



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **North Tyneside Fostering Service**

Children`s Services

Camden House

Camden Street

North Shields

NE30 1NH

22nd March 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**

North Tyneside Fostering Service

**Address**

Children`s Services, Camden House, Camden Street,  
North Shields, NE30 1NH

**Local Authority Manager**

Ms Paula Gibbons

**Tel No:**

0191 200 5000

**Address**

Children`s Services, Camden House, Camden Street,  
North Shields, NE30 1NH

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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 ?**

**Date of last inspection**

18/3/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		22nd March 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Dennis Bradley	074426
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Glynis Gaffney	074449
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not applicable	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		Not applicable	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Ms Paula Gibbons and Mr Colin Fairgrieve	

**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 Tyneside Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

North Tyneside Fostering Service is part of the Family Placement Service, which is based at Children's Services, Camden House, Camden Street, North Shields. The Fostering Service recruits, assesses and supports foster carers to provide a range of placements to children and young people, these include long and short-term foster care, and short break care. Since the last inspection the Family Placement Service had undergone a period of reorganisation and restructuring that involved the formation of separate Fostering and Adoption Teams. Arrangements were also underway to further integrate the Fostering Service and the Council's Short Break Carers Service.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Service was supporting approximately 146 foster care placements. The Service was operating with a staff team of 13 including the administrative support 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.)

#### **Standard 1 - Statement of Purpose**

##### **This Standard was met.**

The Fostering Service has a written Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide had recently been issued to all children and young people in foster care.

#### **Standards 2 and 3 - Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.**

##### **One of these standards was met and the other was nearly met.**

There was evidence that the Fostering Service was managed by staff who had appropriate skills and experience. The Manager will commence a management course in September 2004.

#### **Standards 4 and 5 - Management of the Fostering Service**

##### **Both of these standards were met.**

Arrangements were in place to monitor the operation of the Service. Staff interviewed were clear about their roles and lines of accountability. The Senior Social Worker provides cover in the Manager's absence.

#### **Standards 6 to 14 - Securing and Promoting Welfare**

##### **6 of these 9 standards were and 3 were nearly met.**

The assessment process for new foster carers is comprehensive but would benefit from being developed to include a specific Health and Safety audit. There was evidence that the specific needs of children and young people are given consideration when foster placements are arranged. Action had been taken to reduce the demand for short term and emergency placements. There was evidence that young people were consulted about their care plans and that arrangements were in place to enable young people to voice their opinions about their experience of being in care. Where young people in foster care refuse to attend, or are excluded from, school support is available for the young people and their foster carers. Where appropriate young people in foster care received support and assistance from social workers in the Leaving Care Team. Foster carers had been provided with guidance regarding their role and responsibilities in preparing young people for independent living. Arrangements had been made to ensure that health assessments of foster children are carried out within the statutory time limits.

#### **Standards 15 to 23 - Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers.**

##### **7 of these 9 standards were met and 2 were nearly met.**

The Council's recruitment and selection procedures had been reviewed. Staff had regular team meetings and a formal system of supervision was in place for all social work staff. The Family Placement Service had a stable core team of staff. Action had been taken to review the Council's policies and practice in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff to align these with other authorities in the region. A system was in place to provide regular supervision to all foster carers including family and friends carers. A Foster Care Handbook had been prepared and issued to all foster carers. The contents were still being developed

at the time of the inspection to ensure the Handbook contains all the relevant policies, procedures and guidance concerning the Service. Procedures were in place covering the assessment, approval and review of foster carers and in general these were implemented effectively. All foster carers, apart from family and friends carers, are required to attend a course of training prior to their approval. All foster carers have access to a programme of post approval training.

### **Standards 24 and 25 - Records**

**Both of these standards were nearly met.**

There were written policies regarding case recording and what information should be held on childrens' files and foster carers' files. In general, appropriate records were maintained in respect of children although there were delays in foster carers receiving appropriate documentation. Foster carers confirmed that they knew why a child is placed with them and the basis for the placement. The Children's Register and Register of Foster Carers need to be developed to include all the required information. Foster carers have access to training on Life Storey Work.

### **Standard 26 - Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service**

**This standard was met.**

Although space was limited the premises were adequate for the operation of the Service and, with the provision of additional IT equipment, would be adequately equipped. Arrangements had been made to access dedicated interview rooms in a nearby building and consultants had been brought in to look at how the current office space could be best used.

### **Standards 27 to 29 - Financial Requirements**

**2 of these standards were not applicable and the third was met.**

A written policy on fostering allowances had been put in place.

### **Standard 30 - Fostering Panels**

**This standard was not met in full.**

The Fostering Service Panel was observed to work thoroughly and effectively. Arrangements were in place to be provide the Panel with the appropriate information to enable it to carry out its monitoring functions. The Panel's policies and procedures had been reviewed.

### **Standard 31 - Short Term Breaks**

**This standard was met.**

Action was being taken to integrate the Short Break Carers Scheme with the Fostering Service. Finance had been allocated in the Council's financial plan for 2004-05 to increase the Short Break Scheme.

### **Standard 32 - Family and Friends as Carers**

**This standard was not met.**

The Service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships when assessing and approving family and friends as carers.

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

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	20	FS7FS15	Take action to ensure full compliance Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	31/1/04
2	34	FS8	Take action to ensure that foster placement agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are completed prior to the commencement of a placement;</li> <li>• include all the details specified in Regulation 34 and Schedule 6;</li> <li>• clearly refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when a placement is agreed and, where appropriate, the action to be taken to compensate for any gaps identified.</li> </ul>	31/1/04
3	12 & 28	FS9	Ensure that safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster home in consultation with the carer and everyone else who lives in the household.  Take action to ensure that these safe caring guidelines are cleared with each foster child's social worker and explained to the child.  Develop the Foster Carer Agreement document to clearly set out the expectation that foster carers comply with the Service's policies on child protection and bullying.	31/1/04

4	22 & 31	FS25	<p>Develop the Children's Register to include all the information specified Regulation 22 and Schedule 2.</p> <p>Develop the Foster Carers' Register to include all the details specified in Regulation 30.</p>	31/1/04
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**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	<u>Dennis Bradley</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Glynis Gaffney</u>	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Fiona Millns</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>22 March 2004</u>		

## 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	20	FS15FS3	Take action to ensure full compliance Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	30/9/04
2	34	FS8	<p>Take action to ensure that foster placement agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are completed prior to the commencement of a placement;</li> <li>• include all the details specified in Regulation 34 and Schedule 6;</li> <li>• clearly refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when a placement is agreed and, where appropriate, the action to be taken to compensate for any gaps identified.</li> </ul>	30/10/04
3	12 & 20	FS9	<p>Ensure that safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster home in consultation with the carer and everyone else who lives in the household.</p> <p>Take action to ensure that these safe caring guidelines are cleared with each foster child's social worker and explained to the child.</p> <p>Develop the Foster Carer Agreement document to clearly set out the expectation that foster carers comply with the Service's policies on child protection and bullying.</p>	30/10/04

4	22 & 31	FS25	<p>Develop the Children's Register to include all the information specified Regulation 22 and Schedule 2.</p> <p>Develop the Foster Carers' Register to include all the details specified in Regulation 30.</p>	30/10/04
5	38	FS32	Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure compliance with Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 in respect of the assessment and approval of relatives and friends as foster carers.	30/12/04

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS6FS18	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A health and safety check, based on a suitable format, is carried out as part of the assessment of a foster carer's accommodation and any vehicles that they may use to transport foster children in their care;</li> <li>• Health and safety checks should be carried out as part of the annual review of foster carers.</li> </ul>
2	FS9	Ensure that the Service's policy on measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster carers complies with the most recent guidance issued by the Department of Health regarding the use of physical intervention.
3	FS2	Ensure that by 2005 the Manager of the Fostering Service obtains a qualification at Level 4 NVQ in management, or another qualification that matches the competencies required by the NVQ Level 4.
4	FS32FS22	Review the arrangements that are in place for the support and training of family and friends carers to ensure that they are assessed and met in the same way as for any other carers.

5	FS24	<p>Ensure that the relevant information and Looked After Children documentation is made available promptly to foster carers as set out in the Children's Services Function's own procedures.</p> <p>When placements are being considered on the basis of limited information the child's social worker should carry out a recorded risk assessment and review the foster carer's safe caring policy. This should help ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to enable the carer to provide appropriate care to the child and to protect the foster child, their own children and any other children for whom they have responsibility.</p>
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\* 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	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	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	22/3/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	84

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?
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The Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service was informative and included a clear statement of the aims of the Service. The Statement of Purpose had been formally approved by the elected members of the Council. The Manager confirmed that the names of staff will be included in the document as will the details of staff working in the Short Break Carer Service following its integration with the Fostering Service.

A children's' guide to the Service, 'Your Guide to Fostering', had recently been prepared and issued to all the children in foster care. It was confirmed that consideration was being given to producing the guide in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

## 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?
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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's Manager has a Diploma in Social Work and has significantly more than the required length of experience of working with children including 2 years of working at a senior level. The Manager demonstrated a good knowledge of the operation of the Service and an awareness of its strengths and areas for development. There was evidence that the Manager had exercised appropriate leadership of staff during a period of major change in the organisation of the Service. Arrangements were in place for the Manager to commence appropriate management training in September 2004.	
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### 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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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A Criminal Records Bureau check had recently been carried out in respect of the Manager who advised that arrangements were in place to ensure that police checks are renewed every three years for staff and foster carers. There was evidence that records were kept of checks and references that have been obtained.	
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## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Family Placement Service had undergone a major re-organisation involving the formation of a Fostering Team and an Adoption Team. The Fostering Team now has responsibility for the recruitment, assessment, supervision and support of all long-term foster carers. Arrangements were also underway to further integrate the Fostering Service and the Short Break Carer Service. The Manager of the Fostering Team had only been in post for three months prior to the inspection. Job descriptions, policies, procedures and guidance were being revised and, or, developed to reflect the re-organisation of the Service. For example a new protocol had been developed in relation to the assessment and approval of family and friends carers.

There was evidence of an established and well-developed staff supervision and appraisal system being in place. Team meetings were held each week.

Procedures were in place to monitor financial arrangements, these included weekly budget monitoring meetings. Additional staff had been employed by the Directorate to improve budget and target setting, and financial and performance monitoring. Since the last inspection, responsibility for the Fostering Service's budget had been to be devolved to the Manager of the Service. Foster carers receive an annual statement regarding fees and allowances for the coming year.

A system to notify the Commission of significant events had been put in place.

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

3

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The Manager of the Fostering Team had a clear job description setting out their duties and responsibilities. The level of responsibility and accountability of the Manager was clearly set out in relation to the management of the Fostering Team. A paper had been prepared that clearly set out the proposed responsibilities of the Manager with regard to the Short Break Carer Service.

The Senior Social Worker in the Fostering Team deputises for the Manager in their absence.

## 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?
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The standard of accommodation in the homes of those foster carers who were visited as part of the inspection was satisfactory;</li> <li>• Health and safety matters are discussed with prospective foster carers as part of their assessment and the training provided to carers was being developed to cover health and safety issues;</li> <li>• Foster carers are provided with written guidance concerning their health and safety responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>It is recommended that a health and safety check, based on a suitable format, be carried out as part of the assessment of a prospective foster carer's accommodation and any vehicles that may be used to transport foster children. It is also recommended that arrangements be put in place for such checks to be carried out as part of the annual review of carers.</p>	2



### 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?
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority is collaborating with an independent agency and other local authorities in the region to develop a regional recruiting strategy in relation to the recruitment of black and ethnic minority foster carers;</li> <li>• Foster carers had been provided with a copy of the Service's policy on valuing diversity and the Foster Carer Agreement clearly sets out the Service's expectations of foster carers with regard to meeting the needs of children from a different ethnic, linguistic or religious background;</li> <li>• The format used to assess prospective foster carers includes a section on valuing diversity and consideration is also given as to the carer's capacity to parent a child whose cultural, religious, ethnic or linguistic needs may be different to their own;</li> <li>• The preparatory training for foster carers covers valuing diversity and anti discriminatory practice;</li> <li>• Post approval training for all carers includes training in anti-discriminatory practice, although this is not mandatory.</li> </ul> <p>Foster carers and staff confirmed that, where possible, matching considerations include deliberations concerning the way in which the specific needs of the children and young people could be met.</p>	3

The proposals for developing Remand and Treatment Foster Carer Schemes, as well as the scheme of enhanced payments to foster carers who care for children with more complex care needs, are positive attempts by the Fostering Service to address the specific needs of children. The Authority also provides short break foster care for children with disabilities.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

It was evident that efforts were made to ensure a suitable match between a young person and a foster carer takes place. This was most evident in relation to children who required long-term foster placements. A 'children and families' slot is on the agenda for each team meeting and this is used to ensure that the process of finding an appropriate family for each child is kept under regular review. The development of a strategy to recruit, train and support long term foster carers within North Tyneside is part of the Service's Action Plan for 2004-05.

The effective operation of the Directorate's Resource Panel, which considers and monitors all cases where accommodation is sought for children and young people; as well as the policy of placing young people aged over 11 years in a residential unit for a period of assessment, which enabled more effective planning and resulted in more young people returning home, had reduced the demand for short term and emergency foster care placements. This enabled more careful and considered matching of children and young people who required short term foster care placements with carers who were capable of meeting their assessed needs. In addition, foster carers who provided emergency placements were not always being used to full capacity and this enabled a degree of matching to take place in relation to young people who required such placements. Nevertheless, where short term or emergency placements were required, the limited availability of foster care placements, particularly for children aged between 6 and 10 years, meant very limited choice.

The Council's emergency placement scheme required social workers to re-refer children to the scheme each day. Although the timescales for re-referral had been relaxed, young people could be uncertain as to where they would be staying from one night to another. In addition there was evidence that young people who were placed with foster carers in this scheme could experience a number of changes in their placement over a short period of time. However, the Service's Action Plan for 2004-05 included a proposal to develop and implement a new dedicated emergency foster care service before the end of the year.

There was evidence that foster carers and, whenever possible, Fostering Team social workers were involved in the matching process. Foster carers and staff who were interviewed confirmed that, where possible, each child has the opportunity for introductory visits to a proposed foster carer before moving in.

Examination of a sample foster placement agreements showed that they did not adequately refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and

any actions required to compensate for any gaps. Additionally the foster placement agreements did not always include all the information specified in Regulation 34 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Of those children's social workers who completed a questionnaire, 7% indicated that a foster placement agreement was not in place for a child in foster care and 16% indicated that they were not fully consulted over the agreement. However, all of the social workers indicated that, where agreements were in place, they agreed with the contents and that the foster carers were looking after each child in accordance with the agreement.

**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

There was evidence that:

- The preparatory training for foster carers included sessions on: 'Self Image and Self Esteem'; 'Strategies for Safe Caring'; 'Child Sexual Abuse'; 'Positive Parenting and Managing Behaviour'; 'Abuse and Dealing With It';
- Post approval training for carers included Safe Caring; Caring For The Sexually Abused Child; Promoting Resilience, Managing Behaviour and Child Protection. The latter is part of the core training for foster carers. A training programme was being developed to ensure that refresher training in child protection is provided every 3 years;
- A Safe Caring Policy had been prepared and issued to all foster carers. Action was being taken to ensure that safe caring guidelines were in place for each foster home;
- The Foster Carer Agreement includes an expectation that carers will not use any form of physical or corporal punishment and will only use sanctions that are considered appropriate by the Council. The Agreement must be amended to clearly set out the expectation that foster carers comply with the Service's policies on child protection and bullying;
- Written guidelines had been issued to foster carers setting out the Council's expectations regarding the managing of behaviour and the use measures of control, restraint and discipline. The policy on the use of restraint should be reviewed to ensure that it complies with the most recent guidance on the use of physical intervention issued by the Department of Health;
- The Service had a written procedure regarding the action to be taken if a foster child was missing from home and an anti-bullying policy had been prepared and issued to foster carers. Arrangements were in place to provide carers with appropriate training in its implementation;
- Management systems were in place to collate information relating to child abuse or neglect.

All of the children's social workers who completed a questionnaire confirmed that they the measures of control used by foster carers were acceptable, although 10% indicated that the measures used had not been made clear to them at the outset of a placement.

**Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:**

X

%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

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

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

3

Written guidance is provided to foster carers regarding how they should support foster children to maintain and, where appropriate, develop their family contacts. Related procedures were also in place for social workers. Preparatory training for foster carers includes 'The Role of the Child's Parents in Foster Care' and post approval training includes 'Contact For Children in Temporary and Permanent Placements' – although only 2 carers had attended this training within the previous year.

There was evidence that, wherever possible, contact arrangements were clarified and agreed at the outset of a placement. Where these arrangements were set out in the young people's records those foster carers interviewed were aware of this information and were complying with it. Foster carers interviewed were aware of their responsibility to maintain records of the outcomes of contact arrangements.

Of the children's social workers who completed a questionnaire 97% indicated that, where a child was subject to restrictions on contact, they were satisfied with Fostering Service's management of these restrictions.

**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

The preparatory training for carers emphasises the need to listen to the views of children and young people. There was evidence that young people's opinions were sought and, where possible, acted on. Apart from visits by their social workers, consultation forms are used to gain children's views prior to Looked After Children Reviews. Some of the young people attended their reviews. Children and young people in foster care are provided with information explaining how they can raise any complaints or concerns. This information was available in different formats, including a subtitled video in sign language.

In the Council's Social Services Service and Financial Plans for 2004-05, £30,000 will be invested in measures to improve the involvement of children and their carers in the provision and development of services – including the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service's Action Plan for 2004-05 includes a commitment to strengthening the Foster Carer Review process to ensure that the views of children, young people and their families are sought, acknowledged and used to help shape the Service. Consideration is also being given to re-introducing post placement reviews/reports, involving children and their parents/carers, as one of the ways of obtaining feedback regarding the Service.

North Tyneside has a nationally recognised 'Children Who Foster' support group, which is concerned with promoting the interests of foster carers children. This group has held workshops aimed at developing practice within fostering services. The children of prospective foster carers are expected to attend one of the preparatory days to participate in workshops/activities to help them gain an understanding of foster care. Children from the support group assist with the design and delivery of the workshops.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

There was evidence that:

- The health care needs of children and young people were given consideration when placements were arranged and at formal reviews of the placements;
- The Placement Agreement format used by the Authority includes a section concerning consent for medical treatment. Short break carers enter into a more specific agreement with parents regarding the action to be taken if there is a medical emergency involving their child;
- Foster carers usually received appropriate information regarding the health care needs of the children and young people placed with them. However, one carer interviewed said that when respite placements were arranged relevant information, such as the contact details of the child's GP, was not always provided;
- Arrangements had been made to ensure that health assessments of foster children were being carried out within the statutory time limit. Special clinics had been held to catch up with a backlog;
- Social work staff had good links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and, although there was a waiting list of up to 9 months, access to assessment and treatment could be negotiated. Funding had been made available to develop this service by recruiting additional staff and creating an additional team;
- Specialist medical advice was also available through the Community Paediatrician who acts as Medical Advisor for the Service.

Written guidance was in place for foster carers regarding health and medical issues and this set out the Service's expectations regarding the role of the foster carer in promoting the health of any child in their care. Basic training in health and hygiene issues and first aid was available to foster carers. Some foster carers had attended training concerned with promoting the health of looked after children.

Those foster carers interviewed were able to demonstrate their awareness of the health needs of the young people placed with them and the action taken to address these needs. They also described how they share relevant information with the young person's social worker.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

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

The following evidence confirmed that meeting the educational needs of children and young people in foster care is given a high priority by the Fostering Service Provider:

- One aim of the Service's Action Plan is to: "Educate, enable and support foster carers to actively encourage children's participation in education to maximise their full potential";
- The preparatory training for prospective foster carers had been developed to cover in more depth the carers role in promoting the educational achievement of children in their care;
- The post approval training for foster carers includes sessions on promoting educational attainment. Plans to launch the 'Choices' programme of training, devised by Fostering Network, had been delayed but it was confirmed that the programme would be introduced later in the year;
- All foster carers who had applied had been, or were to be, provided with computers for use by foster children to aid their educational progress;
- Foster carers had been provided with written guidance regarding the Education Service;
- The Council plans to invest £141,000 to improve the educational performance of Looked After Children in the financial year 2004-05. This will include increased support to foster carers in promoting educational achievement. Plans were also in place to recruit dedicated mentors, specialist subject teachers and an educational psychologist to work with Looked after Children;
- An 'Accelerated Learning Provision' is available for children who have been permanently excluded from school, this aims to provide a minimum of 25 hours education a week for such children;
- Educational support provided by the Council's Teacher for Young People in Public Care and, in three cases, an independent education provider was in place for a number of young people not receiving regular education.

Outreach support was available to provide respite for foster carers who were looking after children who were not attending school. There was evidence that, since the last inspection, some foster children had been informally excluded from school.

**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**

Written guidance had been prepared and issued to foster carers specifying what is expected of them in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living. Arrangements were in place to provide foster carers with access to relevant training.

A Leaving Care Team had been set up and a Leaving Care Strategy was in place. Members of the team specialise in working with young people who are moving into independent or semi-independent living and assist each young person in the preparation and implementation of their Pathway Plan. There was evidence that this was taking place, where appropriate, in relation to the sample of young people in foster care who were case tracked.

Discussion with foster carers indicated that they were aware of the need to provide the

children in their care with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

It was confirmed that the Council's recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff had been reviewed to ensure that they comply with the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. However, a sample of staff files was examined and it was noted that they did not contain all the information specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations 2002.

Police checks or Criminal Records Bureau checks had been carried out in respect of staff and foster carers and arrangements had been put in place to have these renewed every three years.

There was evidence that the social work staff employed by the Service were appropriately qualified, although documentary evidence of relevant qualifications was not available in some of the personnel files examined. Those social workers interviewed demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role.

Total number of staff of the agency:

12

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

1

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Team had undergone a period of significant change and development during the previous 12 months. The posts of Team Manager and Family Placement Service Manager had been vacant for a number of months and the Team Manager was not appointed until December 2003. However, there was evidence that:

- Staff were appropriately managed and a clear management structure was in place;
- Staff interviewed said that lines of responsibility, accountability and the level of delegation were clear. They also confirmed that they had received written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service;
- Regular, structured and minuted team meetings were taking place and there was a formal, documented staff supervision system;
- Procedures were in place covering the assessment, approval and review of foster carers. These had been reviewed to ensure that they complied with the Fostering

Service Regulations 2002;

- A backlog of foster carer annual reviews had been addressed;
- Staff had access to copies of the Service's policies and procedures;
- The Service now has a dedicated Administrative Assistant as well as a Resource Information Officer. Social work staff said that the level of administrative support had improved since the last inspection. However, this should be kept under review in light of the Fostering Team assuming responsibility for long term foster carers and the assessment of family and friends carers;
- Work was prioritised and workloads monitored in both the administrative and social work teams. A workload management system had recently been introduced.

**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**

The Fostering Service had a stable core staff team and there was relatively low turnover of staff in the social work team. Social work staff interviewed said that at times the Service was stretched, particularly when foster placements required significant levels of support. A workload management system had been introduced and the Manager advised that staffing levels were being kept under review in light of the Fostering Team now being responsible for long term foster care and the assessment of family and friends carers. Agency staff had been used to ensure all foster carer reviews were up to date and an Independent Reviewing Officer had been appointed in March 2004 for one year. An agency social worker was also employed to take on the case-load of a member of staff who was attending a course of training.

Examination of the Service's procedures and process for recruiting and approving foster carers indicated that the process is thorough. The assessment of foster carers includes the use of a competency-based assessment although, in some cases, the recorded evidence for some competencies was very limited. The procedures refer to assessments of mainstream carers being completed within 6 months of the case being allocated and 3 months in relation to family and friends carers.

There was evidence that the Service had a recruitment policy and strategy aimed at recruiting a range of foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people living in North Tyneside.

**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**

Disciplinary and grievance procedures were in place for staff. The Service's Assessment, Approval and Review Procedures include reference to a representations procedure for carers who wish to appeal against decisions.

Carers can use the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy to lodge any formal complaints they may have about the Service. A Whistleblowing Policy had been prepared and issued to all foster carers and a policy was in place for staff.

Systems were in place aimed at providing monthly support and supervision sessions to mainstream foster carers and arrangements had recently been made to extend this support to family and friends. Contact sheets were used to provide focus to such sessions. Six monthly summaries of these sessions were also recorded. Foster Carers in the Short Break Care Scheme receive visits every 3 months, although these can be more frequent if needed. Support visits to long term carers may be less than monthly where placements are settled.

The Council's Emergency Duty Team (E.D.T.) provides 'out of office hours' support for foster carers. However, plans were in place for the Fostering Team to provide an out of hours telephone support service to foster carers in addition to the EDT 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?****3**

There was evidence that:

- A Corporate induction scheme was in place for all new staff;
- There was no formal induction programme for the Fostering Service. Instead induction training/support is negotiated on an individual basis according to the needs of each member of staff;
- The induction of staff into the Service utilised the knowledge and skills of the more experienced staff;
- The Service's Action Plan refers to the development of a formal induction mentoring package being introduced in June 2004;
- A system of individual staff appraisals was in place and these were used to identify and plan for the individual training needs of staff;
- Staff meetings and regular practice/training meetings were used to keep staff informed of changes in legislation and guidance. The administrative staff are fully involved in these meetings;
- The British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) had been commissioned to provide an annual programme of training for staff and foster carers. Some staff were undertaking post qualifying training;
- Arrangements were in place for all foster carers, to receive regular supervision. Supervision and annual reviews are used to identify foster carers' training needs;
- Foster carers and fostering service staff had the opportunity to participate in joint training on a regular basis.

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b> <b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A formal, structured supervision system was in place. Records were maintained of the content of the supervision;</li> <li>• The duties, responsibilities and caseloads of staff were discussed during supervision;</li> <li>• Regular team meetings took place and team 'away-days' and practice/training meetings supplemented these;</li> <li>• A formal staff appraisal system was in place for all staff;</li> <li>• Staff had access to the policies and procedures for the Service.</li> </ul>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b> <b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The Service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Support includes membership of Fostering Network, which provides access to a legal advice helpline and an independent advice and conciliation service. If allegations are made against a carer they can obtain independent support commissioned by the Service from an independent provider. Monthly support groups are held for mainstream, long term and family/friend carers although the latter had only been set up very recently and attendance was low. The short break carers' support group meets every 3 months.</p> <p>Those family placement workers and foster carers who were interviewed were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. The Service's Procedures include guidance regarding the supervision of foster carers.</p> <p>There was evidence, in the sample of carers' files examined, that reviews of carers were being carried out and that the review reports were available to the Fostering Panel. The report arising from the first annual review of each foster carer is presented to the Fostering Panel. Subsequent reports are presented only if there is an identified need to do so.</p>		

<b>Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)</b> <b>The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The Foster Carer Agreement format used by the Service covers the matters specified in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A great deal of work had been carried out by staff in the Fostering Service to prepare a Foster Carer Handbook that covered relevant the policies, procedures and guidance. This had been issued to all foster carers.</p> <p>There was evidence that, arrangements were now in place for each foster carer to be supervised by an appropriately qualified, named worker on a regular basis.</p> <p>Records were maintained of the visits that were carried out by the family placement workers. There was evidence that unannounced visits to foster carers were being carried out.</p> <p>Out-of-hours support arrangements were in place via the Emergency Duty Team and the</p>		

provision of a dedicated out of office hours telephone service for foster carers was under consideration.

Procedures for investigating allegations were in place as were Corporate Complaints Procedures for children and other service users.

Although no problems were noted in relation to the arrangements for the payment of carers' allowances there continued to be some difficulties in respect of the prompt payment of special allowances.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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There was evidence that:

- All foster carers, apart from family and friends carers, are required to participate in the preparatory training provided by the Service as part of their assessment;
- The assessment process as well as the preparatory training covers safe caring. The Children of prospective foster carers are expected to attend on one the training days;
- The preparatory training programme was being reviewed to ensure that all prospective carers undertake core modules prior to undertaking specific modules that are applicable to their area of interest;
- Ongoing training for foster carers covers a range of practice issues. The majority of this training is provided by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering. The post approval training programme was also being revised to cover additional topics identified by foster carers and staff;
- Carers also have the opportunity to undertake NVQ Level 3 training in Childcare;
- A regional training consortium group provides opportunities for staff and carers to attend training with staff and carers from other regional providers;
- A training programme was also in place for the children and young people who attend the North Tyneside 'Children Who Foster' Support Group;
- The attendance of foster carers at post approval training was very variable. However, the setting up of a data base in relation to foster carer training meant that attendance, particularly at core sessions, could be more easily monitored and addressed where necessary.

## 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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Policy and procedural guidance was in place regarding the purpose, content and structure of young peoples' and foster carers' files. The case records of young people in foster care are maintained by the relevant child-care social worker in the area teams.

There was evidence that foster carers usually receive sufficient information when children are placed with them. However, some carers said that they sometimes received very little information about a child prior to their placement, even when it was planned in advance. It was also evident that there may be significant delays before foster carers are provided with the relevant Looked After Children (LAC) documentation. Some carers at one of the support groups said that they did not find the LAC documentation very useful because the information tended to be very brief. The Manager acknowledged that foster carers sometimes did not receive the relevant documentation within appropriate timescales and advised that an audit of this area was a service priority.

Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they understood why the young people were in their care as well as the purpose of the placement. However, the intended duration of a placement was sometimes not clear because it depended on the availability of alternative placements. There was evidence that carers were involved in reviews and case conferences. Carers interviewed said that they felt they were listened to at reviews although some said that they did not always receive the LAC consultation forms.

Discussion with foster carers indicated that they understood the need to encourage, as appropriate, young people to reflect on and understand their past and to keep appropriate memorabilia. Guidance regarding this is included in the preparatory training for foster carers and the post-approval training programme includes sessions on Life Story Work and Recording. Foster carers are provided with diaries to record information regarding the children in their care as well as lockable storage for records relating to the children in their care. Plans were being developed to provide all foster carers with a standard format for maintaining records of children placed with them.

**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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Children's Register and Register of Foster Carers were being developed to include all the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002;</li> <li>• Separate records were now being maintained of allegations, complaints and accidents occurring to children whilst placed with foster carers;</li> <li>• Action was being taken to ensure that records kept on family and friends carers and short break carers are consistent with those of mainstream and long term carers;</li> <li>• Arrangements were being made to monitor the records of all foster carers to ensure that they are satisfactory;</li> <li>• A policy and procedures were in place for staff in the Children's Services Function in respect of access to, and the retention of, records;</li> <li>• Current foster carer's records were stored in lockable filing cabinets.</li> </ul>		
<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>		146
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>		X
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>		X
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>		18
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>		17
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	X	<b>Maximum £</b>
		X

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The premises used by the Fostering Service were shared with other sections of the Directorate, although changes were underway with regards to the use of the office accommodation. The Fostering Service was equipped with IT and communications systems. However, there were only 3 computers in the Fostering Team's office and these were shared between the social work and administrative staff. The office was small for the size of the team and there was a lack of interviewing space. Arrangements were being made to access dedicated interview rooms at a nearby building and consultants had been brought in to look at how the current office space could best be used. Appropriate security measures were in place in respect of the information retained on the computer system. Lockable and secure storage facilities for confidential information were available although, because of the size of the team's office, files not currently in use were being stored in the stairwell. The Manager had a separate office and computer.

The Council's financial plan for 2004-05 includes the allocation of over £250,000 to improve the quality of accommodation across the Directorate and additional funding has been allocated to improve the computing facilities.

Training facilities for staff and foster carers were available at other premises used by the Council.

## 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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	9
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This standard was not applicable.

### 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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	9
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This standard was not applicable.

**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**

A written policy on fostering allowances had been prepared and issued to foster carers. The Fostering Service publishes details of carers' allowances on an annual basis. These are provided to each carer. Arrangements were in place for the basic allowances for carers to be paid promptly. The Manager advised that one outcome of the Fostering Service now having responsibility for managing its own budget is that every foster carer receives the same financial support, rather than the more ad hoc approach previously adopted.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

The policy/constitution of the Fostering Panel had been revised to take account of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, although they would benefit from including more detail regarding the quality assurance and monitoring role of the Panel. It was noted that one meeting of the Panel had been held when 2 independent members were not present. The Panel was seeking to recruit representatives from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service and the Education Service.

The Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment and annual reviews of foster carers. The Fostering Panel also reviews the assessments and annual reviews of carers in the Short Break Carer Scheme. Arrangements had been made to provide the Panel with the information to enable it to monitor the range and type of carers available to the Authority in comparison to the needs of children. In addition, arrangements were in place for the Fostering Service Manager to provide quarterly reports to the Panel regarding the operation of the Service and the Independent Reviewing Officer to provide regular reports about the outcomes of the annual reviews of foster carers. Panel members are provided with training on an annual basis. Recent training had been concerned with the assessment and approval of family and friends carers.

Evidence from the observation of two panel meetings, as well as an examination of panel minutes, indicated that the Fostering Panel members engaged in a thorough consideration of the information presented to them and that they had a structured decision making process. The Panel Chair encouraged and facilitated the involvement of all the panel members in the consideration of the matters presented to the Panel.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

North Tyneside has a Short Break Carer Scheme for children with disabilities. There were 21 foster carers in this service, including 7 family and friends carers. The Service provides placements to 24 children and there was a waiting list of 14 children. Some mainstream foster carers in the Fostering Service also provide shared care and this includes the provision of care to children with disabilities. The Manager was seeking clarification regarding the criteria used to decide which children can access the Short Break Carer Scheme rather than the shared care provision. This information will be included in the Service's Statement of Purpose.

Plans were underway for the integration of the Short Break Carer Scheme into the Fostering Service to ensure a more consistent and comprehensive service is provided to service users. The Manager of the Fostering Service will be responsible for the management and oversight of the screening, assessment, training, support and reviews of short break carers. This should ensure consistency, for example, in the way family and friends carers are assessed. It is intended that staff of the Short Break Carer Service will be members of, and have close working relationships with, the Fostering Team and the Children with Disabilities Service.

The Short Break Carers Scheme has policies and procedures aimed at meeting the particular needs of children and families who use the service. There was evidence that a careful and considered matching process takes place to ensure that each child or young person is matched with a carer who can meet their assessed needs. However, this should be clearly recorded in the foster placement agreement. It was also evident that the parents/carers of the children concerned were fully involved in the matching process and the introduction of the children to the foster carers.

The Manager advised that, in order to encourage more foster carers to provide care for children with disabilities, consideration was being given to providing disability awareness training to all foster carers. Plans were underway to recruit contract carers who will care for a specific number of children with disabilities and receive a salary. The Council is investing £45,000 in the financial year 2004-05 to provide an increased Short Break Service.

## 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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There was evidence that the Council was sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as carers. Family and friends carers do not undergo any preparatory training as part of their assessment and approval. Assessments of family and friends carers are now carried out by social workers in the Fostering Team. These assessments are shorter than those for other foster carers, although there was evidence that the assessment process was thorough. The Service's procedures have been revised to ensure that the Fostering Team is notified promptly regarding any emergency placements with family and friends carers, so that a social worker from the team can be involved from the outset in the screening and assessment process. The current procedures state that assessments must be completed within 3 months of a placement commencing, although it is intended that this will be reduced to 6 weeks in order to comply with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. However, it was noted that one assessment, presented to a meeting of the Fostering Panel attended by an inspector, had taken 9 months to complete after interim approval had been given by the Panel.

Family and friends carers have the same access to post approval training as other carers and arrangements had now been put in place for them to have the same level of support from a named support worker. Six family and friends carers responded to a recent questionnaire issued by the Fostering Service. All six indicated that they would want a support worker – only 4 of them did have a support worker at the time. Four respondents indicated that they would prefer monthly support visits by a support worker and one preferred fortnightly visits. Each of the respondents confirmed that they would have attended preparation training and would attend on going training.

It was evident that staff in the Fostering Team were sensitive to the particular needs of family and friends carers and that active consideration was being given as to how their training and support needs could be best met.

**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 22 March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:**

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

**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 05 August 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

**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 Mr John Phillipson of North Tyneside Council (North Tyneside Fostering Service) 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** \_\_\_\_\_

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.