



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Wakefield MDC - Family Placement Team**

6 Springfield Grange  
Flanshaw Lane  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF2 9QP

17 January 2005

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

### The role of CSCI is to:

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

## Inspection Methods & Findings

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

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Wakefield MDC - Family Placement Team

**Address**

6 Springfield Grange, Flanshaw Lane, Wakefield, West  
Yorkshire, WF2 9QP

**Local Authority Manager**

Anne Hawtin

**Tel No:**

01924 302167

**Address**

6 Springfield Grange, Flanshaw Lane, Wakefield, West  
Yorkshire, WF2 9QP

**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 ?**

NA

**Date of last inspection**

26/02/04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		17 January 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		9:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Helen Walker	073596
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Ruth Rainey	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	-	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>	-	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		-	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		-	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Anne Hawtin	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

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

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

**Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)**

**Part D: Provider's Response**

**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Wakefield fostering service provides a range of fostering services including short term, long term, family and friends, respite care (short-break), and remand placements. They also support a number of foster carers, approved by Wakefield (fostering service), who reside outside the Wakefield area. There is a central fostering service team, which operates from the family placement office base, at Flanshaw, Wakefield. Also based at this office is the adoption/permanence team, working with carers who provide adoption and fostering permanence placements. Both teams have individual managers and additionally there is a third, temporary agency project manager employed in the fostering team, overseeing policy and development work as well as managing four family support workers in the fostering team. A full time marketing/recruitment officer has recently been appointed to work with the fostering and adoption teams. Field social work teams are variously involved in the recruitment and initial assessment of friends and family carers. Dedicated administrative support, based at the family placement team office, is provided to the adoption/permanence and fostering teams.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering service were supporting approximately 152 foster carers (households) who were caring for approximately 307 foster children which includes 42 family and friend carers caring for 65 children and also 19 children who were placed with independent fostering agencies.

**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.)

Since the last inspection the fostering team now have a full time fostering team manager in post, as well as there being a temporary agency fostering project manager. The team, including administration, are almost fully staffed and vacant posts are being recruited to. The fostering service are proposing to have two full time permanent fostering team managers in addition to the manager of the adoption/ permanence team. The inspectors found that there had been considerable work undertaken over the last year in developing guidance and procedures but much of this has yet to be implemented. There are a number of requirements outstanding from the last inspection including the one relating to family and friends carers but significantly the requirement in respect of panel constitution has now been met.

There were examples of good practice and of the fostering service having the interests and welfare of the children central to their work. The inspectors tracked the cases of four foster carers, and eleven looked after children. Two prospective foster carer assessments were looked at. The inspectors found the service to be functioning reasonably well but with some areas of concern. Cases sampled, demonstrated a worrying lack of communication between the field social work teams and the fostering team, primarily regarding family and friends carers. Risk assessments are not routinely being carried out in respect of children who may be at risk to themselves or others. This relates especially to children who are known or suspected of drug/alcohol misuse, self-harming or have aggressive behaviour.

The links between the fostering service and other agencies, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, alcohol/drugs misuse and Education were seen to be good and accessible.

Quality assurance systems need to be developed and there may be some benefit in foster carers who cease care, to complete exit questionnaires, in order to elicit their views. This would also apply to foster children as their responses indicated their views were not routinely being sought about how the fostering service could be improved.

Responses received from children and visits made by the inspectors demonstrated that the children were being well cared for. Overall the foster carers were happy with the support and assistance received from the family placement team. The foster carers were positive about the recently implemented payment for skills scheme. The inspectors saw good inclusive training for foster carers and a very enthusiastic training officer involved with this. The inspectors were pleased to see the fostering service promoting support groups for carers and the service now has the benefit of a dedicated family and friends fostering officer. Inspectors would like to thank children in foster placements, foster carers, Wakefield children's advocacy service and Wakefield Health and Social Care staff for their time and assistance in the inspection process.



**Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

**Not assessed at this inspection.**

**Fitness to manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)**

**2 of these 2 standards were partly met.**

The fostering service has a robust selection and recruitment process. The fostering manager has yet to obtain a management qualification. The fostering service did not have copies or details of recruitment records relating to agency staff.

**Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)**

**2 of these 2 standards were assessed and 1 was met and 1 partly met.**

Staff are knowledgeable about the operations of the service and aware of management arrangements. The majority of monitoring and quality assurance systems developed have yet to be put into practice. Foster children's opinions and views of the fostering service are not routinely being obtained. Four family support workers have recently been redeployed to the fostering team. The workers have an extremely broad remit and their specific role is unclear. Since the last inspection there has been the death of a foster child cared for by foster carers in this service. The required notification in respect of this death was notified to the Commission.

**Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**

**8 of these 9 standards were assessed, 1 was met, 5 were partly met and 3 not met.**

Inspectors found foster carers providing a good standard of care to children. Risk assessments on children placed when there is a likelihood of risk to themselves or others were not evident. Carer's requests for equipment to assist them care for foster children has a speedy and helpful response. The payment for skills scheme encourages carers to participate in training courses. Several foster carers had children in placement who were outside their original terms of approval, and there was little evidence of matching processes. Annual reviews of foster homes are now taking place but as yet first annual reviews have not returned to panel. Records indicate that most children now have an allocated social worker. Foster children were positive about the encouragement they received to maintain contact with their families. Children have yet to receive the recently updated children's information guide. Currently 3 foster children have permanent exclusions from school and arrangements were being made for alternative education. There is a speedy response to referrals made to agencies such as health and education. Some carers are not being given details of the health needs or health histories of children.

**Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)**

**6 of these 9 standards were assessed, 1 was met, 3 partly met and 2 not met.**

Criminal Bureau checks are carried out on all staff and there has been the reintroduction of a probationary period for new staff. All social work staff have professional childcare qualifications. Field social work staff undertaking initial assessments of family and friends carers don't have the experience of foster care and family placement work and it was unclear who was supporting the worker with the completion of the assessments. There was a lack of communication between the field social work staff and the fostering team. The fostering service has a marketing/recruitment officer and from publicity there had been increased interest in people becoming foster carers. Foster carers are generally well supported, although some carers do not have an allocated worker. Staff have access to a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. More training opportunities are to be made available to foster carers.

**Records (Standards 24- 25)**

**2 of these 2 standards were assessed, 1 was partly met and 1 not met.**

There were good examples in children's files of casework recording. The content and recording in foster carer's files was variable. Not all foster carers visited had a foster placement agreement for the children they cared for neither was this document on the children's case files. Foster carers were not always storing fostering documents and information in a secure way. Foster carers have a good understanding of contributing to children's life history and are supported by social workers in this work. The children's register and register of foster carers needs to be developed to include all the required information.

**Fitness of premises (Standard 26)**

**Not assessed at this inspection**

**Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)**

**1 of these standards was assessed and met. Standards 27 and 28 are not applicable to local authority fostering services.**

The fostering service has introduced the payment for skills scheme since the last inspection. Foster carers generally saw this as a change for the better as it increased their payments. Foster carers said they were paid promptly although some were still awaiting payments from the previous system.

**Fostering panels (Standard 30)**

**Standard not met**

The panel is now quorate and the Chairperson is motivated to ensure panel functions efficiently to safeguard the welfare of children in foster care. The panel should receive more specific training for their role. Some of the assessments being brought before panel had omissions, which held up the approval process. The panel must continue to consider their role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. Management information about the outcome of foster carer's annual reviews is not yet being received at panels.

**Short-term breaks (Standard 31)**

**Not assessed at this inspection**

Not assessed at this inspection. The short-term break scheme was inspected as part of the full Children's Services Review, May 04. The outcome of the review was very positive in respect of the short-term break scheme.

**Family and friend carers (Standard 32)**

**Standard not met**

The fostering service recognise the relationship and position of family and friend carers and have now appointed a fostering social worker to work specifically with family and friends carers. A family and friends carer visited by inspectors felt unsupported during the initial assessment process and unsure of their role. The fostering team should be informed promptly of any family and friend's placements and their expertise in the assessment and approval process should be used. The Regulation 38 assessment taken to panel during the inspection was not fully informed, the social worker undertaking the assessment was unavailable and therefore queries from panel were unanswered. The inspectors also noted that basic health and safety questions on the assessment were not completed.

**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State  
(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection**

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

**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	
			See current requirements	

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

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
Not applicable		
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<u>Helen Walker</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	_____	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	<u>Ruth Rainey</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<u>11 May 2005</u>		_____

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	34, Sch.6	FS8	<p><u>Making of Placements</u> Except in the case of an emergency or immediate placement under Regulation 38, a responsible authority may only place a child with a foster carer if the terms of his approval are consistent with the proposed placement (previous requirement, timescale of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004 not met).</p> <p>Before making a placement there must be a foster placement agreement with the foster carer, which specifies the information in Schedule 6 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.</p>	<p>16 May 2005</p> <p>18 April 2005</p>
2	17, 13	FS9	<p><u>Protection of children</u> Foster carers need training and information with regard to any necessary use of physical intervention/restraint on a child.</p> <p>Full information, including risk assessments must be provided to the foster carer to enable them to provide appropriate care for the child</p>	<p>13 June 2005</p> <p>18 April 2005</p>
3	17	FS12	<p><u>Health care of foster children</u> Information to be provided to carers stating the health needs of any child placed or to be placed with them</p>	<p>18 April 2005</p>

4	29  17,35	FS21	<p><u>Reviews and termination of approval</u> A review shall take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year (previous requirement timescale of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004 not met).</p> <p>The role of the placing social worker and fostering worker needs to be clearly defined in order to provide the necessary support for the foster carer and supervision of the placement</p>	16 May 2005  16 May 2005
5	17, 28	FS22	<p><u>Foster carer agreement</u> All foster carers to have a foster care agreement, applicable to their approval, which contains the information as per Schedule 5.</p>	13 June 2005
6	22, 29, 31	FS25	<p><u>Records with respect to fostering services</u> The fostering service provider shall maintain and keep up to date the records specified in Schedule 2 (previous requirement timescale of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004 not met)</p> <p>Case records for foster carers must include documents as referred to in Regulation 30.</p> <p>The children's register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 22, Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002</p> <p>The foster carers register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002</p>	16 May 2005  16 May 2005  2 May 2005  2 May 2005
7	26	FS30	<p><u>Functions of fostering panel</u> The fostering panel shall oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider (previous requirement, timescale of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004 not met).</p>	13 June 2005
8	38, 27	FS32	<p><u>Family and friends as carers</u> Regulation 38 must be complied with in respect of placing children with family and friends.</p> <p>Appropriate and adequate assessments must be carried out in respect of family and friends carers including those where the placement is not emergency or immediate.</p>	16 June 2005  16 May 2005

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS2	The fostering team manager should now be working towards the Level 4 NVQ in management (or equivalent qualification)
2	FS3	The fostering team manager should ensure that the information outlined in Schedule 1 has been obtained in respect of agency staff.
3	FS4	<p>The manager should develop and implement a formal system of monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A review of the current procedures of kinship carers not being supported initially by the centralised fostering service should be revisited to address the shortfalls in the current procedures</p> <p>The fostering service should routinely consult with children to obtain their views and opinions about the service.</p>
4	FS6	There should be written information held on foster carers file to show that the home is inspected annually and that appropriate risk assessments are carried out in respect of health and safety matters.
5	FS7	Kinship carers should be provided with preparation and training to ensure they support and encourage each child to develop skills to help her/him to deal with all forms of discrimination.
6	FS8	Matching should reflect NMS 8.1, 8.2, 8.3. 8.7 and this should be evidenced in foster carers records.
7	FS11	<p>The fostering service should ensure that the opinions and views of children on all matters affecting them, including day to day matters, are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis and not taken for granted.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure that children in foster care know how to raise any concerns or complaints, and ensures that they receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised. The current children's guide giving this information has yet to be issued.</p>
8	FS12	The carers should be provided with a written health record for each child (including those children over 5 years of age) placed in their care: this is to be kept updated during the placement and should go with the child to their next placement..



9	FS13	<p>Children's files should contain a copy of their Personal Education Plan.</p> <p>The fostering service should make clear to foster carers its expectation of foster carers and the arrangements which will be put in place if a child in their care is not in school, including structured occupation during school hours</p>
10	FS15	<p>All people working in or for the fostering service should be interviewed, as part of the selection process to ascertain their suitability for the job and evidence of this should be on their personnel files.</p> <p>Social work staff involved in assessment of foster carers should have experience of foster care and family placement work and be trained in assessments. Those who do not meet this Standard should only carry out the assessment under the supervision of someone</p>
11	FS16	<p>There should be structures and systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively.</p> <p>There should be a clear understanding about how the fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together.</p>
12	FS17	<p>There should be a clearly set out assessment process for carers, particularly kinship, which defines the task to be undertaken, the qualities, competences or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved, the standards to be applied in the assessment, the stages and content of the selection processes and the timescales involved and the information given to applicants.</p>
13	FS21	<p>Development of a good system of communication between the fostering service social worker and the child's social worker.</p>
14	FS22	<p>The supervising fostering service social worker should meet regularly with foster carers and these meetings should be documented in the foster carer's files. There should also be occasional unannounced visits made, at least one each year.</p>
15	FS23	<p>All new carers including family and friends carers should receive induction training.</p> <p>Implementation of the training programme, for foster carers, including those residing outside of the Wakefield area, in order that they can develop their skills.</p> <p>Specific considerations to be given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers.</p> <p>Details of foster carers training needs and training undertaken should be noted on their files.</p>

16	FS24	<p>A specific policy should be developed in relation to the fostering service's files in line with NMS 24.2.</p> <p>The practices for monitoring files should be more robust.</p> <p>If placing social workers do not provide carers with sufficient information about children they place, request to be made in writing for this information and the request is kept on the foster carers file.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure carers store information in a secure manner, which may be achieved by the provision of a lockable filing box.</p>
17	FS25	<p>A system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records and remedial action to be taken when necessary should be developed and implemented.</p> <p>A front sheet should be placed on staff personal development records to contain staff information as detailed in Schedule 2.</p>
18	FS30	<p>The fostering panel's monitoring role, including tasks identified in NMS 30.5 and 30.7, should be developed.</p> <p>Panel members should receive specific training relative to their role.</p> <p>The level of agency's decision maker should be reconsidered.</p>
19	FS32	<p>The support and training needs for kinship carers (family and friends) to be assessed and met in the same was as for any other carers.</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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	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	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	17/01/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	75

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

### Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

#### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

### 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?

2

WMDC fostering service has 3 managers within the family placement team. There is a permanent full time manager of the fostering service who has been in post since April 2004. There is also an agency project manager of the fostering service (employed prior to April 2004). WMDC plan to employ two full time permanent managers of the fostering service. There is a full time manager of the adoption/permanence team. All managers have the relevant social work qualification. Prior to taking on this role, the permanent fostering manager was employed within another local authority fostering service and has considerable experience as a fostering social worker. The permanent fostering manager does not hold a management qualification but indicated this would be pursued once a second permanent fostering manager had been appointed. All fostering managers have and continue to assess the systems that are in place within the fostering service and recognise some of these need to be changed and updated to ensure the service runs more efficiently and effectively. The agency manager is employed primarily to develop policies and procedures within the fostering service.

**Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

The inspector viewed personnel records in respect of the permanent fostering manager and found that all the required information, including Criminal Record Bureau checks were in order. Discussion with Human Resources section of the fostering service confirmed their awareness of the need for Criminal Record Bureau checks to be renewed every three years. In respect of the agency manager, who had been employed by the service for nearly a year, the inspector was unable to view their relevant records. For recruitment of agency staff the Human Resource section have a market place of staffing agencies who provide written confirmation to say that all the necessary recruitment checks on their agency staff have been carried out. The inspector acknowledges the systems in place but is reliant on the agencies integrity, as the fostering service had not requested copies or sight of documents as listed in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

## 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 substantive fostering manager came into post in April 2004 and alongside the agency project manager has been working on developing procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service. The inspectors considered that quality assurance systems should be fully implemented to monitor such matters as those listed in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Responses from questionnaires sent to foster children by the Commission indicate that the fostering service is not routinely consulting with the children to obtain their views and opinions about the fostering service or foster carers.

With the exception of 4 family support workers employed within the fostering service team, staff presented as being clear of their roles and accountability. The family support workers are unqualified social workers that have been redeployed to their current posts. It was unclear as to what their specific role was and from discussion with a family support worker they too could not confirm if this related to working and supporting the foster carers or children.

In respect of the death of a foster child cared for foster carers of the Wakefield fostering service, the required notification had been made to the Commission.

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

2

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.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

As outlined at Standard 2 there are now 3 managers within the family placement team all with some responsibility for the family placement team. The permanent fostering manager has a job description setting out her duties and responsibilities. There was no job description available at the fostering service for the temporary agency project manager but her duties and responsibilities were outlined to the inspectors. All managers presented as being aware of their responsibilities. Should a manager be absent then at least one of the other managers would be available and in charge. Field social work staff generally instigates the family and friends foster care assessments but it is unclear from the manager's job description how this part of the service is managed effectively. Staff were knowledgeable about the operations of the service and aware of the management arrangements.

**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?****2**

During the inspection process 4 foster care households (family and friends, remand, long and short term carers) were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors very welcome in their home and cooperated fully with the inspection process. It was apparent from the inspection of foster carers records and visits to their homes that a variety of size and styles of accommodation is provided. All of the homes visited were warm and comfortable. It was evident from returned questionnaires, visits to foster carers, discussions with and observations of children and young people, and examination of case files that foster carers provide a good standard of care to foster children.

There was limited information on foster carers files to evidence the homes being inspected annually, in order to make sure that it meets the needs of foster children. The Inspectors could not find evidence to indicate that routinely, risk assessments were being carried out in relation to health and safety.

Foster carers informed the Inspectors that the fostering service has a positive and speedy response to the request for equipment, which appropriately assists them in caring for foster children. Foster carers praised the efficient and helpful delivery service.

Foster carers are being advised by the fostering service, as a matter of course, that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the commission's 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?**

**2**

The fostering service has few carers of black or Asian origin, although a fostering worker had been employed to help with recruitment from these and other ethnic groups. This is now a vacant post in the fostering service with efforts being made by management to recruit to this post.

The fostering service provides predominantly white carers, which reflects the ethnic background of children using the fostering service in the Wakefield area. The inspectors were told that should foster carers be needed for children from ethnic backgrounds then the service would first of all look towards using Wakefield carers from the same ethnic background or arrangements could be made for children to be placed with carers from independent fostering agencies or carers who were supported by the fostering service to meet the young person's specific needs.

The initial training and assessment process for foster carers covers areas of diversity and equality but the fostering service need to further target training for friends and family carers to be comparable to mainstream carers training. Post approval training for family and friends carers should include areas such as race awareness. The fostering service has now employed a fostering social worker specifically supporting and looking at the training needs of some of the kinship carers (family and friends). The 'payment for skills' scheme has been introduced, which focuses on foster carers undertaking training as part of their fostering role.

There is a 'Connect' scheme providing respite care for children with disabilities within the fostering service. This scheme was considered within the full Children's Service Review, May 2004 and found to be providing a very positive service for children with disabilities.

Of the 21 written responses received from children over 8 years old, asking if they were supported by their foster carers with hobbies and activities, 15 outlined the activities they undertook, 5 made no response and 1 said they weren't supported. On behalf of the Commission, the children's advocacy service in Wakefield arranged for foster children to meet and give their views and opinions about living in foster care. Of the 10 foster children who attended the consultation group, 2 said they were encouraged to participate in exercise, sport or leisure activities, 1 said sometimes and 7 said they weren't encouraged to participate in these activities.

**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**

As at the last inspection, the inspectors found that the majority of foster panel minutes and case files did not reflect that matching considerations had been taken into account in the placing of children with foster carers. This was not the case of one foster carer family visited by the inspectors, who were caring for a child on a remand placement. There were issues about the child's substance misuse, although there were no written risk assessments available to the carers or noted on the child's file. The carers had significant experience and skills to care for this young person and this presented as a good example of matching.

The Inspectors found through discussion with foster carers and viewing of file records that foster carers were approved to care for foster children within certain categories but often children would be placed with foster carers outside of the approved category. This continues to be taking place due to a lack of foster carers. The need for a placement took priority and therefore the matching of child with foster carers was not given primary consideration. The inspectors visited a foster carer who was caring for more than the maximum number of foster children allowed, including non-sibling placements. An exemption certificate had been requested and brought before fostering panel for a fourth child to be placed and this was agreed (although 4 children is more than the fostering regulations permit unless siblings), the carer also provided respite foster care. This meant the carer was at times caring for 6 foster children. The fostering panel were not made aware of the respite placements when approval was sought for the 4th child.

Another foster care household had 2 young children placed with them for their first placement. It was unclear as to what the approval status for the carers was and indeed the carers were also unsure and were surprised they had been asked to care for two children when they thought they had been approved only for one. The carer's didn't feel able to question this issue with the fostering service. Recommendations made to panel by the assessing social worker for the carer's contradicted the number and age of the children the carers were recommended to be approved for by pane. The inspectors found the written documents of subsequent approval by the service decision maker were also at odds with the panel recommendation.

Comments from placing social workers and fostering case files indicated that it was not routine practice to contact social workers that already had a child placed with a particular foster carer, to discuss the placement of an additional child with the carer. Procedures should be implemented regarding matching to indicate the level of consultation with field social workers, including those who may already have a child placed with foster carers when an additional placement with carers is under consideration.

The foster placement agreement is the field social worker's responsibility and the DOH Looking After Children forms are used. Not all of these documents were available to be sampled; either at the foster home or on the children/foster carers case files. Some of these documents sampled by inspectors were incomplete. From information received, it appeared that the majority of children looked after had an allocated social worker.

**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?**

**1**

Foster carers receive initial foster training, which covers safe caring and protection of children. Subsequent training is offered to foster carers but evidence from discussion with foster carers, fostering service staff and the manager shows that take up of training has been low. The skills based fostering payment scheme is now in place and to progress to increased payments there is an expectation that foster carers will attend training.

Discussion with foster carers indicated they had limited information about use of physical intervention/restraint and how to respond to bullying and were using strategies they had determined to be appropriate to deal with this matter. The Inspectors felt that foster carers would benefit from further training and professional advice about this issue. The inspectors noted that a child who was known to self-harm and misuse substances and alcohol was placed with a foster carer. The carers did not have the benefit of a risk assessment for this child and inspectors could not locate this assessment on the child's file although the child was placed with an experienced foster carer who had attended numerous courses over the years relating to behaviour management and drugs misuse.

Of the 20 written responses received from foster carers, 25% considered they had not been provided with relevant information the foster child and his/her family to enable them to protect the foster child, their own children and themselves. Foster carers concerns about receiving satisfactory information regarding children they care for should be addressed and all placements made under Regulation 38 must be supported with an agreement and adequate information to care for the child and protect them. This is the responsibility of the placing authority.

The managers of the service are in discussion with the social services training department for a specific programme of training to be tailored to the needs of foster carers. The fostering service recognise a gap in their provision of training to family and friends carers and the managers together with the dedicated family and friends fostering worker are looking to further develop this particular part of the service. Child protection and safe caring information and guidelines are in place in the foster carers handbook as is information relating to bullying and unauthorised absence. The foster care agreement details corporal punishment as being unacceptable.

The fostering service does not currently have a system in place to collate information relating to foster children reporting being bullied. The percentage given below relates to the 21 written responses received by the Commission from foster children.

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

**95**

**%**

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

Foster carers said they generally receive information about contact arrangements from the placing social worker. Information in children's records about contact was not always fully recorded and particularly in relation to children moving from foster carers to long term/permanence carers. Foster carers informed Inspectors of how they promoted appropriate contact between family and friends, which included transporting children to various venues, supervising contact and making contact arrangements directly with other foster carers who were looking after siblings of the children they were caring for. From discussion with the foster carers, children and members of the fostering service it was evident that foster carers put a great deal of time and effort into promoting contact. Foster children visited by the inspectors spoke positively of their carers supporting them with contact.

Financial support is provided by the fostering service for transport or other costs involved in supporting contact. Foster carers seen by the inspectors were aware of how to obtain this financial support.

Most of the foster carers spoken to were fully aware of the need to keep records of contact visits and give feedback of the contact to the child's social worker.

**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**

The foster children have access to a children's advocacy service in the Wakefield area and there are times when children are invited to discussion groups. Children who were spoken to by the inspector said that their carers and social workers listened them to. They confirmed that they had the opportunity to participate and give their views in statutory review meetings. Of the 21 written responses received from children 76% said they were asked their opinions about their foster carers and 52% said they had been asked how the fostering service could be made better. The fostering service does not yet have an established process for obtaining the opinions and views of children in foster care.

The fostering service have recently updated the children's guide, which also includes information about raising concerns or complaints, this document, however, had not been issued to the children at the time of the inspection and this should occur as soon as possible. Two children stated they had not received the original children's guide.

**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

The managers and fostering officers are aware of health services available locally and where possible this is taken into account when children are placed with foster carers. Financial arrangements are agreed for any transport that may be necessary to enable children to attend health appointments.

Foster children spoken to confirm that their health needs are being met and that they have support from the carers to attend medical appointments. The majority of written responses received from children indicated that foster carers help them to stay healthy and encouraged them to eat healthily, clean their teeth and promote good hygiene practices. Of the 10 children who attended the children's consultation group, 7 had visited the dentist (2 didn't know if they had), and 8 had been to the opticians for an eye test (1 didn't know) within the last year. The inspectors found that placing social workers were quick to make referrals to appropriate health agencies and in particular they noted help had been quickly sought from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service as well as the anti drugs agency for the mental health needs and drugs misuse issues of a fostered child.

Discussion with foster carers and the records viewed by Inspectors indicated there was not always a full description of the health needs of a child given at the time of placement, and if received, this could be some considerable time later. Inspectors noted that one foster carer who had been caring for two children (under 2 years old) for over 6 months had only recently received one child's written health records. This information had not been received for the other child. Plans are for both children to move imminently to a long-term foster placement many miles away from Wakefield. There is likelihood that the written health information (birth weight, immunisation record, childhood illnesses, hospital admissions etc.) would not be available to the new foster carer. Not all foster carers visited had copies of children's Action and Assessment records nor were these held on field social work files. The completion of these records could be beneficial when considering children's health needs in foster care.

Foster carers said they were not routinely offered training in first aid and health and hygiene issues but the inspectors were pleased to note that one foster carer they visited was eager to undertake this training and had made their own arrangements to obtain this.

**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

The fostering service places a high priority on meeting the educational needs of children and young people in its care. Children and foster carers said that the fostering service/education had provided computers for the children in the foster home. The inspectors found foster carers and placing social workers were supporting children to attend school and when excluded from school other education/tuition was sought. Foster carers told the inspectors of their involvement with children's schools, which included attending parent's evenings (as appropriate) and discussion with teachers. Currently 3 foster children cared for by the fostering service are excluded from school education. The inspectors visited the foster home of one of these children and found that arrangements had been made for the child to receive only 1½ hour's tuition per week. It was unclear what was expected of the foster carer in respect of providing structured occupation for the time the child was not in school. Although some of the children's case files contained quite comprehensive school and educational information not all contained the child's Personal Education Plan.

**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?**

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

## 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?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
Wakefield WMDC, social services have a robust recruitment and selection policy and process in place (for employees working with children). Criminal Record Bureau checks are carried out on a rolling programme every three years. The service has reintroduced the probationary period for all new members of staff.  The inspector examined personnel records relating to staff in the centralised fostering service. The records were in good order and all the required information was in place for substantive members of staff. The inspector raised the situation of 4 members of staff who had been redeployed from another social services department to the fostering team. There was nothing contained on the files to indicate that there had been any interview, informal or otherwise to assess their suitability to the post of family support worker. Agency staff (social workers and administrative) are also employed in the fostering service team. The Human Resource dept. of the social services have details of several staff agencies, who have given confirmation that all agency staff provided have been suitably vetted. One agency staff has been employed in the fostering service team for two years and there was nothing to evidence managers having sight of references, CRB check or relevant qualifications. The Inspectors were pleased to note, the most recently appointed members of staff to the centralised fostering team had received an induction to fostering work.  All the fostering service's social work staff have professional childcare qualifications and fostering team staff undertaking assessments meet with recommendations in 15.6 of this Standard. Some social workers in the respective fieldwork teams undertake initial assessments of family and friends carers but do not have experience of foster care and family placement work nor are they trained in assessment. The inspectors visited a foster carer who was caring for children whose move to be fostered by family and friends was imminent. The social worker for the children was said to have carried out a foster carer assessment in respect of the family carers but had not the required experience of carrying such assessments and the fostering service team manager was unaware of the current position.  The fostering service has a marketing/recruitment officer as well as administrative staff. The total number of staff includes 7 adoption/permanence workers with part fostering caseload, 3 managers, 4 family support workers, 12 fostering team workers, 10 administration team, 1 marketing officer.	2

<b>Total number of staff of the agency:</b>	37	<b>Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	4
---	----	--	---

**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?**

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

**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?**

2

There has been recent staff recruitment and at the time of the inspection there was one vacancy for a designated ethnic minority worker. Advertisement and recruitment was underway for this post as well as for the post of an additional fostering team manager (agency project manager presently employed to this post). The inspectors are aware however that 2 agency staff are to leave the team shortly. There are still a small number of foster carers including family and friends who do not have an allocated fostering worker and the managers of the team are noted, in the interim, as being their named contact persons.

As with many other local authorities, the fostering service struggles to recruit new carers and compete with private fostering agencies, but is pro-active in its recruitment programme and has employed a full time marketing/recruitment officer aiming to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of the children. Fostering team members raised issues about the lack of carers available to fully meet the needs of children from ethnic minorities, particularly black carers.

The assessment process takes into consideration the qualities, competences and aptitudes of prospective foster carers. It is suggested that some work is done to ensure all outcomes of risk assessments and safety issues that have been undertaken are contained on the assessment report and for this to be made available to panel members.

Of the 21 written responses received from foster carers, 66% felt there was not enough staff in the fostering service. Some foster carers felt they were not given enough support and advice with their first placement and during this time they had considered resigning. Remarks from foster carers about the fostering team were mostly positive e.g.: 'extremely professional' and 'brilliant'.

Foster carers gave praise to the family placement team administrative staff for their telephone manner and the consistent and knowledgeable way in which they dealt with their queries, particularly with equipment and financial matters.



**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?**

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

**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

Three new members of staff have joined the fostering team since the last inspection and one told inspectors they had received what they considered to be a good induction, which involved shadowing and joint working with another member of staff.

Within Wakefield WMDC field social work teams, there are social workers undertaking completion of the initial fostering assessments, primarily linked with family and friends carers. The managers should be mindful of developing the skills of these workers and continue to promote their link with the family and friends fostering worker.

The fostering service has training and development plans for all staff and inspectors were told that these are regularly evaluated. Some staff are undertaking post-qualifying awards, and the fostering service is beginning to implement NVQ training for carers. Fostering service staff informed Inspectors that they have positive training opportunities, which are accessed in house or through external agencies. The managers said training is discussed at team meetings and also within individual staff supervision sessions. Foster carer annual reviews have only recently started to take place but these include identifying training and development needs of carers.

The managers have had discussion with the training section of the Department and it is proposed that some foster care training will be linked to the foster carers 'payment for skills' scheme with a promotion of joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

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

1

The fostering service has a strategy for working with and supporting carers. Although the strategy is in place it is not clear how fostering staff are fully implementing this. The strategy should cover arrangements for training and development but the majority of foster carers spoken to do not know how this will work in relation to the payment for skills scheme. As noted at the last inspection there is concern that annual reviews of carers have only recently started to be carried out and none as yet have been taken back to panel. Foster carers said they wanted a better out of hours' support system. The inspectors are aware that the fostering service is looking towards developing this. The matter of 'support' for carers was

raised in general, as some carers felt they and their families were sometimes left struggling to come to terms with placement endings. This included placement breakdowns as well as children who had been placed with them for a considerable period of time and moved on to other placements.

The inspectors found a lack of communication between some of the children's social workers and the fostering team. This was evident when inspectors visited a carer who was looking after two young children as her first foster placement. The inspectors found that the proposed plan for the children was to be long term fostering with family and friends carers, many miles from the children's hometown. The fostering team had not been involved in these plans, although they should have had significant input. The children have been with the carer for over 6 months and the youngest child was only weeks old at the time of placement. These were the first foster children to be placed with the carer and the foster family were very attached to the children and would need support on the ending of the placement. There didn't appear to have been any consideration given to providing additional support to the family in order for them to be able to cope with their loss and feelings from this when the foster children left their care.

**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?**

1

Foster carers said they usually had regular visits and telephone contact with their allocated fostering officer. There are still some carers who do not have an allocated fostering officer and contact is usually made by telephone via the duty-fostering officer. The majority of foster carers considered they were well supported by the fostering service and fostering officers made regular contact with them.

The inspectors found the foster carers agreement was not specific to individual foster carers and it does not give the terms of the foster carer's approval.

Written information on foster carer files of supervisory visits was inconsistent. Some files gave good information about the purpose of the visit whilst others were brief. As at the previous inspection foster carers were not always aware of the purpose of the visit. Foster carers said they knew fostering officers would make unannounced visits but these are not yet taking place.

**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

Pre-approval and induction training is provided for carers and this was spoken of quite positively by carers. The foster service now has the 'payment for skills scheme' in place, which means carers would need to attend post approval training to increase payments in line with their skills. The provision of training for foster carers living outside of Wakefield MDC area was unclear. As some carers live a considerable distance from the fostering service base, there was nothing recorded on files to indicate that liaison was taking place to obtain relevant skills/development training from other sources for these carers.

Some of the foster carers told inspectors they would like greater flexibility in training times and venues as well as the possibility of having crèche facilities available. Many foster carers had opinions about the training they would like to receive and gave examples of drug and alcohol abuse, leaving care and the use of physical intervention/restraint. The inspectors had discussion with the training officer linked to the fostering service and attended a session of training with some foster carers present. The training was relevant and well presented to carers. The inspectors were pleased to note that family and friends carers also attended this training. The managers have had discussion with the training officer to develop an appropriate programme of training for carers. Financial support is available for travel and child care to enable carer's attendance at training.

There are no specific support, groups or training for the foster carers own children, and it is suggested that the need for this could be explored. Annual reviews of foster carers are now starting to take place. A recently developed review format has been introduced which includes an appraisal of training and development needs. The Information held on inspected foster carers files was found to be inconsistent and variable, including that which related to training.

## 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?
---------------------------	---------------

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

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

Records on foster carers are held at the fostering team office. Records on the children are held by the placing social workers (who are also employed by the provider). The responsibility for maintenance of children's files is the responsibility of the placing field social worker and is monitored by their line manager. The child would also access their file through the placing social worker.	
---	--

Recording in children's files was variable but there were examples of some very good casework recording. The recording in foster carer's files was also variable. Fostering officers should be given guidance about what is expected from them in respect of the level and content of recording.

Not all foster carers had a foster placement agreement for the children they were caring for. Foster carers visited by the inspectors indicated that they had an understanding of their role in assisting children to understand their history and recognised the importance of keeping written records. They were also aware of priority areas of information needing to be recorded and the type of information they would pass onto the fostering service. Foster carers spoke of the life story box children had and how they as carers contributed to this. Foster carers were keen for the children to have photographs and documents relating to their time spent with them.

The inspectors found that some foster carers were not storing information in a secure manner but recognised the importance of this. Foster carers had not been provided with a lockable filing box for the safe keeping of information. The manager stated the fostering service would rectify this by providing a suitable lockable box.

**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?**

1

Wakefield MDC Human Resource dept (social services) have the responsibility for keeping staff records in respect of recruitment and employment. The family placement managers maintain supervision, appraisal and training records for staff. It is recommended that a front sheet be placed on personal development records to contain staff information as detailed in schedule 2 (2), of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and that this information is accessible at the family placement team office.

In respect of the fostering service, the managers keep records of any allegations and complaints, with relevant details kept on staff, carers and children's files. The fostering service (family placement team) does not currently have a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of records kept and such a system should be developed. The Inspectors found that the fostering service records were being stored securely and that Wakefield has a policy on access to personal records, which is outlined in the carer's handbook.

The children's register and register of foster carers must be developed to include all the information required by Reg. 31 and 22 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Foster carer's files examined did not contain full Looked After Children documentation giving details of their current placements. Some carers are making informal agreements between themselves about providing respite care for the children they are caring for. These arrangements must be formalised to ensure the fostering service are fully aware of situations.

The fostering service has both paper and computer recording systems. The Inspectors were told that Wakefield MDC were looking towards installing relevant computer software for the children's services, which should provide a much more comprehensive and accessible information system for the fostering service. The manager must establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Allowances vary according to the age of child and foster carer fees vary according to the skills level of the carer.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	307
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	X
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	118
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	10
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	X
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	X
<b>Maximum £</b>	X

### Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

#### Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not assessed at this inspection.

### Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

#### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not inspected as this standard does not apply to local authority fostering services.

#### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not inspected, as this standard does not apply to local authority fostering services.

#### Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last inspection the fostering service have introduced the 'payment for skills' scheme. From discussion with foster carers it was apparent they felt the scheme was an improvement on the allowances previously paid although this was not the case for some. In these instances the fostering service have ensured, for a limited period, that the carers are not financially disadvantaged due to the change. Foster carers said they are usually paid promptly although some said that they had not yet been paid all they were due under the old allowance system and had repeatedly had to ask for payment of the money.

Not all foster carers had a grasp of the way in which the 'payment for skills' scheme worked and inspectors considered carers would benefit from a more in depth explanation of the

scheme.

Some foster carers discussed, with inspectors, situations when children had caused damage in the carer's homes. The carers said they could not claim on their own insurance and WMDC would not pay for the damage caused. From discussion with the carers and managers of the service, the inspectors were informed that discussion has taken place to try and satisfactorily resolve this matter.

## 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
---------------------------	---------------	---

The inspectors were pleased to note that Wakefield fostering service now have two quorate fostering panels. The in-quorate decisions made between 2002 and 2003 have now been brought before properly constituted panels for confirmation of approval and reconsideration of the previous decisions made. The inspectors viewed documents containing decisions, which had been approved by the agency decision maker at service manager level. The fostering service may wish to review this position and consider the Head of Children's Services as the independent decision maker.

From discussion with the regular Chairperson and observation of the panel, the inspectors felt panel members needed to exercise more robustly their roles. This would be achieved by more specific training.

The Chairperson may wish to consider each panel member having responsibility for reading an individual report being brought before panel. The panel member would then be able share their views with the other panel members.

The inspectors were pleased to see one panel member questioned and raised for discussion, a number of very valid points relating to information contained in the assessment reports.

The standard of assessment reports to panel was reasonable but many had fundamental omissions. Due to the lack of information, panel made recommendations of temporary foster carer approval. Managers should carry out vigorous checking of the assessment reports, before they are submitted to panel. The inspectors considered that the cases should be deferred rather than recommending of approval. The role of the panel is in line with regulation 26 but further consideration should be given to the panel providing a quality assurance function as at Standard 30.5, particularly in respect of kinship care placements. The inspectors noted that the husband of an already registered foster carer had been assessed individually to be a foster carer with his wife. As only the husband was assessed it was this report, which was brought before panel for recommendation to approve. The husband and wife should have been assessed as a couple and not just the husband in isolation.

Foster panels are not yet receiving management information about the outcome of foster carer's reviews.



It is recommended that a system be devised to collate over an annual period any matters, which delay the approval process so that any procedural matters can be addressed as required.

Through discussion with the regular Chairperson of the panel, the inspectors considered he had a good understanding of his role and of matters requiring to be addressed further, in relation to the panel. It was clear that he had a commitment to ensuring the panel functioned efficiently to safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

### 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?
---------------------------	---------------

Not assessed at this inspection.	
----------------------------------	--

## 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?	1
---------------------------	---------------	---

Regulation 38 placement approvals are not in line with regulation 28, in that, they are being recommended and approved (albeit as temporary), before a completed fostering assessment has been carried out. A family and friends foster carer visited had not been requested to make a written foster carer agreement when the children were placed with them. This was relevant as the carers were unsure of their role and what was expected from them. The initial fostering assessment of the carers had been carried out by the children's social worker and the carers felt this process had not been fully explained to them. After several weeks, the carers were extremely relieved to have an allocated fostering worker, but it was the carer who had made initial telephone contact with the fostering team to enquire about their position. The carers said whenever they telephone the family placement team they are greeted by staff who are pleasant and understanding of their position.

The inspectors found that a mainstream foster carer was caring for children who were to move to family carers many miles away. The move for the children was imminent following care proceedings. There was no written evidence to suggest there had been any negotiation between the children's social worker and the family placement team about the intended placement. The children's case files indicated that their social worker had 'assessed' the family carer, but there were no supporting documents on file. The family carer had visited the children on one occasion at the foster carer's home. The children had not visited the family carers home. This type of placement would not be deemed as immediate due to the length of time it had been known the placement was to be made; therefore the fostering team should have been involved from the onset with the assessment, arrangements and future support to the family carer.

The fostering service has appointed a fostering social worker to deal specifically with family and friends carers, but due to the increasing number of such carers, the officer is unable to supervise all cases, other fostering social workers take on this work. Of the carers approved over the last 12 months, 30% were family and friends carers.

The family and friends social worker is developing more specific training for carers as well as compiling written information for the benefit of field social works about the assessment process. Inspectors were pleased to see family and friends' carers attending training organised by the fostering service. Carers said they enjoyed the training sessions and are given written information of training available to them.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

N/a

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 17 January 2005 of Wakefield MDC - Family Placement Team and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

***We are working on the best way to include provider responses in the published report. In the meantime responses received are available on request.***

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

**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**

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other:

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of Wakefield MDC - Family Placement Team confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Or

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of Wakefield MDC - Family Placement Team 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.

**Commission for Social Care Inspection**  
33 Greycoat Street  
London  
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000  
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120  
[www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

S0000042492.V194170.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source