



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Dorset County Council Fostering Team

Princes House

Princes Road

Dorchester

Dorset

DT1 1TP

7th, 8th , 9th, 10th , 17th March 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

Dorset County Council Fostering Team

Address

Princes House, Princes Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1
1TP

Local Authority Manager

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01305 224643

Address

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1TP

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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

09/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Delia Amos	096257
Name of Inspector	2	Sophie Barton	
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 Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Graham Jones / Peter Finn	

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

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.

Dorset County Council Fostering Service is managed within the overall placement resource service. The teams operate from two sites reflecting the wide geographical span of the Local Authority area. The manager of the Fostering team is responsible for the fostering work undertaken by two senior practitioners, ten fostering social workers, and two social work assistants. One of the senior practitioners is primarily responsible for the development of the Shared Care Service for children with a disability. Since 2004 the adoption and permanence team with its own manager has been structurally separated from the mainstream fostering team.

The fostering service workers are organised to cover different geographical areas and have a link role with the Local Social Services Office in each area. In this link role they have the opportunity to develop relationships with the local childcare teams, to be aware of the children who might need placements, to identify local placements, and to supervise and support the carers in that locality. They also have the opportunity to use local knowledge and links in the recruitment of new carers. Support groups for carers are held locally. There is also a support group for the children of foster carers.

One of the social workers has specific responsibility for assessments and training. There is a rolling programme of pre-approval training of foster carers organised in different localities. Two workers are responsible for the Project and Assessment foster care provision, a specific scheme offering increased support to carers who look after young people with complex needs and behaviours. Two other workers undertake reviews of foster carers to provide some independence into the reviewing process.

The Turnaround fostering scheme is also located within the Dorset fostering service. It is a Treatment Foster Care programme. The scheme has a Project co-ordinator and a multi-disciplinary team with separate administrative support. The Turnaround scheme was separately inspected in October 2004.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This inspection was the third to have taken place against the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations. The previous inspection made 5 requirements and 26 good practice recommendations, a large proportion of which are now considered met. There was evidence that the service has made efforts to positively address the previously identified shortfalls.

The service is able to provide care to children in foster homes with carers who are committed, well motivated and child focussed. There are systems in place to support the health and education needs of children. Comments from children in many cases indicated that foster homes were seen by them as nurturing, supportive and safe: 'I feel safe here', 'Several young people referred to the love and care they were given. 'You have someone to love you.' Others wrote about foster care providing opportunities, 'I get more chances at stuff', 'I have a lot more opportunity', 'I get to do the activities I like', 'fostering has made me confident in who I am'.

Inspectors found that fostering team workers had supportive relationships with the foster carers. Support groups were available, including a regular group for foster carers' own children. The fostering service also had effective links with the local self- help foster carer group. Post- approval training opportunities for foster carers has been significantly increased.

Inspectors noted positive progress in the improved management arrangements of the service. There is now a separate manager for an adoption and permanence team and the manager of the fostering team has a more focused role. This may provide more opportunity for the development of a clearer placement strategy. There have been some moves towards more focused fostering recruitment activity, especially in efforts to identify more local placements for children.

Pressure on placements results in inappropriate matches on occasion and children have had to be moved. In some cases children placed, or children already in the family, have been potentially unsafe or unsettled because of poor matching. It was also found that the information given to foster carers is not always sufficient for them to provide appropriate care.

The service needs to consider ways in which it can better meet the needs of children from black and ethnic minorities. Some interagency working has been considered but this remains an area for further development. A more developed overall placement strategy should include an effective approach to broaden the range of carers available to children.

Reduced staffing levels were reported within the fostering team which have had an impact on the capacity of the team to recruit carers and develop services. The appointment to one of the vacant senior practitioner posts had been achieved just prior to this inspection. Another post remained vacant and staff were seen to be overstretched.

Inspectors received 41 survey responses from children placed with foster carers. 30 responses were received from foster carers. 37 Placing social workers from across Dorset returned surveys in respect of 110 children placed with Dorset foster carers. This was a very helpful response rate which was valuable in informing this inspection report. Inspectors visited a small number of foster carers, four households, and also met with a small group of foster carers.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard is partially met

There is a revised statement of purpose. A recommendation about the development of children's guides is repeated.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)

These standards are met

The fostering service is managed by suitable people with appropriate skills.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

These standards were met.

There were clear management arrangements although staff absences had impacted on the capacity of the service to develop.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Four of these nine standards were met, four partially met and one not met.

Foster homes visited provided appropriate standards of care to meet the needs of the children placed. The service had introduced a more clearly documented risk assessment approach to issues for children who shared bedrooms. There was a continuing need for more consistent practice about this and to consider each child's needs. The service is developing strategies to provide a more diverse range of carers, although this was at a very early stage. Systems had been developed to improve the way matching decisions and information gathering were documented. There continued to be matches which were not appropriate. Appropriate guidance was given to foster carers about safe caring skills and managing behaviour. There was evidence of good practice in regard to the fostering service supporting contact arrangements. Consultation with young people is promoted. The health needs of young people in foster care are supported by foster carers and specific nurses for Looked After Children are available. There are systems to support the education needs of young people. The leaving care service has had staffing difficulties and priority was being given to those young people who were approaching 18 years, or who had left care already. Some young people and carers do not have sufficient or early enough access to planning and advice for this stage.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster carers (Standards 15-23)

Seven of these nine standards were met, one partially met, and one not met.

Evidence was seen of appropriate procedures for staff recruitment. There had been a significant change in the fostering service since the previous inspection, with fostering now managed separately from an adoption and permanence team. The rearrangement of the teams was described as still bedding down, but generally was reported to be a more effective and positive management arrangement. Staffing levels in the fostering team were identified as a major concern. Caseloads were high, and the absence of senior practitioners for much of the recent period had added to the pressure. The capacity for the development of the service and recruitment of a more diverse range of carers was reduced. There were some extremely positive reports from foster carers about the level of support that individual

workers had been able to maintain. There was a corporate training programme for staff. Staff were clear about lines of accountability and their own duties and responsibilities. There was a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers, and carers' reviews were being undertaken by specific workers. There was a system for the regular planned supervision of carers. Support is given to the local independent foster carer self help organisation.

Records (Standards 24-25)

One of these standards was met and one partially met.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

Financial Requirements (Standard 27- 29)

Two of these three standards do not apply and Standard 29 was met

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was met

It was noted that the quality assurance role of the panel was developing, with management information about foster carer reviews, the number of carers, and the range and type of carers in comparison to the needs of the children being presented.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

The capacity for development of the provision of short-term breaks for children with a disability has been reduced because the post of Senior Practitioner was vacant for almost a year. With the recent appointment to this post there is now an opportunity for looking forward.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was met

There were clearer systems established for the assessment of friends and family as carers, although there was a continued need for service development and staff training.

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:

Not applicable

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
3	33(b)	FS8	The local authority must be satisfied that a proposed placement is the most suitable placement having regard to all the circumstances.	09.04.04
4	17(3)	FS9	The fostering service must ensure that a foster carer is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him/her to provide appropriate care for the child.	09.04.04

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 **Delia Amos** **Signature** *D. Amos*
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements 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	33(b)	FS8	The local authority must be satisfied that a proposed placement is the most suitable placement having regard to all the circumstances.	01.09.05
2	17(3)	FS8 FS9	The fostering service must ensure that a foster carer is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him/her to provide appropriate care for the child.	01.09.05
3	19	FS17	The fostering service must have sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced people working for the purposes of the fostering service.	01.09.05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The children's guide should be produced in a format that would meet the needs of children with a learning disability. The overall design could be more child-friendly.
2	FS6	When placements are made which involve children moving bedrooms there should be clear documentation about each child's assessed needs for privacy and other needs.
3	FS6	There should be accurate assessments of the foster carers' homes and immediate environment in regard to potential hazards.
4	FS7	Continuing efforts need to be made to identify carers from diverse ethnic and cultural groups.
5	FS9FS9	Where a young person has made a complaint about foster care, consideration should be given to this being investigated by someone other than the fostering social worker for the carer.
6	FS11FS11	The fostering service should consider a wider range of strategies to ensure that children are made aware of the complaints procedure and other ways of raising concerns.
7	FS14	Carers who work with young people who are moving towards independence should have specific training in the Pathway Planning process and work closely with the leaving care workers.
8	FS16	Staffing levels in the fostering service should be further reviewed.
9	FS17	When a shortfall in staffing occurs, contingency plans should be made which allow an adequate service to be maintained.
10	FS22	The revision of the fostering handbook should be progressed and copies distributed to carers. It should be updated regularly.
11	FS25	Foster carers' files should be comprehensive and include updated information.
12	FS25	The records of complaints and allegations should include clear outcomes and these should also be clearly recorded on the relevant files for carers.

* 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

8

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

Date of Inspection	07/04/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	45

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?
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The previous inspection recommended that the statement of purpose should be revised to include more details about how the different fostering schemes operate.

A revised statement of purpose has been made available to the inspectors and is to be included in the foster carer handbook.

The manager reported that work is in progress to produce more child-friendly information about the fostering service, including exploring formats for children with a learning disability. Drafts were seen which have been produced in consultation with children through the advocacy service. The recommendation, previously made, is repeated.

Within the fostering service, staff are working with carers on a 'Welcome to our house' leaflet, to be personalised by each carer.

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

Since the last inspection there have been some significant changes in the management arrangements of the fostering service. The nominated manager of the fostering service is the Service Manager who has overall responsibility for the fostering team, the Turnaround treatment foster care scheme, the adoption and permanence team, residential provision, the Assist (adolescent support) and Leaving Care teams. Management of adoption and fostering has been separated and there is now a manager for a separate adoption and permanence team, in addition to the fostering team manager. Permanent, i.e. long term, foster carers were to be supported within this new team. The manager of the adoption and permanence team was interviewed as part of this inspection in view of the continuing fostering function in that team.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are appropriate arrangements for CRB and other reference checking of staff and managers.

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 changes in the management arrangements were reported to be better able to provide more overall monitoring of the activities of the service and developing quality performance. Whilst this standard is reported as met, inspectors consider that there was potential for a more developed overall placement strategy. There was a need to enhance in-house fostering services to ensure they had a key, valued role in the provision of quality services.

The opportunity to develop a more strategic approach to fostering and family placement should be explored. For example, there were clearer practice expectations about kinship placements (see Standard 32) which was a significant area of growth; this was not yet linked to developing staff skills and no specific training was available. Another example was the difficulty in moving young people on to suitable placements following the time limited placement in the treatment foster care scheme.

There was an increased recognition of the need to explore recruitment strategies which were relevant to the needs of children in different parts of the county, with some areas having more Looked After Children than others.

There was an enhanced expectation of the quality assurance role of the fostering panel, with more regular reporting procedures. There was also more evidence of management monitoring, for example of patterns and issues in disruptions.

Guidelines had been produced to clarify to staff to any possible conflicts of interest, specifically about fostering.

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

NA

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.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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 impact of staff vacancies during the year has limited the capacity of the manager to develop and implement proposed changes as much as the service would have wanted. The absence of two senior practitioners has particularly limited the opportunities for service development. Within the service the lines of accountability were clearly defined and there were clear arrangements for when the manager was absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Inspectors were impressed with the quality of care seen to be provided in the sample of foster homes chosen for visits during this inspection.

Issues identified in the previous inspection had resulted in a recommendation for clear expectations to foster carers and social workers about foster homes meeting a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Very few concerns were raised in this inspection about cleanliness or hygiene. Examples were heard of social workers and fostering staff working together to address issues.

A recommendation was also made about considering the need for risk assessments when children share bedrooms. There is now an expectation that is addressed in documents completed by the family placement officer at the time of placement. There continues to be a need to regularly review this. Inspectors noted several examples where sharing arrangements had been altered after placements were made. Several responses received from social workers and from children indicated some dissatisfaction about sharing arrangements. Some social workers referred to foster homes being 'overcrowded', and 'children having to move bedrooms'. A survey response from one young person poignantly illustrated the importance in foster care of having their own bed.

Where children are placed in foster homes where there are more than the usual limit, appropriate procedures were followed in examples seen, and decision making was evidenced.

Survey responses from a small number of social workers expressed some reservations about aspects of the carers' home and environment in relation to safety factors. In examining the relevant files, inspectors would agree that some of the assessments of carers did not contain sufficiently clear information about hazards. In one example there was a very misleading description of the environment which minimised potential risk factors and did not analyse strategies for managing the risk. The practice is established for health and safety factors to be included in the assessment but examples seen indicated that these needed to be more meaningful.

The questionnaire responses received from the children indicated that they were in homes where they were encouraged to eat a nutritious and varied range of foods. Several referred to this being a very positive and important part of being in foster care.

No child referred to feeling unsafe, and in some cases being safe in foster care was specifically mentioned as 'the best thing'.

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?**

2

It has previously been recommended that Dorset fostering needed to identify ways of increasing its numbers of black and minority ethnic carers. The information seen by the inspectors indicated that ten children in foster care were of origins other than white British. There has been no increase in the number of carers from black or minority ethnic groups; the recommendation is repeated.

The manager reported that efforts have been made to identify relevant recruitment strategies. Initiatives with neighbouring local authorities are being explored. Specific advertising to recruit black and ethnic minority carers was being planned, using multi-lingual advertising. These strategies were at an early stage and this is an area to which the management team will need to give more robust attention.

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?**

1

Efforts were seen that the staff aim to ensure that there was appropriate matching with foster carers capable of meeting the assessed needs of children. With pressure on resources and having to respond to emergencies there were examples where adequate matching was not always achieved. The quality of the information made available to the fostering team was very variable and hampered efforts to achieve appropriate matches. The fostering team manager identified this as a continuing concern which he would be attempting to address in visits to childcare teams. The short term request form had been amended and an addendum form to be used with the LAC documentation introduced to try to ensure that sufficient information was made available.

The significance of careful matching was highlighted in several examples given by foster carers where serious consequences had resulted from inappropriately made placements. There was a specific reference to not being told about a sexual matter. Other examples seen involved insufficient attention to risk factors and the impact on other children in the household. A previously made requirement is repeated.

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

Foster carers were provided with information about appropriate behaviour management. Children's surveys included reference to a range of appropriate sanctions. These included grounding, limited access to TV., being talked to and time out.

Awareness raising about safer care practices is achieved through training and through carers being asked to document their household's safe care strategies. These were seen on many of the files. A programme of training, including the team teach approach to behaviour management, has been made available to some carers and it was planned that this would be expanded. Two of the children's surveys indicated that they had been restrained. Foster carer reviews and supervision visits will need to explore what training needs individual carers might have. In one of the foster homes visited during this inspection it was considered that there was a significant need for training about appropriate methods of physical intervention.

Allegations and complaints were recorded and dealt with in liaison with the relevant social service team. The policy officer for child protection confirmed that where an investigation had been required there had been appropriate management of the case. In another case of a complaint made by a young person, inspectors consider that there should have been a more independent assessment of the circumstances, rather than the carers' fostering social worker. A recommendation is made about this. At Standard 25 there is reference to the need for clearer management systems in regard to the collation and evaluation of information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse.

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

Some excellent examples were seen of foster carers supporting contact arrangements, sometimes over some considerable distance and with great sensitivity. Many of the questionnaires completed by foster carers described complex contact arrangements which they were supporting. Typical comments were: 'we feel contact is one of the most important things and we work hard at keeping it up.'. ...'we do everything possible! Maintain good relationship myself with mum and family and encourage children to do same if they're happy to do so'.

Some references were also made to some high quality work undertaken by foster carers in helping prepare a child moving to their adoptive family.

The role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements has been included in the documentation that the fostering service has introduced to supplement the LAC agreements.

Some responses from carers and from social workers indicate this is, for some, an area for continuing development. In most cases the placing social workers made positive comments about foster carers' approach to contact, often referring to them being 'inclusive', 'non judgemental'. There were a few examples where the placing social worker indicated

difficulties in dealing with contact. In some of these, the foster carer's inexperience was said to be the cause. In another example there was a continuing problem and inspectors noted that the family placement worker and the social worker were in close communication and worked jointly in attempting to address the issue. In a small minority of cases there were reports of carers having judgemental attitudes and, in some case-notes, evidence was seen of family placement officers attempting to address this when it became known to them.

Carers gave examples of problems that can arise in the decision making process when they have to wait before a child gets the relevant permissions for outings, for example. This is an issue where good communication and accessibility of childcare staff is important, and these was cited as a problem by many carers.

Several young people referred to not liking being placed at some distance from friends. Distance from family was also raised as an issue by some social workers and this is a continuing challenge for the service. (Standard 17 discussed the service's awareness of the need to focus recruitment to provide more local carers in some areas of the county)

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

Children gave a number of examples of being consulted about everyday matters, and where their views had made a difference to the arrangements, for example compromising about coming in times, room decoration, what to do at half term.

The council ensures that advocacy services are available to children. Several young people referred to the value of having someone, not their social worker, to listen. Others spoke positively about being able to talk to their foster carers – 'there to talk to when you need it', 'they have always been for me and not taken sides', 'having someone who listens'. In a few cases the response suggested a less positive experience. One child wrote that the 'fostering service was very slow, no-one listens to you'. Another that the 'foster parents should be there more to listen if the child is getting bullied'.

In the case of a complaint made by a young person, inspectors did not see that an independent view had been taken, (as referred to in Standard 9).

Some case files evidenced that attention was given to ensuring that children's views were sought, for example about placement arrangements. One example seen showed that there was a high level of awareness of the need to consult a young person about an incoming placement, although better practice would have been to have allowed the young person more time and to have had clearer options.

Some instances were raised in the inspection where children and carers had been given insufficient information or notice about the visits by independent reviewing officers.

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 service has access to designated nurses with responsibility for Looked After Children. There were some detailed references from social workers to the sensitive and positive support given to children and young people by many foster carers. Psychological support is also available to assist carers.

There were examples where practice about recording could be improved in foster care, particularly in the records kept about medication.

Comments from children indicated that many appreciated the positive and healthy environment of their foster home, referring to eating healthy food and getting lots of exercise, going to bed at regular times, and washing regularly. One wrote 'I have given up smoking'. Emotional support was also mentioned. A young person wrote that foster care had 'taken the pressure of me'.

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**

There was good evidence that the fostering service is committed to supporting the educational needs of Looked After Children. Fostering social workers addressed educational issues during their supervision sessions with carers. It may be that this needs to be more proactive in some cases. An example was seen of a carer needing to have a clearer understanding of the statementing process. There is support available from the Education LAC service. Placing social workers often referred to carers being active in linking with schools and helping children.

A number of the children who returned surveys referred to the support they received in education. Examples included: 'I get help with my schoolwork', 'there's no-one to interrupt me when I'm doing homework', 'get encouragement to do well', 'go to school every day', 'I can ask my foster mum about homework'. 'lets me use the computer', 'lots of help', 'if I need help I get it'.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

'The leaving care team has had staffing difficulties resulting in a more reduced level of service to some young people. Priority has been given to the older age range and some very positive examples were given of young people being well supported in the move to independence. It was heard that effective links had been made with housing forums and with the Supporting People team.

Examples were seen of young people being well supported in their particular situations. This was not the case with all young people. Foster carers in some cases have had insufficient support and advice about the leaving care arrangements and this has produced uncertainty and anxieties. Leaving care issues are to be included in the post-approval training. It would also be helpful if the fostering team staff had updated input from the leaving care service. A previously made recommendation is repeated.

This area remains an area for development to ensure that young people are prepared and supported in arrangements as they move into adulthood.

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

A sample of staff files were seen which included evidence that there was good practice in recruitment which would help ensure children were safeguarded. Practice included making telephone calls to verify references and details of CRB checks.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has been significantly reorganised since the previous inspection. A separate manager for adoption and permanence has been in post since September. There has been a period of transition and managers described the arrangements as still bedding down. There were regular meetings of the management team. It was generally reported that the new arrangements for management were positive and more effective.

It was previously recommended that staffing levels should be reviewed and this is repeated. The assessment of family and friends as carers is still generally being undertaken by the childcare teams, although long term kinship arrangements were to be located in the permanence team. There were ten family placement workers in the fostering team, with two senior practitioners (one vacant at the time of the inspection) and two assistants. The adoption and permanence team, also undertaking fostering work had seven workers and a senior practitioner, plus an assistant.

There were structures and systems in place to ensure referrals from prospective foster carers are recorded and responded to. The capacity to take up assessments promptly has been hampered by the staffing issues. The frequency of supervision of carers has been reduced in many cases.

Administrative processes have been reorganised as a result of the change in team structures. This was still a developing area at the time of the inspection.

The fostering team had limited access to computers and staff reported that this had a general impact on the management of the work. Working from two different sites has also been seen by staff and management to reduce efficiency.

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?	1
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The level of staffing in the fostering team was identified as a major concern. Inspectors were impressed with the level of support that some fostering officers were able to maintain and some carers made very appreciative comments – ‘they do an excellent job’, ‘availability and approachability of staff’, ‘when I need help they are there’... ‘they are stretched to their limits but despite this provide for us – at quite a cost to themselves.’ The level of support being sustained by some workers was commendable, but stress was reported to be an increasing concern. The team was described as functioning in a reactive way, having to prioritise work in terms of responding to crises.

A large number of carers made comments about insufficient staff; they were very aware that the team was overstretched. They referred to ‘some things not followed through quick enough’.... ‘it took a long time to arrange a break’.... ‘can’t plan our own family life’. Others referred to some delays in getting a response. Many said that the frequency of visits made by their family placement worker had reduced.

Caseloads were very high, with some workers having responsibility for supervising thirty carers. The Head of Children’s Services had requested a comparative survey of workloads and the results from this survey suggest that a review of the caseloads and staffing levels was needed.

The fostering team had less access to sessional workers who had previously been undertaking assessments but for their own reasons were not so available. The problem with staffing was reported to be having a significant impact on the ability of the team to recruit, assess, and support carers. There was a concern that in-house fostering provision could not meet the needs of the service.

There was also an impact on the capacity of the team to ensure documentation was kept to the required standard. Shortfalls are identified at Standard 25.

Another aspect of this standard is in relation to the recruitment and assessment of carers. The service was aware that certain areas had an insufficient range of carers which meant that children were very likely to be placed at some considerable distance from family and school. Recruitment activity, including working with the local social services teams, was being focussed on this issue.

As stated at Standard 6, it was found that assessments sometimes lacked sufficient details about safety aspects in the local environment, for example the proximity of a road to the

children's play area.

The fostering service is moving towards a more competency based approach to assessments and this has been incorporated into the carer preparation programme. Some carers referred to the length of time assessments took and again staffing issues have caused some delays.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The council is generally described as having sound employment practices and adequate support for staff and carers. A job evaluation scheme was still in process at the time of this inspection.

Out of hours support to carers continues to be through the general service's emergency duty team.

Management systems for carer supervision are established.

The whistleblowing policy is included in the revised handbook, soon to be distributed.

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 is a corporate training programme, evaluated annually. The learning and development team were working closely with the adoption and fostering services and some specific training had been made available. This included communicating with children, and life story work. The training needs of fostering staff and of foster carers were reported to be more 'up' the agenda than previously.

There was an ongoing commitment to support staff in achieving the post qualifying award and one of the workers in the fostering team was undertaking this.

Some training needs identified in this inspection include

- The assessment and support of family and friends carers.
- Support to placements where young people are moving towards leaving care.

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

Staff reported that they had a good understanding of lines of accountability and of their own duties and responsibilities. They confirmed that they received management supervision and a record was made of this. There was a system for regular staff appraisals.

Staff meetings were held regularly and minutes of these were seen in the course of the inspection.

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 fostering service provided support to carers through visits, phone calls and support groups. Respite was provided in some cases. There was also an office hours duty system if carers needed advice and their own link worker was not available. Survey responses indicated a mixed experience about this level of support. Some very negative comments suggest this provision may need further evaluation.

Carers were allocated to a family placement officer although more direct support was often undertaken by the support assistants in the team. Inspectors heard many positive comments about the support provided by team members. Some carers said they felt the support group was underused. 'We are sorry that more carers do not use the support group as we feel it has been a great help in the past.'

The fostering service has supported the local branch of the independent foster carer support network and membership for all carers is now paid, as well as national membership. The level of consultation was reported to be positive.

A support group for the children of foster carers was also available and this had included some lively events with positive feedback.

There was a system for undertaking annual reviews of carers, with two workers doing most of the reviews. The quality of the reviews was variable, sometimes with insufficient attention given to concerns or significant changes. The manager was aware of the variability and was working to address this.

There were positive comments from children's social workers about the fostering service. There were also comments about poor communication and frustration about not being consulted when new placements were made, when respites were planned, or other changes. Similarly, examples were seen of decisions made, or placements going ahead without adequate consultation with the fostering team. There is a continuing need for strategies to improve communication between the teams.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

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

There was a system for regular planned supervision sessions of carers, and unannounced visits were also seen on some files.

It had previously been recommended that the revision of the fostering handbook should be progressed and copies distributed to carers. Inspectors were provided with the latest version of the handbook which is ready to be distributed to carers once senior management has endorsed it. At the time of the inspection this had not quite happened.

Records about allegations of abuse were kept and monitored. There was a developing approach to the importance of keeping clear chronologies on carers' files and ensuring that full information was available to panel when issues of concern arose (also see recommendation made at Standard 25).

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The fostering service has made a number of improvements in the provision of training to carers. Pre-approval training for foster carers has been developed to include a more competency based approach. It would be good practice for the training to include more specific input about the role of advocacy. Three training programmes for foster carers each year are organised. This is increased from previous programmes.

A programme of post-approval training for foster carers has been implemented and reviewed. Input from the education and psychological services has been included to ensure carers have opportunity for developing skills to meet the needs of the children. The continuing development of NVQ 3 training for carers is also being planned, although the programme has had some setbacks. The learning and development unit is now hoping to progress this by using internal assessors.

Some of the questionnaire responses reflected that the improved training provision has been positive for those that have attended. Practical support has also been provided to assist carers in attending the training, for example childcare and expenses.

Some ongoing training needs identified in this inspection had also been identified by the service. The development of training portfolios for carers may help ensure that individual training needs are addressed. These include the appropriate use of physical interventions and knowledge about leaving care issues.

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?
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The case records for the children are maintained by the childcare social workers and kept in the local offices. They were not seen in this inspection. Some records about children are kept by the fostering service, in relation to referral information and subsequent details about placements.

Staff acknowledged that in some cases there would be shortfalls in recording on the foster carers' files because of the pressure caused by vacancies in the team. Some carers' records seen showed gaps in information, some were not signed or dated. (See recommendation made at Standard 24) Inspectors found that the files did not always contain up to date information on placements, although there was evidence that information had been sought from local offices. The adequacy of the information is the most critical factor, and in some cases the presence of the relevant documentation did not include sufficient details about known or likely behaviours or risks. A carer wrote 'information was very basic – more details would have given us a more realistic expectation'.

As previously stated, (see requirement made at Standard 8 and 9) information available to carers was not always as comprehensive as it should be for the foster carers to adequately care for child.

Diaries were provided to foster carers for each child. Inspectors noted that there was no systematic advice to carers about the recording of medication and this may be an area for the service to improve practice. Foster carers were encouraged to help the child reflect on and understand his or her history, and to keep appropriate memorabilia.

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?	2
Files were kept in locked cabinets on both sites. Separate records were kept for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations.			
As stated at Standard 24 foster carers' files were not always as comprehensive as required.			
Inspectors were told that the current collation of complaints, allegations and significant events was to be revised and a clearer system was being proposed. There were omissions in the present collation. Inspectors found that the record of some complaints and allegations on carers' files was insufficient. The decision making process was not always documented and actions taken were not found in some cases. (Standard 25.13) A recommendation previously made is repeated.			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			X
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		X	Maximum £
			X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard was not assessed on this occasion.		

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?

9

This standard is 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?

9

This standard is 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 review of allowances and fees has taken place since the previous inspection. Several areas of fees and allowances were increased. A working party, including foster carers, sought and took into account the views of carers. Inspectors were informed that the council's budgetary constraints meant that allowances remained at a lower rate than the minimum recommended by Fostering Network. The majority of carers responding to the survey did not express any concern about the allowance. In a small number of cases (five) this was a continuing area of dissatisfaction, in two cases very strongly expressed, ('abysmal'). One wrote about the continuing lack of uniformity between local offices about expense claims. Another referred to 'a lack of good will' because of delays in expenses.

In reporting this standard as met, it is nevertheless suggested that this is an area that will continue to need regular consultation and review.

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
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The panel was observed on 10th November 2004 to inform the inspection of the Turnaround fostering service. The panel had been kept well informed of the development of the Turnaround Project scheme, with the manager of the scheme giving a formal update in October. Panel members had been made well aware of the specific issues arising in the Project, particularly the multi-agency approach, and the behaviour management strategies.

The panel meeting was observed to be well conducted. Information was available in advance for panel members. Panel members identified relevant issues arising from the cases presented. It was evident that they were clear about their roles and responsibilities. The process was seen to be fair, with panel members responding sensitively to the applicants. Measures were taken to assist applicants feel comfortable. An updated information leaflet about the purpose of panel and panel membership has been produced.

The quality assurance function of the panel was seen to be developing. Management information about annual reviews of foster carers, the number of carers, and the range and type of carers in comparison to the needs of children was presented to Panel in January 2005. The panel met with the family placement team for a constructive exchange and this experience was reported to be valued by staff and panel members. It was planned that the fostering manager would present a report to panel every quarter.

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
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The fostering service has had reduced capacity to further develop the provision of short-term breaks for children with disabilities. The post of Senior Practitioner was vacant for almost a year and was eventually filled in February 2005, just prior to this inspection. The manager states that there will now be an opportunity for looking forward following a planned audit of the service.

Inspectors saw files and data about the service. In the west of the county there were few children waiting for a service, but the east of the county had a longer waiting list.

This standard is reported as met although it is acknowledged that the service has a number of areas for development which will now be more feasible. Specific areas identified in this inspection that will need to be addressed include:

- Protocols about funding for the equipment needed in shared care foster placements.
- Training of carers, to include appropriate methods of physical intervention,
- Record keeping, specifically in regard to medication.

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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It was previously recommended that there should be a clear policy in regard to carers who are friends and family of the child. A written statement from senior management has been produced and a process has been set up between the fostering team manager and the panel secretary. This is intended to give the fostering manager more oversight of the quality of assessments going to panel. Childcare social workers, in the majority of cases, are responsible for completing the assessments. The expectation has been established that the fostering staff should be involved in an advisory role and that the team manager of fostering should sign off all assessments. Training is offered, and ongoing support by the fostering team. Practice in these areas was still developing. Although there was more linking at an early stage with the fostering service, there were some comments made by social workers that they were still waiting for an allocated fostering officer.

A large proportion of the survey responses were in relation to these placements and social workers frequently commented on the positive value for the child being with family or friends. Some of the responses from young people also confirmed that it was a positive experience being fostered with a family member; one indicated they did 'not like their Nan being called a foster carer'. Several others commented on reviews being a 'hassle', or 'annoying'.

Foster placements with family and friends' carers is an expanding and significant sector of the placement strategy. This standard is reported as met although there is a continued need for service development and staff training.

1

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 7th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

In general this is a very positive report which acknowledges the real progress made since the last inspection. The benefits of the reorganisation into two teams are beginning to be felt but further positive impacts are anticipated as more cases and carers transfer to the permanence team and they recruit to build their capacity.

Although we have expanded our staffing resources in recent years, we are aware of the increased requirements of a more explicit supervisory relationship with carers. We are reviewing our staffing levels with the Head of Children's Services who has already agreed an additional half-time reviewing officer post for the East.

Recruiting to senior Practitioner posts has proved difficult and this has had an impact on our ability to expand our specialist schemes in particular. It is hoped that market forces recognition will be achieved and that this will aid a successful appointment to be made.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 6th June 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all 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 Mr Graham Jones of Dorset County Council Fostering Team 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 GRAHAM JONES
Signature *Graham Jones*
Designation SERVICE MGR. RESOURCES
Date 3/6/05

Or

D.3.2 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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