



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Barnsley Local Authority Fostering

Wellington House
36 Wellington Street
Barnsley
S70 1WA

5th February 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

Barnsley Local Authority Fostering

Address

Wellington House, 36 Wellington Street, Barnsley, S70
1WA

Local Authority Manager

Mr Paul Dempsey

Tel No:

01226 775877

Address

Wellington House, 36 Wellington Street, Barnsley, S70
1WA

Fax No:

01226775864

Email Address

pauldempsey@barnsley.gov.uk

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

5.3.03

Date of Inspection Visit		5th February 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Russell Shackford	073020
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspector on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		N/A	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Paul Dempsey (manager)	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 Barnsley Local Authority Fostering. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The statement of purpose describes the fostering service as part of a range of services for children and young people who are “Looked After”;

The stated aims being to provide a safe, stable and secure family environment, to meet the assessed needs of the child and family within the foster placement and to provide quality fostering support, staff and services.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met.

The agreed statement of purpose was available for inspection. It gave a clear account of the services provided by the fostering service and covered the required matters. The staff interviewed confirmed that they had been involved in a consultation exercise about it and they could give an account of its content. The children's guide to the statement had been produced. It was colourful and informative with pictures used to support the text. The manager described plans to produce the children's guide in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

All children placed were said to have been given a copy of the children's guide.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standard 2 and 3)

Both standards were met.

Since the last inspection, a person has been recruited to manage the adoption service, which was previously done by the fostering service manager. This has had a very positive effect upon the whole of the fostering service.

The manager had the necessary skills, knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to manage the service and its staff. He had a Diploma in Social Work qualification and he had commenced a recognised management qualification course in January 2004.

During the inspection process the inspector observed the manager lead the staff team and the services operations both skilfully and effectively.

All staff interviewed confirmed that the manager was approachable and available when needed.

Management of a fostering service (Standard 4 and 5)

Both standards were met.

Staff and management were clear regarding their respective roles. Supervising support staff and foster carers interviewed confirmed that there were well-established lines of communication and accountability.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standard 6 to 14)

9 of the 9 standards were met.

The inspector visited three foster carers in their own homes as part of the inspection process. Those seen, provided a safe, healthy and nurturing environment that could comfortably accommodate the needs of the foster children who lived there.

The discussions and interviews conducted by the inspector with the staff employed by the service, confirmed that all staff were committed to meeting the organisations aims and objectives in relation to this standard. This was supported by the information contained in the relevant policies and procedures.

Carers interviewed confirmed that receive all of the necessary background information in relation to the child at the start of the placement.

Carer interviews and questionnaires returned, confirmed that they had received training around managing difficult behaviour, bullying and complaints.

Risk assessments were seen on all files checked for those children that were tracked.

Seven children's questionnaires were returned. When asked if their social worker saw them and asked their opinions, six said often and one said sometimes.

All seven said they aware of the procedures to follow if they wished to make a complaint. Specialist health care professionals were members of the services fostering panel. The inspector observed their contribution to the process to be extremely valuable as it ensured that the health care needs of children, and carers, referred to the panel were fully considered.

Children spoken to, and questionnaires returned confirmed that they were supported with their homework. Any necessary uniform or equipment had been provided. The participation in after school activities or trips had also been supported.

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

9 of the 9 standards were met.

The inspector checked the recruitment files of three members of staff. All contained details of qualifications obtained, experience, employment history, detailed CV's, proof of identity, a copy of the application form and evidence of satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks. Staff checked had a wealth of experience, qualifications and training in working with children and young people. It was evident from the staff interviews that each person had a wide range of the required knowledge and skills to effectively carry out their responsibilities. All carers interviewed or surveyed said that they were well supported by the staff employed by the service.

Out of hours support was available for staff and carers from the emergency duty team and senior on call managers.

Carers interviewed confirmed that following their approval they were given a carers handbook that contained information of the services policies and procedures, finance, support, complaints, insurance etc.

Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they met regularly with their supervising social worker and that sometimes these were unannounced visits. All said that they found these sessions supportive and informative.

Records (Standards 24 and 25)

2 of 2 standards were met.

Carers interviewed were aware of the information that they were required to pass onto the service. They could describe the records they had to maintain and the importance of detailing special events/achievements or taking photographs to capture the event.

The service had the appropriate systems in place within their offices to ensure that information was recorded, stored or retrieved in a permanent, secure and private manner.

Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was met.

The service had identifiable office premises to which staff had access to during normal office hours. Three supervising social workers interviewed confirmed that a competent and supportive administration team was in place within the service and that the office was sufficiently equipped with the necessary items.

Financial requirements (Standard 27 to 29)

3 of 3 standards were met.

The service had written policies, which detailed the fostering allowances currently payable to all carers.

The allowances paid were clearly documented and all carers interviewed said that they were clear about their allowances and any agreed expenses.

Allowances and fees were reviewed annually.

Carers interviewed stated that they were paid promptly.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was met.

The inspector observed the panel to be conducted professionally with all members contributing appropriately. The meeting had an agenda, minutes were taken and all members had, prior to the meeting, received information regarding the business matters to be presented. The inspector observed the panel members voicing concerns, identifying problems and clarifying any issues with the social workers, and prospective foster carers. The chair of the panel had the skills and experience necessary for chairing the fostering services panel.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

Not applicable to this service.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was met.

The service had a policy on this matter, which the inspector saw. It detailed the appropriate checks to be undertaken in the case of immediate placements, and the process for a provisional report being presented to the fostering panel within six weeks. The manager confirmed that timescales for training and full assessment are agreed and implemented.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			NONE	

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	N/A
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Russell Shackford	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	N/A	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Amanda Lindley	Signature	_____
Date	10.2.04		

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	
			NONE	

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
		NONE

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	4
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	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	NO
Date of Inspection	5/2/04
Time of Inspection	9:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	28

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?

3

The agreed statement of purpose was available for inspection. It gave a clear account of the services provided by the fostering service and covered the required matters. The staff interviewed confirmed that they had been involved in a consultation exercise about it and they could give an account of its content. The manager stated that copies had been circulated to relevant parties. The statement is available to other council departments via the organisation's intranet site.

The children's guide to the statement had been produced. It was colourful and informative with pictures used to support the text. The manager described plans to produce the children's guide in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children. All children placed were said to have been given a copy of the children's guide.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Since the last inspection, a person has been recruited to manage the adoption service, which was previously done by the fostering service manager. This has had a very positive effect upon the whole of the fostering service.

The manager had the necessary skills, knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to manage the service and its staff. He had a Diploma in Social Work qualification and he had commenced a recognised management qualification course in January 2004.

During the inspection process the inspector observed the manager lead the staff team and the services operations both skilfully and effectively.

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 inspector checked the manager's recruitment file. The file contained a full and detailed Curriculum Vitae (which included a full employment history), medical assessment, proof of Identification and proof of qualifications. Satisfactory references, including one from the last employer, were seen.

A satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check for the manager had been obtained.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service had systems and procedures for monitoring the service, and ensuring quality of performance. The manager stated that the service worked to number of targets set relating to the quality of the outcomes of care for looked after children. Staff interviewed confirmed that there are well-established lines of communication and accountability between themselves and the manager. The inspector saw evidence on the staff's files that they had signed to confirm that they were aware of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager had a clear understanding of his duties and responsibilities and did not hold a similar position in another organisation. At the time of the previous inspection, the manager was responsible for both the fostering and adoption services provided by the organisation. This had been recognised as an area for change and an adoption team manager had been recruited in order to achieve a specifically dedicated fostering services manager position. Following the interview of the manager the inspector was assured that he was clearly aware of his responsibilities and accountability. A deputy was identified to take responsibility during the manager's absence.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The supervising social workers for carers confirmed that the accommodation provided was a safe, nurturing environment. A fostering services support worker carries out the annual reviews on all foster homes. The manager stated that this includes a review of the environment, suitability of placement, Health and Safety and any training issues. The carers surveyed and interviewed confirmed that reviews took place and that their views were given appropriate consideration.

Foster carers surveyed by the commission confirmed that their induction, handbook and training covered health and safety issues. Those foster carers interviewed were aware of the commission and their potential involvement in the 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

It was evident from the discussions and interviews conducted by the inspector that the staff at the agency, both value and implement the companies' detailed policies and procedures relating to this matter. The inspector saw evidence that the birth families had been consulted and their wishes taken into account when placing the children tracked. The manager and staff interviewed could detail how the young people placed had been consulted about the content of their placement plan. The children surveyed by the Commission confirmed that they had been given the opportunity to express their wishes. All of the carers surveyed by the Commission confirmed that they had received training in issues of diversity and equality. Examples highlighted included anti oppressive practice, gay and lesbian issues and disability issues. None of the children tracked had been placed in an emergency. The inspector saw comprehensive and detailed written guidance for staff covering issues around disability. The manager stated that where care is provided for children with disabilities and/ or specific talents, interests and hobbies, then a range of facilities, resources and support services would be made available.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The manager and staff spoke to the inspector about the organisations efforts to recruit and retain a range of carers capable of meeting the broadening range of the needs of children and their families in Barnsley. Examples included a radio campaign, newspaper articles, library flyers, cinema magazine adverts and advertising at sporting events. The manager demonstrated the latest eye catching poster collection.

The service has in place a system for both identifying and compensating for any gaps in the match between the child and the carer. The manager stated that detailed information is sought from the placing officer and other relevant professionals, which also take account of the child's care plan and written assessments of the child, their family and the carers.

Matching takes account of children's assessed needs in relation to race, religion, language, culture and ethnic origin. Where assessed as necessary, additional support and training is provided to carers. Where possible and appropriate, introductory periods for establishing familiarity and views are used.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector saw copies of the local area child protection procedures in place. The manager and the staff interviewed could describe those procedures, giving examples of their content and application. There was written guidance to staff and carers covering issues of behaviour management, which included sanctions and physical intervention. The guidance was clear about what was permissible and acceptable. Carers confirmed that they had received training around managing challenging behaviour.

Risk assessments were seen which covered children's known and likely behaviours and activities, illicit or otherwise, both within and outside of the home.

Bullying is addressed through the carers handbook and training. A satisfactory policy and procedure relating to bullying had been produced and circulated.

The service had a satisfactory procedure for foster carers to follow in the event of a foster child being missing from home. Carers were able to access the Local Authority Emergency Duty Team outside of the agencies office hours who in turn had access to a senior on call manager. One carer spoken to described how they had used this system effectively.

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

100

%

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

The service has written guidance for staff about promoting contact with family and friends, which the inspector saw. The manager stated that the service promotes and facilitates appropriate contact for children placed. The manager stated that where siblings are placed separately, efforts are made to place them close together in order that contact is easier to provide.

In each child's individual file checked, contact details were recorded. The children spoken to confirmed that they had been given the opportunity to express their wishes. Carers confirmed that they had received training and support regarding the requirement for them to encourage and aid contact. Financial support is provided to cover the cost of transport and other expenses incurred.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The manager, staff and the young people could detail a range of ways in which consultation had taken place. Particular examples highlighted included direct work between fostering service staff and children placed, the corporate parenting forum where young people meet with policy and decision makers, a Department of Health training package called Total Respect and a young peoples group run by the children's rights service called K.I.C.K.A.R.S. (Kids in care know about right stuff). All of the children surveyed by the Commission were aware of their right to complain about the service and the procedure for doing so.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The organisation employs a range of professionals whose specific duties include either commissioning or providing local health care services. A specialist health advisor for looked after children is employed by the organisation. The organisation had developed a nurse led assessments system, which included consultation with children and young people about those assessments.

The manager stated that detailed health information is passed to carers at the time of placement and they give verbal updates to the placing officer. The carer maintains an ongoing written health care record. Carers confirmed that they had received training on health issues, first aid and health promotion.

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?**

4

The education of looked after children is a high priority for the fostering service and they are to be commended for helping their foster carers to meet each child's individual needs. Staff interviewed confirmed that carers are encouraged to contribute to the assessment of the child's educational needs and progress, and be involved in the development and delivery of any personal education plans. Personal education plan training was noted to be on the proposed training schedule for carers. The records of reviews seen by the inspector included contributions from carers, children and the organisations educational liaison officer. Placement agreements identified the foster carers role in school contact and activities. The manager stated that the service provided financial and other support for the provision of necessary uniform, equipment and attending school trips and other activities. Computer equipment is provided for all secondary school age children placed. Information technology training was noted to be on the schedule of training for carers. The service has IT systems, which allows them to oversee the educational attainment of children with their care and the numbers of those excluded from school.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The manager had developed written guidance for carers covering issues related to preparing young people for adulthood. The inspector saw this. Carers and young people gave examples of how this guidance had been implemented.

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

The service had a satisfactory policy and procedure regarding the recruitment and selection of staff, which the inspector saw.

The inspector checked the files of three staff. Each contained the necessary information regarding their personal details, identification, qualifications and experience and employment history.

All social work staff had appropriate qualifications and during staff interviews it was evident that they each had the knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities. The manager stated that staff are appropriately qualified and trained to work with children and unqualified staff do not carry out social work functions.

Total number of staff of the agency:

10

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

0

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

There was evidence of a clear management structure within which there were clear lines of accountability. The staff were managed and supervised by people who had appropriate skills and qualifications. None of the staff had responsibilities, which exceeded their skills, qualifications and experience. The staff interviewed stated that there were systems in place to prioritise and monitor their workloads.

The service has clear systems in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews were both managed and implemented successfully. The manager stated that upon receipt of the commission's inspection report it would be distributed to other departments within the organisation and other relevant persons. The manager had suitable qualifications and experience to provide professional supervision.

Those staff interviewed confirmed that there were adequate procedures in place to ensure that enquiries for services and employment were dealt with promptly, and that administrative support was sufficient to ensure that the support workers are freed up to concentrate on maintaining the needs of the foster carers. Within the workplace there is access to a range of professional and legal advice. It was stated that all employees are provided with written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service.

The staff interviewed detailed ways in which they work in conjunction with the children's

social workers. The inspector noted that written details relating to the service, including disciplinary, equal opportunities and health and safety policies were on display around the workplace.

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 service had employed a vigorous recruitment drive in an attempt to ensure that sufficient support workers are available to maintain a high level of contact and support to carers. This had been very successful and the service boasted a full staff team. This included two specialist posts with responsibilities for developing services for children with disabilities, those on remand, emergency and other specialist areas such as kinship care and difficult to place children. These workers also highlighted a twenty-four hour support service run by carers for carers for development.

The staffing number, experience and qualifications were adequate to meet the service described in the Statement of Purpose. The service had a broad ranging assessment process for carers. The manager highlighted the inclusion of the competency-based assessment framework incorporated into that process.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service employs robust practises around the supervision and support of its social work staff.

The manager stated that he has implemented a system for the appraisal, supervision and support of carers. The inspector saw written records of carer supervision having taken place. The carers interviewed confirmed that it had taken place.

The service has a health and safety policy for carers.

The inspector saw evidence of appropriate insurance cover for all staff and carers. The service has a whistle blowing policy, which staff spoken to could describe.

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
<p>The inspector saw that the service had in place schedules of both planned and implemented training, which reflected the needs of the service and its staff. The staff training programmes were said to be reviewed annually. During interviews the agency staff detailed examples of joint training for themselves and carers.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector saw written details of supervision, appraisals and regular staff and team meetings.</p> <p>The inspector attended one of the focussed staff group meetings. The meeting was appropriately agended, chaired and minuted.</p>		

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
<p>The support workers interviewed could describe their supervising responsibilities and confirmed that they produce carer review reports for the fostering panel. Systems were in place for ensuring good communication between the support workers and the children's social workers.</p>		

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**

The foster care agreement provided to each carer provides the carer with the details of the expectations placed upon them by the fostering service. The agreements for carers had been developed to ensure that they contained all of the required information as referred to in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services regulations 2001. The support workers interviewed could describe their supervising responsibilities and the manager stated that he had implemented a system for the appraisal, supervision and support of carers.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The fostering services induction-training programme includes opportunities for pre-approved carers to meet with existing carers to share experiences and learning. The service provided evidence of an extensive, ongoing programme of training for foster carers. The venues used for training, and session times were varied to enable carers to attend around personal commitments. Review reports seen by the inspector contained some details of the carer's annual training and development appraisals.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service makes positive attempts to ensure that carers receive all available and relevant information. There was evidence that information was shared between the agency social worker and the child's social worker to ensure that there is good integration of information stored in the respective files. Looked After Children information stored in the individual case files checked contained details of the purpose and intended duration of the placement, together with the child's current legal status. The agency provides training around life story work with children, which carers confirmed was implemented. Information recorded by carers was said by carers interviewed to be stored in a secure manner.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service has systems in place to ensure that information is recorded, stored or retrieved in a permanent, secure and private manner.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	176
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	203
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	149
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	13
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	10
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	86.08
Maximum £	627.89

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service has identifiable office premises to which staff have access to during office hours. Supervising social workers interviewed confirmed that a competent administrative team of staff supports them and the office premises are sufficiently equipped with the necessary items. The premises have IT systems and lockable rooms for the secure retention of records. Access is restricted to only those who are authorised. The manager confirmed that the premises are insured and there are systems in place to replace items when and as required.

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 manager stated that the service is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. As part of the pre inspection process, information regarding the financial viability of the service has been received by the NCSC in the form of a business and spending plan. These were examined by the inspector and found to be satisfactory.

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 pre-inspection information provided showed that there are systems for ensuring that the services accounts are properly maintained and audited.

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

The agency has a written policy on fostering allowances. Current allowances are well published and carers receive clear information about allowances. Issues raised by carers about the breakdown of payments received were discussed with the fostering service manager. The manager was aware of the problem and a new coded system had been recently introduced to rectify it.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector observed the fostering panel, as part of the inspection process. The service had re-written its operational procedures relating to the panel. It contained details of all the required matters. Nine members were present on the panel, including independent members and others who had expertise in child health and education. An elected member of the council was present, as was a different local authority foster carer. All members of the panel had been the subjects of satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks. The inspector observed the panel to be conducted professionally with all members contributing appropriately. The meeting had an agenda, minutes were taken and all members had, prior to the meeting, received information regarding the business matters to be presented. The inspector observed the panel members voicing concerns, identifying problems and clarifying any issues with the social workers, and prospective foster carers. The chair of the panel had the skills and experience necessary for chairing the fostering services panel.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
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Not applicable to this service.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The service had a policy on this matter, which the inspector saw. It detailed the appropriate checks to be undertaken in the case of immediate placements, and the process for a provisional report being presented to the fostering panel within six weeks. The manager confirmed that timescales for training and full assessment are agreed and implemented.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

N/A

Lay Assessor N/A **Signature** _____

Date N/A

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the announced inspection of BMBC Fostering Service on 5.2.04.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 5.2.04 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

None

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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 within 28 days, 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

NO

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: No requirements were made, so no action plan was required.

YES

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 – Announced Inspection

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

D.3.1 I Pat Jupp of BMBC Fostering Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on 5.2.04 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 Pat Jupp of BMBC Fostering Service 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 5.2.04 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.