workers indicated that they felt that the volume of administrative tasks e.g. filling detracted from the delivery of child centred work.

Comments of foster carers, supervising social workers and children's social workers indicated that there is a range of medical, educational and other advice available for children and young people.

Comments of supervising social workers and children's social workers demonstrated that each group generally understands the others role and responsibilities.

The local authority remains a primary provider of foster care placements and does not place children with independent fostering agencies.

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

This standard was met

In interview the fostering service manager and staff indicated that there are sufficient numbers of qualified workers to carry out the full range of duties and responsibilities when the service is fully staffed. The turnover of staff working in the fostering service was low which showed that the service retains it staff.

It was established from staff interviews and documentation seen that the service had a proactive approach to recruiting foster carers to meet service demands. However the manager acknowledged that there is a need for more foster carers.

Feedback from foster carer questionnaires indicated that some foster carers were concerned about the lack of recruitment of new foster carers in the right numbers. Others commented that foster carers should be more involved in training and supporting potential foster carers.

The assessment process for foster carers is clearly set out in documentation provided to foster carers, in training and procedural guidance. The fostering service carries out competency-based assessments and these were in evidence on the foster carer files examined and address the areas outlined in NMS17.7 and 17.7

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 service employs corporate policies and procedures for staff recruitment and selection. Evidence from the case tracking exercise indicates that employment practices for staff and carers are safe and satisfactory.

Feedback from foster carer questionnaires and interviews indicate that the out of hours support arrangements are not considered to be adequate. However, foster carers reported that they felt the support provided by their supervising social workers was helpful and valued by them. The system for out of hours support is under review and new arrangements are to be introduced early in 2004 (refer to comments detailed in NMS 22).

A whistle blowing procedure relating specifically to staff employed by the council was available. Whistle blowing is referred to in the foster carer handbook. This should be supported by a clear procedural framework.

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 Local Authority provides a clear pathway of training and development through induction, in service and post qualifying training. Whilst the inspection was in progress no staff were following an induction programme

In interview staff reported that they felt supported by the service managers, all had access to formal regular supervision and employee development reviews. Regular team meetings were held and examination of a sample of team meeting minutes showed that these meetings addressed both management and practice issues

Supervising social workers in the fostering service reported that they felt that they were kept informed about new legislation and guidance.

While there were training events that supervising social workers, children's social workers and foster carers could attend they were not set up as part of a structured joint training programme.

Staff interviewed commented that they had completed most of the core training provided by the department. Some staff commented that they would benefit from more service specific training Staff had been provided with competency based assessment training

In interview the manager reported that a training programme would be developed to support the implementation of the new LAC team

The fostering services manager should develop and implement a core joint training programme

Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>This standard was met.</p> <p>All staff were issued with job descriptions and contracts.</p> <p>All staff interviewed confirmed that they received regular supervision and employee development reviews. Written records were maintained. Staff reported that they felt the service to be well managed.</p> <p>All staff had access to relevant policies, procedures and practice guidance; in addition staff had access to the intranet as a means of keeping abreast of policy and legislative changes.</p> <p>Regular recorded staff and team meetings were held, minutes of these meeting were available.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 – 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>This standard was met.</p> <p>Information and planning on all aspects identified in MNS 21.2, was in evidence.</p> <p>The foster carer handbook issued to all carers provides an important and informative resource for carers.</p> <p>In interview supervising social workers and foster carers reported that they knew and understood their respective roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>A system to trigger and monitor foster carer reviews was in place. Review reports are presented to the Fostering Panel.</p> <p>Feedback from foster carer interviews and questionnaires indicted that they felt that the communication lines between them and their supervising social workers was very clear and effective.</p> <p>Feedback from questionnaires and interviews of foster carers identified the support received from placing social workers as the worse aspect of support offered, mostly because of cancelled appointments, unreturned telephone calls, lack of recognition of foster carer role and turnover of social workers, resulting in children having changes in social workers and no opportunity to subsequently develop a relationship.</p> <p>In interview placing and supervising social workers reported that the development of the new LAC team should go some way to resolving these issues.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has reviewed and revised its Foster Care Agreement to reflect the new National Minimum Standards and Requirements. This document must be revised to include details on the terms of the foster carers approval.

Foster carers are provided with a handbook, which provides foster carers with information and practice guidance on a broad range of issues pertinent to the role of a foster carer.

In interview supervising social workers and foster carers reported that they do meet regularly and this was evidenced in the foster carer files examined by the inspector.

A system of out of hours support is available to foster carers, however it was evident from interviews with foster carers and feedback from questionnaires that foster carers do not consider these arrangements to be satisfactory.

This matter was discussed with the manager who reported that new arrangements were in to introduced early in the 2004. This includes the development of a dedicated LAC team. This will entail social workers being available up to 9pm x 7 days which should provide a more robust support framework for foster carers and children.

In interview children's social workers and supervising social workers were enthusiastic about the proposed developments, stating that they represented a positive development.

Feedback from foster carers via their questionnaire and interview indicated that they were informed about the complaints procedure and how to use it. This was also the view of children who responded via their questionnaire

Records of allegation of abuse were maintained and monitored. The service had a procedure for Management of Allegations of Abuse by Foster Carers. A clear policy framework for deregistration of a foster carer was not available.

The fostering manager must revise the Foster Carer Agreement to include details of the terms of approval

The fostering manager should develop a clear policy framework, which outlines circumstances and process of deregistration of a foster carer.

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

The fostering service has a well-designed approval-training programme that makes good use of both staff and existing foster carers. It includes provision for both adult members of the applicant's household, the applicants own children and is flexible in its delivery and includes safe caring.

The inspector case tracked a relatively new foster carer; from the foster carer interview and records seen it was not evident how the induction of this carer had been facilitated.

Individual training profiles were in evidence in 2 out of the 4 foster carer files examined, however it was not clear how these linked to the foster carer review process.

The fostering services manager should ensure training profiles are linked to the foster carer review process. Records should reflect the content and delivery of induction training and support.

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

This standard was met

Foster carers are provided with Looked After Children's documentation and are made aware through training and procedural guidance of the need to ensure confidentiality of information and the importance of keeping records secure.

Feedback from foster carer questionnaires and interviews with foster carers indicated that some foster carers were not provided with sufficient information concerning the needs of children placed. Other commented that they felt that some information was deliberately omitted.

The inspector case tracked 4 children. All required LAC documentation was in place and had been provided to the foster carers.

Foster carer confirmed that they were made aware of the need to maintain a records of children's placements and that they were provided with the necessary guidance and equipment to do this.

The foster carer handbook includes information on confidentiality, record keeping and other related matters

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
<p>This standard was met.</p> <p>The service had a clear policy and procedures for establishing and maintaining case files. Records about complaints and allegations were held and maintained with an individual record sheet on each foster carer file to log these.</p> <p>Separate records as detailed in NMS 25.2 were kept. Foster carers and children were made aware, through leaflets and procedures of how to gain access to their records.</p> <p>Files looked at during the inspection were found to be well managed, documented and maintained. Storage and security arrangements were adequate.</p> <p>All foster carer and staff files examined contained records of checks and references.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			137
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			111
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:			19
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			14
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	71.52	Maximum £	148.85

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

This standard was met

The premises are located in a village near to Scunthorpe. No adverse comments were received from foster carers regarding the buildings accessibility. The building lends itself to foster carer training and or formal/informal meetings and groups.

The office is available to provide for the matters detailed in NMS 26.3. In interview the administrative manager reported that storage and security arrangements are adequate.

Adequate insurance and or replacement arrangements are provided by the local authority

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
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This standard was met.

The Local Authority provides the service, therefore financial viability is accepted. The inspector found no evidence to suggest the Council is not resourcing its fostering service appropriately

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
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This standard was met.

The services budget is subject to the accounting and auditing processes of the central financing section of North Lincolnshire Council.

The fostering service is allocated a budget on an annual basis, which is subject to regular monitoring, by the fostering service and administration manager.

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

This standard was met

The authority has written information on current foster allowances. Allowances are reviewed annually. Feedback from interviews conducted with foster carers and foster carer questionnaires indicate no specific concerns regarding payments and allowances. Kinship carers are paid the same allowances as other foster carers.

In interview the fostering services manager reported that foster carers have raised concerns regarding late payments and lack of clarity regarding entitlement to certain allowances. This matter is currently being addressed by the service.

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

This standard was met

The Fostering Panel policies and procedures had been revised to take account of the new standards and regulations and address the practical, organisational and legal implications in terms of its membership and practice.

An independent person who has considerable child-care experience chairs the panel.
Medical representation All panel members had been CRB cleared.

Meetings of the panel are formally recorded and decisions/recommendations are placed on the relevant foster carer's file. Past panel minutes examined as part of this inspection were comprehensive and consistently recorded.

Arrangements are in place for the panel to receive service information on a quarterly basis.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The service provides short-term flexible breaks and respite aimed at children who have a disability in most cases but not exclusively. Short-term breaks/respite care are also made to other children/foster carers where needed. This was confirmed in interviews held with foster carers.

The service employs a dedicated family placement officer to support foster carer who provides placements for children with disabilities. At the time of this inspection the post was vacant.

In interview the officer with the strategic lead stated that specific policies and procedures were being developed to support service delivery arrangements and that these would be available early in 2004.

The fostering services manager must ensure specific policies and procedures are developed and implemented in practice which support short term breaks and respite care

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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This standard was met

It was evident from the interview with the fostering service manager, supervising social workers and records seen, that the service does recognise the contribution of family and friend foster carers and endeavours to provide for their training and support needs in a sensitive way. Similarly, the assessment and training provision for these carers was provided in ways consistent with the training and support of other foster carers.

Policies and procedures for assessment, approving supporting and training foster carers were available.

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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