



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service

Children`s Resource Team

Moor House

Widemarsh Common

Hereford

Herefordshire

HR4 9NA

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th
March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service

Address

Children`s Resource Team, Moor House, Widemarsh
Common, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR4 9NA

Local Authority Manager

Rebecca Plato

Tel No:

01432 262839

Address

Children`s Resource Team, Moor House, Widemarsh
Common, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR4 9NA

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

NA

Date of Inspection Visit		1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th , 8 th , 9 th , 10 th , 11 th March 2004		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am		
Name of Inspector	1	Dawn Taylor	081289	
Name of Inspector	2	Sue Young	089999	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Rebecca Plato		

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods(see Part B) 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.

Herefordshire Council operates a Children's Resource Team, which provides a fostering and adoption service.

The Children's Resource Team is line managed by the Children's Service Manager (Resources) who is responsible for the overall management of the Fostering, Adoption, Family Support and Aftercare Service. The Fostering Team Manager is responsible for the fostering service and has an acting manager role in the absence of the Adoption Team Manager of the adoption service.

The Family Placement Social Workers in the Children's Resource Team carry both fostering and adoption caseloads.

The fostering service provides a range of foster care to children and young people who are Looked After by Herefordshire Council, which includes emergency contract care, short term foster care, kinship care, teenage placement scheme, middle years scheme, long term foster care, shared care and respite care.

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 report is the first by the National Care Standard Commission under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and therefore serves as an audit of the service against the Regulations and National Minimum Standards identifying areas that need development.

Since this is the services' first inspection this report may contain a substantial number of Recommendations and Requirements. These should fall significantly at the next inspection when the service will have had time to take into account the new legislation and standards and to take action to meet them.

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 took place over fourteen days in March 2004. It found that the majority of the National Minimum Standards had been met or partially met.

Where appropriate young people living with foster carers were asked to complete questionnaires. Questionnaires were also sent to foster carers and Children's Social Workers.

Ninety-four Children's Social Worker questionnaires, forty-four foster parent questionnaires and twenty-seven young peoples questionnaires were completed.

The questionnaires were used to inform Requirements and Recommendations set out in this report.

The Fostering Team Manager provided the Inspectors with comprehensive and informative pre inspection information. The pre inspection questionnaires demonstrated that the Fostering Service was aware of areas where it met practice and areas where practice needed to be developed. The Inspectors found that where the Fostering Team Manager, prior to the inspection, had identified shortfalls action plans and processes were already in place to inform change.

The Inspectors are confident that where short falls have been identified in this inspection report the Children's Resource Teams capacity for improvement will bring many of the scores from one to three with relatively small input and within short time scales.

Statement of Purpose.

1 of 1 Standard was not met.

There was a Statement of Purpose that was known to staff and described practice in line with policies, procedures and staff guidance for Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers. The Statement of Purpose needs to be developed to include more detailed information regarding the Service's policies and procedures regarding child protection, anti bullying and behaviour management.. At the time of this inspection a Children's Guide was being developed with the input of a range of professionals and young people. The Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide have been developed in line with guidance in the Children's Services Handbooks, Foster Carers Handbooks, Inter-Agency Guidelines and Protocols and the Draft Fostering Service Internal Procedures.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service.

2 of 2 Standards were met.

The Manager of the fostering service possessed the necessary business and management skills to manage the work efficiently and effectively. Herefordshire Council had followed clear staff vetting policies and procedures to ensure all checks and references were undertaken and suitable for any persons managing the fostering service.

Management of fostering service.

1 of 2 Standards were partially met and 1 was met.

In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions Managers, Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers were able to describe well-established lines of communication and accountability. A Conflict of Interest Policy needs to be developed to meet Standard 4.5 and Regulation 20(6). Effective systems were in place that enabled the Fostering Team Manager to monitor a range of matters that were used to inform practice and improve the quality of foster care provided by the service.

Securing and promoting welfare.

4 of 9 Standards were not met, 4 were partially met and 1 was met.

At the time of this inspection the fostering service used elements of LAC documentations as the Foster Placement Agreement. These documents did not meet the matters and obligations set out under Regulation 34(3). Herefordshire Council need to review the LAC documentation to ensure that the combined documents cover all the matters set out under Regulation 34(3), Schedule 6 and that the agreed format of Foster Placement Agreements are completed to a standard that enables the foster carer to care for the child. Herefordshire Local Authority should give priority to this Requirement .

Foster carers and children are supported by a network of professionals who liaise effectively. In interviews and questionnaires foster carers and children gave positive feedback and examples of good practice with regard to the support they received from Family Placement Social Workers.

Formats for recording annual announced inspections and health and safety checks need to be developed and implemented.

At the time of this inspection a number of the Inter-Agency ACPC policies and procedures were in the process of being revised. Herefordshire Council need to develop the Anti Bullying Policy and Behaviour Management Policy.

Family Placement Social Workers are currently working with foster carers to develop record keeping. A procedure needs to be developed to ensure these records are shared with children and other relevant professionals.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers.

2 of 9 Standards were partially met 1 was not met and 6 were met.

Foster carers are managed, trained and supported by a team of Family Placement Social Workers who are appropriately experienced and qualified. There are systems in place that promote supervision, team meeting and access to corporate and specialist training. All carers have access to support groups, the Emergency Duty Team, Herefordshire Education Liaison Support Service and a child psychologist. Herefordshire Council need to ensure that vacancies to the Children's Resource Team are recruited to within a reasonable time frame.

Records.

2 of 2 Standards were partially met.

Herefordshire Council have and are developing policies, procedures and staff guidance to ensure that up to date and comprehensive case records are maintained for each child in foster care and each foster carer. These need to be reviewed and developed in line with Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

At the time of this inspection Family Placement Social Workers were working to develop the standard of records maintained in each home by the foster carers.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service.

1 of 1 Standard was met.

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

Financial requirements.

2 of 3 Standards were met and 1 was partially met.

In interviews and pre inspection questionnaires Managers were able to describe clear policies and procedures relating to finance. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were reviewing processes and procedures to improve the timescales of payment of expenses to foster carers.

Fostering panel.

1 of 1 Standard was not met.

Herefordshire Council have developed policies and procedures in the Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures with regard to the Fostering Panel. These policies and procedures were in line with the practice described by Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were reviewing the membership of the Panel in line with the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Short-term breaks.

Not assessed at this inspection.

Family and friends as carers.

1 of 1 Standard was met.

The fostering service has clear procedures for assessing, approving and supporting foster carers who are family and friends of the child placed. In interviews, group discussion and questionnaires the Inspectors were informed of proactive practice by Family Placement Social Workers to support foster carers with meeting the children's needs emotionally, physically and environmentally.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

THIS SECTION IS NO LONGER APPLICABLE.

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)
(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Dawn Taylor	Signature	
Second Inspector	Sue Young	Signature	
Regulation Manager	Alan McCardle	Signature	
Date			

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS11FS10 FS1	Herefordshire Council should produce a Children's Guide in line with Regulation 3 (3) and will provide a copy of the Children's Guide to the Commission, to each foster parent approved and to each child placed.	30 th November 2004
2	20(6) and 50(7)	FS4	A Conflict of Interest Policy should be developed to meet Standard 4.5, Regulation 20(6),(7).	30 th November 2004
3	11	FS6	Procedures for the annual inspections and health and safety visits should be formalised to ensure that agreed and regular checks are carried out and accurately recorded.	30 th November 2004
4	11	FS6	Procedures for ensuring foster carers transport is safe and appropriate to the needs of the young people placed should be formalised to ensure that agreed and regular checks are carried out and accurately recorded.	30 th November 2004

5	34 and 38	FS13FS12 FS10FS9F S8	Herefordshire Council should review and develop the current Foster Placement Agreement to ensure that the information required by Regulation 34 (3) Schedule 6 is made available at the point of placement, except in the case of an emergency placement when Regulation 38 (1) would apply.	30 th November 2004
6	12	FS9	Herefordshire Council should ensure foster carers are aware of the procedures in place to support a foster carer and their family if an allegation is made against them.	30 th November 2004
7	14	FS10	Records should demonstrate that the fostering service considers the need for, and benefits of, appropriate contact for a child when finding/suggesting a suitable foster carer and the views of the child are sought and taken into account in determining contact arrangements.	30 th November 2004
8	14	FS10	Foster carers records should record the outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child. There needs to be a formal system for these written records to be shared or fed back to Children's Social Workers.	30 th November 2004
9	21	FS18	A management system of annual appraisals for foster carers in line with 18.4 should be incorporated into supervision and annual reviews.	30 th November 2004
10	17, 29	FS23	Foster carer annual review reports should include an appraisal of training attended and development needs.	30 th November 2004
11	27, 28, 29, 30, 32	FS24	Policies should be developed to include guidance and procedures with regard to records maintained by Family Placement Social Workers on foster carers and children and how these records are shared between social work teams.	30 th November 2004

12	22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32	FS24	<p>Herefordshire Council should ensure that – electronic storage still provides the child with access to the record where appropriate and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that any entry in the record can be clearly identified by a signature, • that any electronic signature is (a) uniquely linked to the signatory, (b) capable of identifying the signatory, (c) created using means that the signatory can maintain under his sole control, (d) linked to the data to which it relates in such a manner that any subsequent change of the data is detectable. <p>Where electronic records are printed and stored in a file they need to be signed and dated by the author.</p>	30 th November 2004
13	Data Protection Act 1998	FS25	Herefordshire Council should review policies to comply with requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, in particular the right of individual data subjects to have access to their records.	30 th November 2004
14	24	FS30	At the time of this inspection the membership of the Fostering Panel was under review. Herefordshire Council should ensure that the membership of the Panel is in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.	30 th November 2004
15	26, 29	FS30	Herefordshire Council should review and develop the format of reports for Panel to ensure that Panel Members are provided with consistent and well-presented information.	30 th November 2004
16	29	FS30	The views of young people and children placed with foster carers should be expressed to Panel Members in a more transparent manner when undertaking a review of a foster carer.	30 th November 2004

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS7	Herefordshire Council should enable all foster carers access to training specific to working with young people with learning difficulties.
2	FS18	Herefordshire Council should review the system for ensuring all foster carers are aware of the Children's Resource Team duty system, which is in place for foster carers during office hours.
3	FS29	Herefordshire Council's review of the procedure for payment of expenses to foster carers should result in the process being developed to meet the needs of foster carers more effectively.
4	FS29	Information and guidance for fosters carers with regard to tax related issues should be developed and shared with all foster carers.
5	FS24	Where a Standard states that a record should be signed, there should be full and legible signatures or a printed name. Where a Standard does not specifically state that a record should be signed the Inspectors recommend that it is good practice that it contain full and legible signatures or printed name.
6	FS24	Foster carers should be aware of the rights of children to read their records.
7	FS25	Separate records should be maintained by foster carers for each child placed.
8	FS14	Information should be provided to foster carers and young people to enable them to understand the options available to young people moving towards independence, the role of the Aftercare Team in providing effective support and the role of a foster carer.
9		Herefordshire Council should review and develop training for Family Placement Social Workers working within the foster service to ensure that training is provided that is specific to fostering.

10		<p>The Statement of Purpose should be developed to include a statement relating to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Service’s policy regarding behaviour management of children in foster care and the use of physical intervention and training of foster carers in physical intervention. • the Service’s policies on child protection and anti-bullying.
11		<p>Herefordshire Council should develop practice and written procedure where it is assessed appropriate that foster carers will be provided with restraint training.</p>
12		<p>The Anti Bullying Policy and Guidance for foster carers should be developed to identify those who are likely to instigate bullying i.e. foster carers, siblings and Social Workers and describe the role of the Family Placement Social Worker in helping foster carers cope with bullying.</p>
13		<p>Herefordshire Council should ensure that Family Placement Social Worker staff vacancies are recruited to within a reasonable timescale.</p>

* 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	14
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)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	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	1/02/04
Time of Inspection	10.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	110

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Herefordshire Council Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose, which sets out aims and objectives and the service it provides. The Statement of Purpose gives an outline of the management and staff structure.

The Statement of Purpose should be developed to include reference to the Service's policy and procedures regarding behaviour management of children in foster care, the use of physical intervention and training and support to foster carers in physical intervention. It should also include reference to the Service's policies on child protection and anti-bullying. The Statement of Purpose was reviewed and approved by elected members of the Council on the 18th December 2003. The same body will consider any subsequent amendments of the Statement of Purpose.

Herefordshire Council Fostering Service is currently producing a Children's Guide, which will be made available to all children using the service. The Fostering Team Manager is proposing that in addition to the Children's Guide all children are also given a copy of the BAAF fostering document – 'What it is and what it means – A guide for children and young people'.

The draft Children's Guide has been produced with the input of a group of young people who are or have been in the Looked After System. A Project Manager in partnership with the Children's Advocacy Worker has undertaken this work.

Once an initial Children's Guide has been produced it should be developed further in a range of formats to ensure that it is suitable for all children fostered through the service.

The Children's Guide will be shared with all children currently using the service and in the future with all children at the point of placement.

The Statement of Purpose will be shared with parents at pre-placement planning meetings by the child's placing Social Worker. It is proposed that at the first review Social Workers will check that parents have received the document together with the Herefordshire Compliments and Complaints leaflet.

Placing and prospective placing authorities other than Herefordshire will be sent a copy of the Statement of Purpose during the referral process by the Family Placement Social Worker. It is proposed that in the future prospective placing authorities will be able to access this document via the Herefordshire web site.

In interviews and questionnaires with staff the Inspectors were informed that the Children's Resource Team had initially discussed the Statement of Purpose in a Team Meeting.

In interviews Family Placement Social Workers were able to describe the content of the Statement of Purpose.

The Fostering Team Manager informed Inspectors that following the approval of the Statement of Purpose by Cabinet it was posted on Herefordshire Council intranet and operational teams were informed of this by e-mail.

The Foster Carers Handbooks and Fostering Network Safer Caring Booklet are given to all foster carers.

The Children's Services Handbooks and Inter-Agency Guidelines and Protocols are available to all staff in the office. All policies and procedures accurately reflect the Statement of Purpose.

At the time of this inspection the Herefordshire Council Service Internal Procedures were in draft. This guidance has been compiled in line with the Arrangements for the Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Fostering Team Manager is a qualified social worker with a Masters Degree in Social Work and has completed the Certificate in Management Studies at Ashton University. She has extensive previous experience of working with children and staff teams at a management level.

In interviews and questionnaires the Fostering Team Manager demonstrated knowledge of effective leadership of staff and management approaches.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Inspectors examined the staff vetting files for the Fostering Team Manager.

A current Enhanced CRB check was held on each file.

All appropriate checks under Schedule 1 had been undertaken for the Fostering Team Manager.

Herefordshire Council has a policy that will ensure that all staff and panel members will have CRB checks renewed every three years.

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 Team Manager informed the Inspectors of systems for monitoring the Children's Resource Service. This included:

1. Annual caseload monitoring including monitoring all tasks, allocation and enquiries. Workload is adjusted annually accordingly.
2. Fortnightly monitoring of the team resource i.e. availability of foster carers which is then fed to childcare teams and management meetings.
3. Monitoring through the fostering register any changes in approvals/withdrawals on an annual basis. The Fostering Team Manager presents quarterly reports on the fluctuations of service as part of the quarterly Children's Services Information. This is circulated to the Managers of Children's Services. This monitors performance and stability. This data contributes to the overall quality and performance of the Service.
4. A report is produced by the Fostering Team Manager to the Fostering Panel on an annual basis providing an overview of resources and quality of resources.

The data collected met Regulation 42, Schedule 7 and enabled the Fostering Team Manager to monitor and improve the quality of foster care provided by the service.

All monitoring procedures have been used to inform Quality Protects and Best Value Review. This standard of monitoring at the time of this inspection was over and above the Requirements set out for Local Authority Fostering Services. This practice is to be commended.

All Family Placement Social Workers had clear and up to date job descriptions. In interviews and questionnaires Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers described clear and effective lines of communication and support.

There were financial procedures and information available to purchasers of services and others. These procedures were reviewed on an individual basis for each child and as a fostering service. At the time of this inspection the foster carer allowances and payment process were under review.

Regulation 46 requires the 'registered person' to inform the Commission of any changes in manager or management structure. During the inspection it was agreed that although this Regulation excludes local authority services it would be good practice for Herefordshire to notify the Commission of any changes.

A Conflict of Interest Policy should be developed to meet Standard 4.5, Regulation 20(6), (7).

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

N/A

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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. Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home. Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution. Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home. Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	2 0 0 0 0 3	
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:		0
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:		0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Fostering Team Manager had a job description, which clearly defined the lines of accountability between staff and carers.</p> <p>There was a procedure for an identified staff member to act up in the absence of the Fostering Team Manager.</p> <p>The Children's Resource Team is line managed by the Children's Service Manager (Resources) who is responsible for the overall management of the Fostering, Adoption, Family Support and Aftercare Service. The Fostering Team Manager is responsible for the fostering service and has an acting manager role in the absence of the Adoption Team Manager of the adoption service. This system is reciprocated in the absence of the Fostering Team Manager.</p> <p>In interviews and group discussions the staff team were aware of this procedure.</p>		

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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The foster homes visited by the Inspectors' demonstrated accommodation appropriate to the needs of the young people placed. The homes were well furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Young people accommodated had their own bedroom apart from where an assessment of need had determined otherwise.

Home Check Services assess potential hazards and provide necessary equipment when requested. In interviews with foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers the Inspectors were informed of annual unannounced visits and annual health and safety visits. The Inspectors sampled five foster carer files and found that the format and recording of these checks were not consistent. This needs to be addressed.

All foster carers attend preparation training which covers health and safety issues. Written guidelines on health and safety were contained in the Foster Carers' Handbooks.

In interviews the Fostering Team Manager and Family Placement Social Workers described procedures for the assessment and placement of children who have been abused or have abused other children.

The Fostering Team Manager and Family Placement Social Workers described procedures for ensuring foster carers transport was safe and appropriate to the needs of the young people placed. This included maintaining copies or records of appropriate current documents - car insurance, MOT, driving licence on each foster carers file. The Inspectors sampled five foster carer files and found that not all of these documents and /or records were in place and that some documents were checked for information in some cases but not in others. The format and recording of these checks should be formalised to ensure that agreed and regular checks are carried out and accurately recorded.

It was made clear to the Inspectors that foster carers were aware that they might be interviewed or visited as part of the Commissions inspection process.

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**

Herefordshire Council's Training Programme provides induction and training in valuing diversity.

Herefordshire Council has a policy that was made available to all Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers entitled Equal Opportunities Policy.

Special arrangements required to meet the needs of a child are identified through core assessments, which inform LAC documentation for the child. Specific arrangements are reviewed at statutory reviews.

In interviews foster carers were able to describe appropriate care and practice to meet the individual needs of young people. Foster carers were able to demonstrate positive relationships with schools and clubs to ensure that the individual child's welfare was developed and promoted. Case tracking files demonstrated that these arrangements were in line with the child's wishes and minutes of review meetings.

Family Placement Social Workers, foster carers and the Fostering Team Manager were able to describe how a child with a disability was assessed and supported to maximise their potential within a foster home. The Fostering Team Manager described how appropriate equipment or adaptations to carers homes or vehicles would be provided if required.

At the time of this inspection there were a number of staff vacancies, this included a vacancy in the Children with Disabilities Team. The role of this post is to provide support to shared care foster carers. The Commission as part of the next annual inspection will inspect this role.

In questionnaires and interviews foster carers identified training they had attended relating to disabilities. A number of foster carers requested training specific to working with young people with learning difficulties. This request was fed back to the Fostering Team Manager.

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**

The Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures and Children's Services Handbooks set out the roles and responsibilities with regard to placement arrangements.

The Fostering Team Manager and Family Placement Social Workers described the process followed to match a child with an external or out of county placement. The child's Social Worker makes initial enquiries of suitably registered potential service providers. The Social Worker decides on the most appropriate placement and makes recommendation to the Children's Resource Panel (CRP). The CRP makes the decision on the placement. When a decision has been made, the Contracts Officer confirms if the selected provider has a Pre-Placement Agreement. The Social Worker completes an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA), which is forwarded to the Contracts Officer and then signed by the Children's Service Manager.

The Inspectors sampled a file of information held on external services accessed by

Herefordshire Council. This contained letters requesting specific information – NCSC inspection reports, confirmation of registration and copies of current Statement of Purposes. Where information was not on file there was evidence that that information had been requested.

The Fostering Duty Officer or Team Manager takes internal referrals via Children's Social Workers. Referral information is then used to identify any appropriate foster carers. Information relating to appropriate matches would then be passed back to the Children's Social Worker. Some of the files sampled by the Inspectors contained detailed referral and matching information, other files contained minimal referral and matching information. At the time of this inspection a new system had been introduced that should ensure that all files contain detailed written information regarding the matching process. Section 10 of the Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures details the checks that should be carried out prior to placement as part of the matching process. A written record of these must be kept on file.

Herefordshire Council are currently using the Looked After Children (LAC) documentation Placement Plan Part 1, Essential Information Part 1 and Care Plan as the Foster Placement Agreement at the point of placement. Inspectors sampled this documentation and found that it failed to meet the matters set out in Regulation 34 (3) Schedule 6.

In addition to this shortfall Inspectors were concerned to note that the quality of LAC documents produced by Children's Social Workers varied and at times were inadequate. This meant that on occasions children were placed with foster carers without the essential information required to ensure that their needs were being fully met. This matter is explored in more detail under the appropriate Standards in this report.

The Inspectors do not wish for work to be duplicated and understand the principle of utilising the LAC documentation as the Foster Placement Agreement at the point of placement. This system should be reviewed and developed to ensure that the information required by Regulation 34 (3) is made available at the point of placement, except in the case of an emergency placement when Regulation 38 (1) would apply. This may be achieved by an additional document being developed addressing matters not set out in the LAC documents with guidance stating the intention of the forms as Foster Placement Agreements requiring specific information to be made available in them when being completed.

Foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers described the process of information sharing meetings and introductions of young people to a foster family. The Inspectors' were shown files that were beginning to be collated by foster carers that contained photos of the foster carers, their children and their home. These will be used in future to show to foster children prior to placement.

The Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures gives a detailed agenda for the pre-placement meetings, which should ensure all appropriate topics are discussed and recorded.

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

Management systems were in place that collated information on the circumstances, numbers and outcome of all allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care. This was updated and monitored by the Fostering Team Manager.

In interviews and questionnaires the Fostering Team Manager demonstrated that she had an overview of child protection concerns through the collation of the database and staff supervision. This information was used to identify patterns of concerns, which were then addressed through annual reviews of foster carers and regular supervision sessions with Family Placement Social Workers.

Herefordshire Council has a range of policies, procedures and staff guidance in place.

These policies, procedures and staff guidance are contained in the Foster Carers Handbooks, Inter-Agency Guidelines and Protocols and Children's Services Handbooks.

In addition to Herefordshire Council's policies, procedures and staff guidance foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers had access to a range of leaflets and publications providing information and guidance.

At the time of this inspection not every foster carer had a safe caring policy, Family Placement Social Workers were working to ensure that each foster carer develops their own Safe Caring Policy. Each Carer's Safe Caring Policy will be monitored during regular supervision and shared with the children placed and their Social Worker.

Foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers described the action they would take if they were concerned about the welfare of a child or if a child was to make an allegation.

In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions a number of foster carers expressed concern and confusion at the support that would be given and information that would be shared if a child made an allegation about them. Herefordshire Council need to ensure foster carers are aware of the procedures in place if an allegation was made to support the foster carer and their family. At the time of this inspection these procedures were available to foster carers in the Foster Carers Handbooks.

Pre-approval training and post-approval training ensures that foster carers have training in Child Protection, Bullying and Whistle blowing. Foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers have accessed ACPC joint training events.

The policies, procedures and staff guidance contained in the Foster Carers Handbooks makes clear to foster carers that corporal punishment is not acceptable.

Regulation 13 requires providers to 'prepare and implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents' and to 'take all reasonable steps to ensure that no child placed with foster parents is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline, which is excessive or unreasonable', it is therefore a reasonable expectation that where appropriate foster carers will be provided with restraint training as part of the providers measure to implement their policy. This matter should be reviewed and training developed to ensure this matter is addressed.

The Foster Carers Handbooks contain an Anti Bullying Policy and guidance relating to Children Living away from Home. The Anti Bullying Policy and Guidance for Foster Carers should be developed to identify those who are likely to instigate bullying i.e. foster carers, Social Workers and siblings and describe the role of the Family Placement Social Worker in helping foster carers cope with bullying.

In interviews Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers were able to describe practice in line with policies and procedures available to them that promoted the safe welfare

of children.

In the group discussion with foster carers it became apparent that not all foster carers were provided with full information about the foster child and his/her family to enable them to protect the foster child. To overcome this some foster carers sought this information from Children's Social Workers and other foster carers and at their own volition made appointments to read files. Family Placement Social Workers and Children's Social Workers must ensure that foster carers are provided with full information about the foster child and their family to enable them to safeguard the child's welfare. This information must form part of the child's Foster Placement Agreement and LAC documentation shared with Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers.

The Foster Carers Handbooks contained guidance entitled Absconding.

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?

1

Policies, procedures and staff guidance on contact were available to foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers in the Children's Services Handbooks and Foster Carers Handbooks.

The Foster Placement Agreement used by Herefordshire Local Authority was the LAC documents as described in the appropriate section of this report. The Inspectors sampled these documents and the additional LAC documents completed after placement and found that details regarding contact arrangements with friends, family members and social workers were not always completed or detailed. Herefordshire Council must ensure that the initial Foster Placement Agreement and LAC documents set out contact arrangements.

Once a child is placed with a foster carer contact is reviewed on a regular basis and through LAC review meetings.

Family Placement Social Workers and Children's Social Workers should ensure that records demonstrate that the fostering service considers the need for, and benefits of, appropriate contact for a child when finding/suggesting a suitable foster carer and the views of the child are sought and taken into account in determining contact arrangements. At the time of this inspection procedures had been implemented to ensure that the process of matching was clearly recorded and demonstrated that these matters are taken into consideration when placing a child with a foster carer.

At the time of this inspection not all foster carers were maintaining individual records for each child, Family Placement Social Workers were supporting foster carers to set up individually written daily reports for all children placed. These records should record the outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child.

In interviews foster carers felt that some Children's Social Workers were more proactive than others in seeking the views and observations of foster carers of a child's reactions and views regarding contact arrangements.

There should be a formal system for written records made by foster carers to be shared or fed back to Children's Social Workers.

All foster carers receive training regarding promoting contact.

Children's contact visits were supported by foster carers, the child's Social Worker or Family

Placement Social Worker. In interviews foster carers described how they were supported by the fostering service in dealing with any difficult contact issues. Foster carers were able to claim financial support to provide for transport and other costs involved in ensuring contact arrangements take place. Maybe predictably the issue of contact with family members and friends was raised in a number of children's questionnaires. The importance rightly placed on this issue by children highlights the importance to record discussions and decisions made with regard to contact.

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?

2

Herefordshire Council has a Corporate Complaints Procedure. All foster carers and children are given a copy of a standard Herefordshire Council leaflet entitled Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure. Specific guidance entitled 'Complaints made by Foster Carers' and 'Complaints and Compliments about Foster Carers' is available to all foster carers in the Foster Carers Handbooks. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council had produced Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures. This document contained a section entitled Complaints. Foster carers are able to feedback to Herefordshire Council using a formal Complaint Procedure or as part of the annual Foster Carer Review. It is the role of the Chair of the Fostering or Adoption and Permanency Panel to investigate concerns raised during Reviews. The Inspectors observed a Panel Meeting where foster carers were encouraged to give feedback with regard to the support and training they receive. In questionnaires the majority of children stated that they were aware of the procedures to follow to make a complaint. In interviews children confirmed that Social Workers and foster carers made them aware of complaints procedures through discussions. All children and young people are given a copy of Herefordshire's Complaints Procedure leaflet for Children and Young People entitled 'How are we doing?' This is given to all children at the point of placement and is available in a range of formats. The Fostering Team Manager stated that all children would be supplied with the Children's Guide, which will contain information on how a child can complain. At the time of this inspection the Children's Guide was in draft and had not been shared with all foster children. The draft Children's Guide states 'If you are not sure about anything written in this leaflet, or need help to read it, please ask'. The information will be made available in different languages including Braille and Makaton or on cassette or CD. In interviews Family Placement Social Workers stated that children were consulted about foster placements prior to reviews, during social worker visits and in daily conversations with foster carers. Written records of this practice should be maintained by foster carers and social workers. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were continuing to review and develop ways of consulting with children and young people placed with foster carers. All children are invited to contribute to Voices and received a copy of the 'Voices Newsletter'. The Fostering Team Manager informed the Inspectors of an 'Ears 2 U' day that had taken place recently to gain young peoples comments and opinions with regard to the fostering service.

All looked after children in Herefordshire have access to a Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, which supports young people in expressing their views. Foster carers are made aware of this service through the Foster Carers Handbooks.

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?

1

All foster carers receive training on health and First Aid.
Policies, procedures and staff guidance is available to all foster carers on health related issues in the Foster Carers Handbooks.
LAC documentations, children's health records, LAC Review minutes, Planning Meeting minutes, initial and annual health assessment and permanency and adoption medicals detail health information relating to each individual child placed.
The Inspectors noted that appropriate health information was not always available at the point of placement. The fostering service should ensure that the foster parent is provided with appropriate information regarding the state of health and health needs of children at the point of placement, which enables them to provide appropriate care. The fostering service must ensure that appropriate health information is always gathered as part of the referral process in line with Regulation 17(3).
Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers were able to describe to the Inspectors' a range of specialist services available to young people and how they would support them to access those services.
In interviews foster carers described different levels of involvement with Children's Social Workers in preparing review reports, which include a section on medical needs and health. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were recruiting a Looked After Children's Nurse in partnership with PCT.
All children placed with foster carers were registered with a GP and where possible children remained registered with their own GP.
Herefordshire Social Services fund a half-time Clinical Psychology post, linked with an equivalent half-time Health funded post. Referrals can be made for direct work with children or foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers can ask for consultations.
In discussions and interviews foster carers were positive with regard to the support received by the Play Therapist and Clinical Psychologist.

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?****2**

Herefordshire Council provide a range of additional support to promote educational achievement, these include a clinical child psychologist and an Educational Liaison Support Service (ELSS).

The ELSS provides a link between schools and foster placements.

All foster carers receive training on promoting educational opportunities and achievements.

In interviews foster carers were able to describe positive relationships with local schools.

Foster carers were able to describe how they supported young people to attend school and complete homework.

In interviews the young people confirmed that they had access to computers and study materials and that foster carers attended school events and parents evenings.

The foster service ensures all financial costs are met with regard to education.

Written guidance relating to education is available in the Foster Carer Handbooks.

At the time of this inspection although not all children were in full time education the ELSS were working closely with the child, carer and social worker in liaison with schools and the Education Department to provide alternative or specialist education.

In line with Standard 13.4 the Foster Placement Agreement needs to state the foster carer's role in school contact in conjunction with the birth parent and where financial responsibility lies for all school costs, including school uniform, school trips and school equipment.

It was the responsibility of the Child's Social Worker to liaise with the foster carer, parents and school to draw up a Personal Education Plan.

Access to library facilities and 'story sacks' are made available through Family Placement Social Worker.

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**

All foster carers receive training on moving on – exploring why placements end and preparing young people for independence.

Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers were able to describe how they worked to promote each individual's independence skills in relation to their Pathway Plan.

Herefordshire Aftercare Team engage with young people to prepare them for adulthood and there are also links with the local Connexions services. Feedback was given to the Inspectors from foster carers and young people that support from the Herefordshire Aftercare Team was at times limited, young people were without a named link worker and were concerned about where they would be living post 18.

Both young people and foster carers felt that they would benefit from more information regarding the options for young people due to leave care and the role for foster carers post 18.

The Fostering Team Manager informed the Inspectors that a course entitled preparation for independence was available to all foster carers in the 2004 Training Programme.

Written guidance was provided to foster carers in the Foster Carers' Handbooks.

Foster carers gave positive feedback with regard to two of the Family Placement Social

Workers who maintained specialist links to teenage placements. Foster carers commented on the availability and support provided to them by the whole of the Children's Resource Team but in particular these two workers in relation to teenage placements.

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

Herefordshire Council has a written recruitment and selection procedure for appointing staff. The Inspectors inspected five staff personal files in line with Regulation 20, Schedule 1 and Standard 15.

All files contained enhanced CRB checks. Of the five files inspected, one did not have a photograph on file in line with Regulation 20, Schedule 1 (1) and one file did not contain two written references in line with Regulation 20, Schedule 1 (3). A photo was placed on the file during the inspection. The Fostering Team Manager informed the Inspector that historically the recruitment policy had only required one reference for staff transferring internally. This policy has now been amended.

Herefordshire Council had ensured that appropriate checks had been undertaken in the employment of a play therapist.

The Children's Resource Team incorporates both the Adoption and Fostering Service. Within the Children's Resource Team there are two full time Team Managers, one Fostering Team Manager and one Adoption Team Manager. There are 7.5 Family Placement Social Workers who carry a caseload of both fostering and adoption work depending on expertise and the requirements of the service.

In addition to these posts there is one fulltime "Home finder" Family Placement Social Worker, one full time "Shared Care" Social Worker, a half time Child Psychologist, a half time Play Therapist, one full time Panel and Team Administrator and 2.75 full time Administration staff.

The fostering team consists of a well-qualified and experienced range of social work staff. At the time of this inspection there were two social worker team vacancies and one administration post vacancy. The two Family Placement Social Worker vacancies were long standing vacancies. In interviews staff and the service manager described how workload was regularly reviewed and distributed to existing team members. The team should be commended for the management of this work however Herefordshire Council must ensure that staff vacancies are quickly recruited to.

The Inspectors were informed that proactive recruitment for professional staff was currently being undertaken by Herefordshire Council using the council website, careers conventions and specialist recruitment fairs.

The figure in the box totalling the 'number of staff of the agency' indicates the proportion of worker time dedicated to the Fostering Service.

The figures in the boxes below do not represent members of the administrative team.

Total number of staff of the agency:	6	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	0
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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
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In interviews and questionnaires staff and managers described a clear management structure and lines of accountability.

There were systems and procedures in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed effectively and by people who have appropriate skills.

In interviews and questionnaires Family Placement Social Workers and Managers were able to describe a range of systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads.

The Children’s Resource Team consisted of well-qualified and highly experienced social work staff who demonstrated professional knowledge and experience of fostering services as well as specific interests. This enabled the Fostering Team Manager to assign tasks to appropriate staff.

There were systems in place to check NCSC registration and inspection reports of other fostering agencies and ensure that there are no concerns about the agencies’ assessment, approval and review processes. These records were inspected and found to contain a chart of information requested including registration certificate, inspection report and Statement of Purpose. The chart records whether information has been requested, if that information is available and if it has been received.

The Inspectors sampled three foster agency files. These demonstrated that Herefordshire Council has systems in place to monitor that procedures are followed in line with Regulation 40 (4) and 40 (5) to ensure that no arrangements are made without written agreement in respect of each placement and child. These records also identified where information, such as Individual Placement Agreements were not in place. Herefordshire Council must ensure that when a gap in information is identified action is taken quickly to resolve the situation.

Professional supervision was provided to all Family Placement Social Workers.

Herefordshire Council provides a range of corporate training available to foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers. In addition to this training the Children’s Resource Team run a range of targeted specialist training for foster carers. At the time of this inspection post approval training was being planned as a series of seminars in response to foster carers feedback.

Personnel in the Children’s Resource Team maintain a record of training attended by foster carers.

A team of administration staff and a corporate personnel system supports the Children’s Resource Team.

In interviews with foster carers and young people the Inspectors were informed of a range of people available to give advice and effective systems requesting support. In interviews and questionnaires foster carers demonstrated that they had a clear understanding of the roles of Family Placement Social Workers.

In interviews staff stated that they had written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service.

All foster carers are provided with copies of the Foster Carers' Handbooks.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The terms, grades, experience and qualifications of staff are adequate to the size of the service and are in line with the Statement of Purpose. Where a short fall in staffing levels occur a contingency plan exists. Work is shared among the members of the team and an agency member of staff had been employed for a short period of time. Herefordshire Council should be mindful of the principles expressed in Standard 15 and must ensure that posts are recruited to within a reasonable timescale to maintain a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced staff working for the purposes of the fostering service.

Herefordshire Council promotes the retention of salaried staff through corporate training and supervision. At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were reviewing all employees terms and conditions.

Herefordshire Council has a recruitment policy and strategy that aims to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service. There is a clearly set out process for foster carers, which includes training and assessment. Herefordshire Council uses the BAAF Form F, which covers matters set out in Standard 17.7. These forms were sampled through a system of case tracking.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers described sound employment practices to Inspectors.

Foster carers described out of hours support received from Hereford and Worcester Emergency Duty Team (EDT). In addition to this service Herefordshire Council have entered into an agreement with the National Children's Homes to provide planned out of hours support packages to foster carers and children who have been assessed to have specific needs.

A duty system was in place for foster carers during office hours provided by the Children's Resource Team. It was evident during the group discussion that not all foster carers were aware of this service.

Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers informed Inspectors of a new system of supervision of foster carers that had recently been implemented. Records of these sessions will be maintained by Family Placement Social Workers and used to inform annual reviews and training needs of foster carers. At the time of this inspection due to the staffing shortfall shared carers were not receiving supervision.

A management system of annual appraisals for foster carers in line with 18.4 should be incorporated into supervision and annual reviews.

There were comprehensive health and safety policies, procedures and staff guidance for carers contained in the Foster Carers' Handbooks and a Whistle blowing Policy.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Team Manager maintains a list of all staff training and development on the computer system. This is specific to training offered, training attended and individual's development.

There is a corporate training programme available to all Family Placement Social Workers this was not specific to fostering. This programme was also available to foster carers. This enabled foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers to attend joint training events covering specific issues such as child protection.

The Family Placement Social Workers felt that they would benefit from more specific training relating to fostering. It was not possible for the Inspectors to conclude one way or another whether this was a shortfall but it may be useful for Herefordshire Council to review this matter.

Family Placement Social Workers informed inspectors that all new staff participate in induction training on commencement of their employment. This induction allows staff to move between departments and observe different teams roles.

In interviews and group discussions Family Placement Social Workers described training attended by individuals that was specific to fostering. The Inspectors were told that any information gained on these courses or on seminars was disseminated to the team in team meetings.

Family Placement Social Workers are informed of changes in legislation or guidance relevant to their jobs through team meetings, corporate training or specific training sessions organised by the Fostering Team Manager.

All Family Placement Social Workers receive annual appraisals and reviews, which identify training needs.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Family Placement Social Workers have copies of policies, procedures and staff guidance in the Children's Services Handbooks, Inter-Agency Guidelines and Protocols and Foster Carers Handbooks. These contain clear written details of the duties and responsibilities expected of them together with the policies and procedures of the organisation.

In addition to this guidance Herefordshire Council have developed Fostering Service Internal Procedures that at the time of this inspection were in draft.

Inspectors saw evidence that Family Placement Social Workers receive regular support and supervision. A record is kept of the date, duration and content of the supervision.

Herefordshire Council have a Staff Review and Development Policy.

Inspectors saw evidence of regular team meetings. Minutes are taken of these meeting and made available to staff who are unable to attend.

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 Family Resource Team has a clear strategy for working with foster carers that is documented and includes all matters set out in 21.2.

In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers were able to describe how foster carers and children would be supported in a range of situations and with the help and support of a network of professionals.

It was clear that foster carers understood the role of Family Placement Social Workers and Children's Social Workers.

Inspectors observed a fostering panel and saw evidence of annual review reports being presented to and made available to the panel. In interviews foster carers were able to describe the procedure for their annual review and the role of panel.

In questionnaires Children's Social Workers described good communication between foster carers, Family Placement Social Workers and the young people's Social Workers. In interviews and group discussions foster carers described how communication was maintained with Children's Social Workers either through telephone calls or home visits.

Foster carers were able to describe clear and consistent approaches for resolving concerns. Foster carers stated that Family Placement Social Workers were supportive and proactive in resolving concerns and providing support.

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**

Foster carers sign a Foster Care Agreement and are given a copy of the Foster Carers Handbooks, which include policies, procedures and staff guidance. Foster carers informed the Inspectors that they were aware of what was expected of them and of the fostering service. Inspectors saw evidence of completed Foster Care Agreements on files in line with Regulation 28 (5) (b) Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2001.

Each foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice.

The foster carers informed the Inspectors that they were given the Handbooks prior to approval, these contained policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details. The Inspectors were informed that these are regularly reviewed and updated.

At the time of this inspection supervisory meetings between foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers had just been implemented. The Inspectors saw evidence of these meetings recorded in the foster carers files.

Unannounced visits have been taking place at least annually. The Inspectors recommend that as a team the Family Placement Social Workers agree a consistent purpose, approach and format for undertaking and recording these visits.

Foster carers described the system of support available to them by Herefordshire Council out of hours Emergency Duty Team.

In interviews and questionnaires foster carers described insurance cover and access to Family Placement Social Work support.

Foster carers were provided with information regarding the complaints procedures and the procedures dealing with investigations into allegations.

The Fostering Team Manager described systems for recording and monitoring allegations of abuse and complaints in line with Regulation 42.1 (b) Schedule 7.
A clear policy exists which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There is an on-going programme of training for foster carers, which includes pre-approval training, induction training and post approval training.
Training available to foster carer's covers child protection, court skills, children's rights and advocacy, dangerous relationships, drug awareness, first aid, men in foster care, preparation for independence, preparation for permanence, sex education and relationships, sons and daughters of foster carers, valuing diversity and working with the department.
Foster carers are able to undertake NVQ level 3 in caring for children.
All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.
Foster carers attend Herefordshire Council corporate training and ACPC joint training.
The Fostering Team Manager and Family Placement Social Workers have been consulting foster carers to identify appropriate times and forums for ensuring attendance of the maximum number of foster carers to post approval training events.
The Fostering Team Manager informed the Inspectors that it is the responsibility of the Family Placement Social Workers to ensure foster carers are aware of training sessions and identify specific training needs. This will form part of the newly introduced supervision system.
A foster training data base records all training delivered to foster carers and attendance.
Foster carers informed the Inspectors that where appropriate their children have also attended training sessions. This is good practice.
Inspectors observed a foster panel and sampled annual review reports. Foster carer review reports should include an appraisal of training attended and development needs. Minutes of reviews should evidence that where gaps in practice or the need for refresher training has been identified appropriate action has been taken. Where the review identifies a training need the appropriate action from that recommendation should cross reference to supervision and training records.
The Fostering Team Manager undertakes an annual review of all training provided to foster carers by the Children's Resource Team.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>There was a range of policies, procedures and staff guidance regarding maintaining case records.</p> <p>A main children's record is maintained by Children's Social Workers these relate to each young person placed with foster carers.</p> <p>The Family Placement Social Workers maintain a file that details relevant information, visits and contact specific to each foster carer. In addition to these the Family Placement Social Workers maintained files containing basic information relating to children referred and placed. These files were stored alongside the foster carers files.</p> <p>In interviews Family Placement Social Workers described internal procedures for sharing information and discussing decisions.</p> <p>Guidance is set out in the Children's Services Handbooks and Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedure with regard to children's files and foster carers files maintained by Children's Social Workers and Family Placement Social Workers. This guidance should be developed to include how these records relating to both children and foster carers are shared between social work teams.</p> <p>In interviews with Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers the Inspectors were told that relevant information relating to a young person would be copied and shared with foster carers. In the group discussion foster carers stated that the information shared by Children's Social Workers was not always detailed. One foster carer stated that when a young person was placed with her she arranged to visit the Social Services office and read all appropriate documents relating to the child. Herefordshire Council should ensure that all foster carers are given all information including historical information, to ensure that the child's safety and welfare is promoted whilst in a foster placement.</p> <p>There is a policy in the Foster Carers' Handbooks that gives clear guidance that all records must be stored in a secure manner by foster carers.</p> <p>Foster carers described to the Inspectors how they were supported and provided with the necessary information and equipment to help a young person understand and record past significant events. The Inspectors heard how foster carers encouraged young people to reflect and understand their history and to keep appropriate memorabilia.</p> <p>Following legal advice the Inspectors informed the Resource Manager and Fostering Team Manager that a 'written' record does not have to be pen and paper it can be electronic. The Inspectors observed computer records being maintained by foster carers and Family Placement Social Workers. Herefordshire Council should ensure that electronic storage still</p>		

provides the child with access to the record where appropriate, that any entry in the record can be clearly identified by a signature and that any electronic signature is (a) uniquely linked to the signatory, (b) capable of identifying the signatory, (c) created using means that the signatory can maintain under his sole control, (d) linked to the data to which it relates in such a manner that any subsequent change of the data is detectable.

Where electronic records are printed and stored in a file they need to be signed and dated by the author.

The Inspectors observed when case tracking records that some records maintained by foster carers and file notes maintained by Social Workers were initialled. Where a Standard states that record should be signed, there must be full and legible signature or signature and printed name. Where a Standard does not specifically state that a record should be signed the Inspectors recommend that it is good practice that it contain full and legible signatures or signature and printed name.

In interviews not all foster carers were aware of the rights of children to read their records while other foster carers described how they shared their daily reports with the child placed. Foster carers need to be aware of the rights of children to read records and good practice described by some foster carers needs to be shared.

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

Policies, procedures and staff guidance on the retention and security of records were in the Foster Carers' Handbooks, Children's Services Handbooks and Fostering Service Draft Internal Procedures.

Herefordshire Council maintained separate records for staff, foster carers and children. The Inspectors saw evidence of permanent, secure, and private records for each young person and foster carer referred to or appointed by Herefordshire Council.

At the time of this inspection Family Placement Social Workers were working with foster carers to develop their record keeping skills. The Inspector observed records relating to a number of young people being kept in one diary. Family Placement Social Workers should ensure that separate records are maintained for each young person.

Herefordshire Council should ensure that they comply with requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, in particular the right of individual data subjects to have access to their records.

Inspectors sampled young people's files and foster carer files. Records were on the whole legible and non-stigmatising. Records of complaints and allegations were clearly recorded on the relevant files.

A system existed for keeping records about allegations and complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely.

Herefordshire Council maintain a computerised database detailing complaints and allegations made by children in their care. This is monitored and updated on an ongoing basis by the Fostering Team Manager.

A separate database is maintained by the Fostering Team Manager, and updated with regard to Notifiable Events, which includes Schedule 2 records detailing all accidents occurring to children whilst placed with foster carers. This information is gathered by the Fostering Team Manager through information passed onto her by Children's Social Workers and Family Placement Social Workers.

The Fostering Service's administration records include computerised data on CRB checks

for all members of foster carer households over 16 years, leisure passes for foster families to allow them free access to the County's Leisure Centres, monitoring of Duty Calls and Duty Roster and Staff sickness.

There is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, through supervision sessions and action is taken when required.

At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were continuing to develop the Integrated Children's System. The current data retrieval system (CLIX) is unable to analyse information to a sufficient degree of sophistication to provide reports to the Fostering Service as required.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		135
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months: (excluding placements made with independent fostering agencies)		120
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		124
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		10
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		19
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	67.69	Maximum £ 128.67

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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Children's Resource Team has dedicated office accommodation on the first and second floor of Moor House. There are identifiable, well-equipped office premises to which staff and others have access during normal office hours. The Children's Resource Team has access to rooms to provide training and meetings.	
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Facilities exist for the secure retention of records and IT systems.	
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All staff have access to their own personal computer linked to a central secure server managed by Herefordshire Council.	
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The premises and its contents are adequately insured.	
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At the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were undertaking a review of office accommodation, which may change the location of the Children's Resource Team.	
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Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. Procedures exist to deal with situations of financial crisis and regulations and guidelines imposed upon businesses are conformed with.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Children's Resource Team has the benefit of the full resources of Herefordshire Council's Finance and Audit Sections, which operate within prescribed financial boundaries and which are subject to evaluation by the Commission through a separate inspection process.

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?

2

The Foster Carers' Handbooks and Children's Services Handbooks contain a range of policies, procedures and staff guidance relating to fostering allowances. In interviews and discussions foster carers were able to describe how they would access information relating to allowances and expenses either through support groups, their Family Placement Social Workers, training and information sharing days or written information. In questionnaires and interviews foster carers stated that they felt that process for payment of expenses was complex and slow. They also felt that they would benefit from more information and guidance with regard to tax related issues. In pre inspection questionnaires the Fostering Team Manager informed the Inspectors that at the time of this inspection Herefordshire Council were reviewing the procedure for payment of expenses. Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers described how a young person would be supported financially to access specific activities, hobbies or holidays through discussions and in agreements during reviews.

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?	1
<p>There were policies and procedures relating to the role of the Foster Panel in the Foster Carers' Handbooks, Children's Services Handbooks and Foster Service Draft Internal Procedures.</p> <p>Herefordshire Fostering Panel meets once a month.</p> <p>In interviews with Family Placement Social Workers, foster carers and Managers the Inspectors explored the role of Panel. The Panel's task is to approve fostering applications from individuals and couples who wish to offer short-term, respite or teenage placements. It also approves friends and relatives (kinship carers) applying to foster a child who is already known to them. The panel is also responsible for overseeing the review of all approved foster carers, for considering complaints, applications for deregistration of carers and for granting exemptions to the usual fostering limit that has been placed on each approved foster carer.</p> <p>A written procedure has been developed to describe how the Panel provide a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process and in line with Standard 30.5. At the time of this inspection the membership of the Fostering Panel was under review in order to provide more contributions from people independent of Herefordshire Fostering Service in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. This review will also allow for the appointment of an independent member of the Panel with expertise in education and in child health.</p> <p>The definition of people who cannot be an independent member of the panel in Regulation 29.9 (b) includes employees of the provider organisation. When the provider is the local authority the letter of the Regulation is that someone employed by the local authority does not meet the criteria for an independent member. This technically rules out anyone employed by the local education authority, no matter how its departments/functions are configured. In order to ensure detailed local knowledge of how the educational needs can be met of children placed with foster carers locally, it is clear that it is desirable for the education representative to be from the same local authority as the fostering service, and this will not compromise their independence.</p> <p>The Chair described clear procedures for a Vice Chair to act up in his absence. Herefordshire Council had undertaken satisfactory CRB checks for all foster panel members. Inspectors observed the functioning of the fostering panel and saw evidence of foster carers reviews being considered by panel. The Resource Manager informed Inspectors that panel considers all first foster carer reviews and thereafter every two years.</p>		

At the time of this inspection the Foster Carers Handbook policy 'Reviews: Foster Carers' was being revised.

Reports were prepared and presented to Panel. The Inspectors heard that these reports were sent out to all Panel Members in a timely fashion prior to Panel Meetings.

Herefordshire Council should review and develop the format of reports for Panel to ensure that Panel Members are provided with consistent and well-presented information. Once an initial assessment has been presented to Panel and a foster carer has been approved the Inspectors recommend that all subsequent review reports provide chronological information with regard to children placed, change in approval status, training attended.

The Inspectors saw evidence on foster carer's files of written records of its proceedings and the reasons for its recommendations.

The Inspectors were informed that children's views were gained at LAC reviews by Children's Social Workers. The Inspectors noted that this feedback from foster children was not presented to Panel when considering the reviews of foster carers. The Inspectors recommend that the views of young people and children placed with foster carers should be expressed to Panel Members in a more transparent manner.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Not assessed at this inspection.

This will be assessed in the announced inspection 2004/2005.

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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<p>The Local Authority provided a fostering service and support network for kinship carers. The Inspectors considered the assessment, approval and supervision of family and friends as foster carers to be sensitive to their needs and their existing relationship. The Inspector visited a kinship carer and sampled the Family Placement Social Workers records. The Local Authority had provided financial support to enable the young person to remain cared for by her natural family to include adaptations made to the home and specialised equipment. In interviews the foster carers described how the Family Placement Social Workers and other professionals had provided support and networked to identify and meet the changing needs of the young person. At the time of this inspection the Fostering Team Manager was exploring opportunities for kinship carers to form their own support group and developing specific training sessions. Preparation training specifically tailored for kinship carers will be available this year.</p>	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Providers response was received and is available, on request, from the Hereford office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 13th August 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Mr H Lewis of Herefordshire Council (Herefordshire Local Authority 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 Mr H Lewis of Herefordshire Council (Herefordshire Local Authority 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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