



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Redcar & Cleveland Fostering

Grosmont Resource Centre

20 Grosmont Close

Redcar

TS10 4PJ

31st January, 1st, 2nd & 3rd February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Redcar & Cleveland Fostering

Address

Grosmont Resource Centre, 20 Grosmont Close, Redcar,
TS10 4PJ

Local Authority Manager

Ms Sharon McBride (Acting Manager)

Tel No:

01642 495910

Address

Grosmont Resource Centre, 20 Grosmont Close, Redcar,
TS10 4PJ

Fax No:

01642 491630

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

26/01/04

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Date of Inspection Visit | | 31st January 2005 | ID Code |
| Time of Inspection Visit | | 10:00 am | |
| Name of Inspector | 1 | Darren Hobson | 073895 |
| Name of Inspector | 2 | Stephen Smith | 073899 |
| Name of Inspector | 3 | | |
| Name of Inspector | 4 | | |
| Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process. | | | |
| Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable) | | | |
| Name of Service Representative at the time of inspection | | Ms Sharon McBride (Acting Manager) | |

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Redcar & Cleveland Fostering. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Fostering Service is based at Grosmont Resource Centre. The service currently provides support to 90 children in placement through the provision of circa 60 foster carers, currently of whom 49 are mainstream carers. Placements include long and short-term placements, shared care, specialist and kinship care placements. Carers are provided with support from a multi-disciplinary team of supervising social workers, support workers and a small network of support carers.

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.)

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council provides an effective fostering service. The service is held in regard by the 60 carers it supports and it is considered a valued resource by children and families social workers. It is commendable that the requirements and recommendations identified at the last inspection have been met.

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

Being Safe:

The fostering service undertakes comprehensive assessments of all prospective carers and robust recruitment checks including enhanced CRB disclosures are undertaken in respect of all staff and prospective carers. The service provides good quality child protection and safe caring practice training to its carers. Written guidance is available to carers, and training covering health and safety, identification of abuse, drug and alcohol awareness, sexual exploitation and managing challenging behaviour has been accessed by carers.

All of the 20 children who were interviewed or who had completed questionnaires indicated that they 'Felt Safe' in their particular foster placements.

The service had carried out 6 robust investigations into complaints made about carers. These were seen to have been satisfactorily resolved with 5 partially upheld and one not upheld.

The one issue, which was identified in respect of children's safety, was the lack of comprehensive information within the foster carers handbook in respect of permissible and prohibited forms of sanctions.

Being Healthy:

An examination of foster carers and children's files confirmed that appropriate health information is maintained in respect of children's health needs. Children receive annual health assessments and information about children's health is available to carers and children in placement. It was noticed in supervising social worker records of visits to carers' homes that the fostering service undertakes monitoring of children's health and any accidents involving foster children. However, the fostering service does not have a system to formally monitor any data collected in this respect. Most carers have undertaken first aid training.

Achieving and Enjoying:

Children interviewed said that they received support from their carers in respect of doing homework and school attendance. Carers are offered a personal computer for the use of children in order to raise achievement. The Local Education Authority has a project known as 'School Without Walls' which provides support to children who are excluded from school or are at risk of such exclusion.

School aged children who were case tracked as part of the inspection were found to have personal education plans (PEP's) in place. All of the 20 children with whom the Inspectors had contact indicated that they were happy within their placements and were engaged in social and leisure activities.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society:

Children interviewed indicated that they were involved in a number of community activities including attending out of school activities and leisure pursuits. The level of consultation between children and the local authority is good, and most children considered that they were able to contribute towards decisions regarding their care and future. All of the children interviewed commented positively on their fostering experience.

Children who are of an age whereby they are preparing for independence were found to have pathway plans in place, and guidance in respect of health issues, drug and alcohol awareness, keeping safe and sexual health is available to children.

Social and Economic Well-being:

It is the view of the Inspectors that children placed in foster care with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council fostering service are generally well supported and provided with care and nurture which will aid their personal and social development. Foster carers are well trained and supported by an experienced and well-qualified team of social work practitioners. Children's records maintained by the Authority and examined during the inspection are clear and would if they were to be examined by a child contribute to the understanding of the individual's life events. Young people leaving care are supported by the 'Target' Leaving Care Team to promote independence and find and maintain appropriate post 16 educational/employment placements.

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:

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Regulation | Standard | Required actions | |
|-----|------------|----------|------------------|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

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

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

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

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

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Lead Inspector | <u>Darren Hobson</u> | Signature | _____ |
| Second Inspector | <u>Stephen Smith</u> | Signature | _____ |
| Regulation Manager | <u>Christine Wharton</u> | Signature | _____ |
| Date | <u>8th March 2005</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 are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

| No. | Regulation | Standard * | Requirement | |
|-----|------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 42 | FS4 | The fostering service must put in place a system to monitor the functioning of the service which should include all of the matters listed in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations 2002 | To be met by 31/03/2005 |
| 2 | 10 | FS3 | The personnel files of all staff must include any details of periods of acting up/secondment | To be met by 31/03/2005 |

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 | FS5 | The fostering service should consider identifying a nominated deputy from within the service in order to maintain continuity of service in the absence of the manager |
| 2 | FS9 | The section of the foster carers handbook which relates to children's behaviour should include comprehensive details of all permissible and prohibited sanctions imposed on children |
| 3 | FS30 | It is recommended that any decisions made by the permanency panel in respect of carers who are registered as mainstream carers are placed on the fostering panel agenda at the earliest opportunity in order that such recommendations can be actioned or otherwise. |

* 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 | 4 |
| 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) | YES |
| • Local Foster Care Association | NO |
| Tracking Individual welfare arrangements | YES |
| • Interview with children | YES |
| • Interview with foster carers | YES |
| • Interview with agency staff | YES |
| • Contact with parents | YES |
| • Contact with supervising social workers | YES |
| • Examination of files | YES |
| Individual interview with manager | YES |
| Information from provider | YES |
| Individual interviews with key staff | YES |
| Group discussion with staff | YES |
| Interview with panel chair | 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 | 31/01/04 |
| Time of Inspection | 09:30 |
| Duration Of Inspection (hrs) | 72 |

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

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

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council has produced a clear Statement of Purpose, which reflects the service. The Statement of purpose includes the aims and objectives of the services and includes details of the information listed within Standard 1.4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. Local Authority's Members' have approved the Statement of Purpose. A number of placing officers stated within their questionnaires that they had access to the Statement of Purpose and this was confirmed during interviews carried out with children's and families social workers.

The local authority has produced a comprehensive children's guide. The guide, which was developed in consultation with children accessing the service, is given to all children who are fostered. The children's guide meets with the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Children interviewed confirmed that they had received a copy of the guide.

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

At the time of the inspection, an acting manager who was temporarily appointed from another unit within the Authority's children's service held responsibility for the day to day management of the fostering service. The acting manager who had been in post for 12 week prior to the inspection met with the requirements of Standard 2.2 in respect of qualifications and experience. Comments made by foster carers' about the manager included, 'I personally think she does a good job' and 'She always has time for you, you can contact her anytime'. It is commendable that the service has continued to develop following the departure of the previous manager and that the requirements identified at the last inspection have now been met.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

There is a robust recruitment procedure in place for the recruitment of the manager and of placement team staff based on the recommendations of the Warner Report, which fulfils the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. An examination of staff personnel records including the acting manager confirmed that the Authority had undertaken all appropriate statutory employment checks including a Criminal Records Bureau check at enhanced level and references taken up.

It was noted however, that the personnel file of the acting manager did not include information as to her current role and responsibilities.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has in place a system to make statutory notifications to the Commission for Social Care Inspection, although at the time of the inspection there had been no notifiable events. Information and data is collected through a number of reporting mechanisms including staff and carer supervisions, notifications made by carers, reviewing panel decisions and children and carers' reviews. However, this information is not collated and reported in a format, which is readily accessible by senior managers and therefore does not meet with the requirements of Schedule 7 and Regulation 42 (1) of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

The manager receives regular financial updates on service expenditure, which is managed centrally by the local authority. Suitable arrangements are in place to deal with payments to foster carers and purchasing of equipment.

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

0

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.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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 service has a job description and clear lines of accountability are defined and in place. Arrangements are in place to cover for the manager in her absence, although this is undertaken by the Service Manager (Accommodation and Support) within the Health and Social Care Department, which means that no one within the fostering service maintains direct management control in the absence of the manager. It is recommended that a nominated deputy be identified.

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

During the inspection a number of visits were made to foster carer homes. In all cases the Inspectors' confirmed that the carers homes provided appropriate and environmentally safe accommodation, which met the assessed needs of the children placed.

An examination of foster carer training programmes and interviews with carers confirmed that carers receive support and training in safe caring practice, child protection and health and safety. As part of the carers' assessments, supervising social workers undertake a detailed risk assessment of carers' homes.

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

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council has a post holder within the Health and Social Care Department who acts as the Authority's diversity champion. The Authority has conducted a Diversity Assessment Impact, which has resulted in an action plan, which has identified diversity and cultural objectives. Training offered to prospective foster carers includes a session on valuing diversity. Information on managing and valuing diversity is available to within the foster carers handbook.

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**

All of the 13 carers who were interviewed said that children currently placed with them were placed within their approvals. It is clear from interviews with foster carers and placing social workers that efforts are made to ensure a suitable matching process between children and foster carer takes place. Comments made by carers' included, 'I think they do try to match' and 'If they have a choice they will always try to match a child with you, they don't always have a choice'. Carers reported that they are kept appropriately informed by their supervising social workers. However, information relating to children within their care is not always forthcoming from social workers from within the children's teams although all carers interviewed confirmed that they had received all relevant Looked After Children's (LAC) documentation including Essential Information Part 1 and 2, Placement Plans Part 1 and 2, and LAC reviews.

Where children are placed outside of carers' approvals, over the registered number of children, the fostering service issue an exemption notice. The service does not have a system for monitoring the notices issued on a service wide basis.

The Authority currently has 8 children placed outside of its area with voluntary and independent fostering agencies. Such placements are used when the fostering service is unable to provide the specialist service for the assessed needs of children requiring placement or where there is a risk assessed need for the child to be placed some distance from their birth family. The service only places children with agencies, which are accredited through the Authority's commissioning unit.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

Policies and procedures are in place in relation to the management of child protection referrals, and carers during the group and individual discussions with Inspectors demonstrated an appropriate level of understanding of their role and responsibilities in dealing with child protection issues and referrals. An example given by one carer, which is indicative of the responses received was, 'If a child disclosed to me, I would tell them I couldn't keep it to myself and would have to tell the social worker. I would listen to what was being said and record it and pass it onto the child's social worker. If it happened at night I would talk to the Emergency Duty Team (EDT). The quality of the training and information is excellent'. Guidance is available to carers and effective training is in place. It is evident from the inspection that prospective foster carers receive training about child protection issues and safe caring practice as part of the assessment process. Subsequent training is offered to carers including access to the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) training.

Of the 13 children interviewed and the 7 responses to questionnaires, two children reported minor bullying in their placement. This occurred in the same placement by a third older looked after child. An examination of the foster carers handbook confirmed that the

handbook does not give full and detailed information in respect of permissible and prohibited sanctions imposed on children. Appropriate countering bullying guidance and information is available to carers and children

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

90

%

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

All of the carers interviewed and those visited at home confirmed that they were in receipt of appropriate LAC documentation, which included details of contact. Children's records contained clear information about contact arrangements with families and the foster carers interviewed were aware of this information and complying with it. Children interviewed reported that they are able to maintain contact, and where contact restrictions were in place, children had been informed of the reasons for this. Comments made by children included, 'Yes once a month' and 'I can ring my mum anytime and see her every week'.

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

All of the 20 children with whom the Inspectors had contact, confirmed that their views are sought in respect of the care they receive. Most of the children interviewed reported that they attend their reviews and are able to make representations. Within the children's group meeting, 5 of the 6 children present said that they attended their reviews. Of the 7 questionnaires completed, all of the children indicated that their carers 'always' or 'mostly' ask their opinions.

Young people's records viewed evidenced their involvement in reviews and records showed that visits to the foster home by staff of the fostering service include talking to the children in private.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

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

The carers interviewed were able to demonstrate awareness of the health needs of the children placed with them and the action taken to address these needs and described how they share information with the supervising social workers through their individual supervision. As previously stated, all of the carers interviewed confirmed that they had received current LAC documentation in respect of children, including health information. An examination of the training programme confirmed that carers receive training in health awareness including, drug, alcohol and sexual awareness, personal hygiene and reporting procedures in respect of children's health. The children case tracked as part of the inspection were registered with appropriate health professionals and had attended annual health assessments.

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

Carers confirmed that they are offered a personal computer for the use of children in placement to promote educational attainment. The local authority has in place support arrangements provided by the local education authority (LEA) to raise the educational achievement of children looked after. There is a project known as 'School Without Walls' which is designed to engage young people within the looked after system who have or who are at risk of educational exclusion. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) were in place for all of the children of school age whose cases were tracked as part of the inspection.

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

Advice and guidance in preparing young people for independent living is available to carers within the foster carers handbook. Separate guidance is available to young people and provided by TARGET, the Authority's leaving care team. An examination of children's records confirmed that Pathway Plans are in place for those young people who are of an age, which requires the formulation of such a plan. Carers interviewed spoke knowledgeably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood and evidence was available in young people's files of work being carried out with other professionals and agencies.

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

As previously stated in this report the local authority has robust procedures for the recruitment of both staff and foster carers which includes a Criminal Records Bureau check at enhanced level being carried out. The local authority maintains appropriate information for all staff employed within the fostering team and its carers'. It is evident from the inspection that the organisation operates within a thorough and comprehensive recruitment policy. This policy and procedural document contains full details of the recruitment process including the setting out of how the organisation applies the Warner Codes of Recruitment Practice.

Total number of staff of the agency:

11

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

All staff within the fostering team receive monthly supervision provided by the manager of the service and comprehensive records are maintained of these meetings. Overall the service is effectively organised and managed. The team who are sufficiently skilled and experienced are clear about their responsibilities and the management structure within the organisation. Staffing levels within the team are good with seven social work staff supporting circa 60 carers including mainstream, support, kinship and specialist carers. Copies of the departments policies and procedures are in place and accessible to staff.

The fostering service has clerical and administrative support and during interviews, staff reported that administrative systems are effective and that work is ongoing in terms of developing the services IT equipment and arrangements to link the administration of the service more effectively with that of the organisation as a whole.

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? | 4 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|

Redcar and Cleveland Fostering Service benefits from having an experienced and well-qualified team. A number of staff either hold or are undertaking post-qualifying awards in childcare. The fostering service provides a duty system to ensure that all calls and referrals are received and recorded, and to ensure that there is always a member of staff on hand to give support and advice to foster carers. As previously stated the service maintains good staffing levels and low staff turnover. The quality of carer Form F assessments and reports are good. The service provides a network for carers through the carers' forum, which meets twice yearly. Carers are provided with additional support on a 24/7 basis by the Authority's support carers who can be contacted day or night to provide advice and support, including emergency respite. Carers particularly regard this service.

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

Redcar and Cleveland fostering service provides 6 weekly supervision to all of its carers undertaken by a named supervising social worker. Guidance is produced and available to staff and carers in the form of handbooks, policies and procedures and practice guidance. There are specific policies and procedures dealing with whistle blowing, health and safety and child protection. The local authority has appropriate public and professional indemnity insurance cover for staff and carers.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

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

All social work practitioners within the service hold an appropriate social work qualification. A number of staff have undertaken post-qualifying training in childcare and other development courses. Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that the organisation operates within its own sound employment procedures. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place for staff. Carers confirmed that there are opportunities for them to undertake joint training with social work staff and indicated that joint arrangements are very productive.

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

Staff working in the fostering team receive regular four weekly supervision and the content, outcomes and decisions are recorded. Discussions with supervising social workers confirmed that they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. They reported that staff had access to the necessary policies and procedures and stated that although they have regular supervision, the manager of the service operates an open door policy. Comments made by staff included, 'We have an open door policy in the manager's office and the service manager is also available at any time'. Staff indicated that they are well managed and supported by the manager. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members and a formal staff appraisal system is in place.

Each supervising social worker maintains links with childcare social work teams and attends team meetings of the team to which they are linked.

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**

The service maintains effective procedures and has a clear strategy for supporting carers. Guidance is available to staff contained with the Authority's policies and procedures, some of which are specific to the fostering service. Guidance is available to carers in the form of the foster carers handbook, and both carers and staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the supervising social worker.

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?****4**

The level and quality of support and supervision of carers is good. Very favourable comments were received from the 13 sets of carers interviewed by inspectors. Comments made in respect of supervising social workers by carers included, 'My link worker is very good. She visits weekly nearly enough. If she doesn't visit, then she phones me up to see how things are going. She will take me to training or meetings', and 'I have a good relationship with my link worker. She is always on the phone and comes to see me regular. It is a good relationship I have, and the kids have a good relationship with her, they see her and talk to her more than their social worker'.

The quality of guidance available to carers is good. The carers' handbook is in an easily accessible format. Carers' interviewed demonstrated a sound understanding of their responsibilities and had an appropriate level of awareness in how to make complaints and deal with allegations of abuse.

Minutes of carer supervisions are maintained on file and these are generally well recorded. Reports of reviews of carers are good. Of the 26 sets of carers with who the Inspectors had contact, 3 carers made negative comments about the quality of parts of the service. These comments were however, generally focused upon the Health and Social Care Department and mainly related to issues around social work staff within the children's team and the lack of support afforded by them. A significant majority of carers' comments were positive.

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?

4

Pre-approval training for foster carers is good and meets the needs of new carers. Carers interviewed commented that this training had provided a sound foundation at the beginning of the foster carer careers. Carers told Inspectors' that the pre-approval training is challenging and prospective carers have to undertake a high degree of soul searching to decide whether or not they wish to foster. The supervision programme offered to carers includes reference to any identified training needs and foster carers stated in their group meeting that the training offered to them is generally of a high standard. The 13 carers who had completed questionnaires further confirmed this. Once carers have completed their initial training, thereafter carers are offered opportunities to attend training programmes along with their social work colleagues.

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

Children's files examined were well formatted with information readily accessible. The files of the children case tracked as part of the inspection were found to hold all relevant LAC documentation. Children's review documentation was particularly good. All children with whom Inspectors had contact confirmed that they had received copies off their LAC documentation. Inspectors were of the view that the recording arrangements for children's information would if examined by a child contribute to their understanding of their life events.

Likewise, carers' files were well structured with information easily accessible in all but one case. Although relevant fostering documentation was in place, copies of minutes from the permanency panel, which had impacted upon the case, were not present, and the case tracking was therefore difficult. Carers' records included all of the information required in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Foster Services Regulations 2003. Copies of relevant children's LAC documentation were available on all carers' files.

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

Records maintained by the fostering service generally meet with the requirements of Schedules 2 and 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 including a carers and children's register. Records in respect of staff are maintained separately and include all necessary information relating to the employment checks and CRB disclosures. Similarly records relating to complaints and allegations against carers are maintained by the appropriate service within the department. Systems are in place to record confidential and sensitive information. Children and carers interviewed said that they were aware that they could have access to their files.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

90

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

85

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:

9

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

79.40

Maximum £

658.90

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service operates from the former Grosmont children's home and has appropriately furnished offices shared with staff from residential children's services and the permanency team. The offices have facilities for the storage and retention of records. There are efficient administrative systems, including Information Technology (IT) systems in place.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| | 0 |
|--|---|

This standard was not inspected.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| | 0 |
|--|---|

This standard was not inspected.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Evidence was seen which confirmed that Redcar and Cleveland fostering service makes prompt payments to its foster carers. Fees are paid according to an age and assessed need banding and range from £79.40 to £658.90. The payment scheme pays an additional allowance based on foster carers skills, competency and experience. None of the foster carers with whom the Inspectors had contact raised concerns about the level of allowances. Clear information is provided in the foster carer agreement about foster carer payments

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service's panel is constituted in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. It is a positive development that the panel includes a former care leaver. Evidence from observation of a panel meeting and the examination of panel minutes showed that the fostering panel engages in a thorough consideration of the information presented to it, has a clear structured decision making process and that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. During the inspection a panel meeting was observed and it was evident that cases are dealt with sensitively. Policies and procedures are in place governing the function of the panel and full recordings of minutes of meetings are taken. Recommendations made by the fostering panel are ratified by the agency decision maker who is currently the Director of Health and Social Care

One issue, which was identified in the case tracking exercise surrounded the length of time a recommendation made by the permanency panel had taken to come before the fostering panel. This situation left the carer in a period of uncertainty and anxiety. It is recommended that any such future decisions made by the permanency panel are placed on the fostering panel agenda at the earliest opportunity in order that such recommendations can be discussed and where necessary actioned.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Redcar and Cleveland fostering service has a 'shared care' service provided to parents of children with disabilities. The service has a designated officer who advises and support carers, undertakes formal assessments of prospective carers and provides continued formal supervision once approved. | 3 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|

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

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council recognises the particular relationships and position of family and friend carers. Assessment is undertaken in the same way as for other foster carers, although assessment is normally undertaken within a period of six weeks. Full training is offered, however, the service is sensitive to the fact that some kinship carers do not view themselves as foster carers within the normal sense of the term, and therefore do not always take up training offered. The service provides a part time supervising social worker who undertakes all assessment work prior to approval and subsequent support and supervision. This post is located within the permanency team.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

There was no lay assessor available for this inspection.

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 31st January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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 8th March 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

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 CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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