



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Leeds City Council Fostering Service**

Merrion House

110 Merrion Centre

Leeds

LS2 8QB

8th December 2003

## 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**

Leeds City Council Fostering Service

**Address**

Merrion House, 110 Merrion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8QB

**Local Authority Manager**

Rodger Walker

**Tel No:**

0113 2478700

**Address**

Merrion House, 110 Merrion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8QB

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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**

04/03/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		8th December 2003	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Dave Stanford	071351
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Sean White	071337
<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 NCSC. 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>			

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the 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.

Leeds Adoption and Fostering Service is a part of the Local Authority Social Service Department and provides placements for children in the Leeds area who require to be looked after.

The head office is located in the centre of the city with some of the fostering officers placed in area offices spread around the city.

The service is provided through three fostering and adoption teams and a family placement team for children with disabilities. The services include:

- Temporary placements
- Permanent placements
- Planned short breaks, as a respite scheme
- A range of Fee Paid Schemes
- Family placements. Providing long-term or shared care for children with disabilities.



## **PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **Inspector's Summary**

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

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

**This standard was assessed and not met.**

Whilst a statement of purpose exists, it has yet to be revised as required at the previous inspection. There is now a draft children's guide, though this requires further work.

#### **Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)**

**Both of the standards were assessed and met.**

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced to manage the service. The local authority responsible for the fostering service ensures that all checks are carried out as required.

#### **Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

**One of the two standards assessed was met.**

The monitoring of the service is satisfactorily managed, though there are areas that require greater consistency. The management provision of this service is sufficiently clear, effective and is satisfactorily organised.

#### **Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)**

**Six of the nine standards assessed were met.**

There are resource shortfalls which can impinge on the best practice guided by the placement plan, however some children spoken with talked of how they felt they were listened to, and some gave examples of how their opinions had changed things within the placement.

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

**Six of the nine standards assessed were met.**

Personnel records showed that due rigour is practiced in the selection and recruitment of staff into the service and the service manager and team managers were able to demonstrate clarity in the structure of the organisation and to show there were systems in place to deliver support and monitor performance. There are difficulties in recruiting enough people willing to foster children and there are particular recruitment problems in some parts of the community where ethnicity is a placement requirement. There are also some established carers who have not been allocated a link-worker. Some carers pointed out that, although training is available for those who are new to the service, there is not always followed up. Foster carer agreements are produced on every occasion, though they do not yet contain all the information required by regulations.

#### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

**Both of the standards assessed was met.**

Case records and files inspected were found to be accessible, up to date and in acceptable order, however the fostering services administrative system was less accessible. The service is aware of this and has begun the process of enabling the system to be more

responsive.

**Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service(Standard 26)**

**This standard was assessed and not met.**

Whilst the premises are, in the main, suitably located, designed and arranged for their purpose, there remains limited access to IT and communication systems, with poor internet access and only a partial email facility.

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

**One of the three standards was assessed and met.**

Whilst there could be problems for foster carers receiving monies due on time, it was usually in respect of emergency, remand or rapid turnover placements.

**Fostering Panels (Standard 30)**

**This standard was assessed and not met.**

A range of issues, primarily relating to the clarity of the purpose and function of the fostering panels need to be addressed.

**Short-Term Breaks (Standard 31)**

**This standard was assessed and met.**

Suitable policies and procedures are in place. Although regular meetings are held with the fostering services manager, the management structure of the scheme is currently attached to the adult disability services.

**Family and friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

**This standard was not assessed.**

## **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:

YES

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**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
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	
1	3 & 4	FS1	The statement of purpose must include all required information. A children's guide must be produced.	
2	34 CA1989 Sch. 7	FS6	The service must ensure that children are placed within a suitable environment.	
3	33	FS8	The service must ensure that each child is carefully matched with the carer(s).	
4	12 & 13	FS9	The fostering service must protect each child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.	
5	34 & 35 Sch. 5&6	FS22	The responsible authority must make arrangements to visit each child in placement as required.	
8	23	FS26	All premises used as offices by the fostering service must be appropriate for their purpose.	
8	24	FS30	Fostering panels must have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.	

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

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

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Dave Stanford</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Sean White</u>	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	<u>Chris Picking</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>30<sup>th</sup> April 2004</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 and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3 & 4	FS1	The statement of purpose, including a children's guide, must be reviewed and must include all required information.	01/06/04
2	42(1) Schedule 7	FS4	All accidents, injuries and illnesses of children in fostercare must be monitored by the service.	01/06/04
3	34 CA1989 Sch. 7	FS6	The service must ensure that children are properly placed within a suitable environment.	01/10/04
4	33	FS8	The service must ensure that each child is appropriately placed with the carer.	01/10/04
5	13	FS9	The service must have a clear written procedure for carers to follow in the event of a child being absent from the foster home without permission.	01/06/04
6	17	FS18	All carers must have an allocated worker.	01/10/04
7	34 & 35 Sch. 5&6	FS22	The service must ensure that proper arrangements are in place for visits to be made to each child in placement, as required.	01/10/04
8	23	FS26	Premises used as offices by the fostering service must be appropriate for the purpose.	01/04/05
9	24	FS30	Fostering panels must have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice.	01/10/04

### 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	FS19	The service should provide for more consistent follow-up specialist training, as a way to consolidate and support the development of the fostercarers skill and knowledge base.

\* 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	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	08/12/03
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	60



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?**

1

The service has a statement of purpose, however, this has yet to be amended and revised as required at the previous inspection held in March of this year. There was an example of a draft children's guide provided at this inspection, which also does not meet with all the requirements.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The manager is suitably qualified and experienced to manage the service. Discussions held with other staff responsible to the manager indicated the management style was satisfactorily effective.

### 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 local authority responsible for the fostering service ensures that all checks are carried out as required and records are maintained accordingly.

## 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 monitoring of the service is satisfactorily managed, however there are areas that require greater consistency, or to be properly maintained. For example the serious illness or accident of a child in foster care is not recorded. Notification of events to the NCSC must be given due attention.

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

0

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.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

Fostering is a vigorous and complex service, set in a changing, dynamic local and national social policy context. The management provision of this service is sufficiently clear, effective and is satisfactorily organised.

## 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

As with the previous inspection there were incidences noted where the arrangements made to place children were expedient and based on resource shortfalls rather than the best practice guided by the placement plan. There were similar examples of families having more than three children placed with them and again a significant number of exemption certificates being applied for. Annual inspections take place and the foster homes seen during the inspection, which were selected at random, appeared suitably furnished and decorated.

### 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

The service has a clear commitment to valuing diversity and this was evident in the policies and practices pursued both organisationally and in day-to-day work. There is a wide and overarching view that cultures, religion and ethnic identities must be at the centre of decision-making and efforts continue to be made to recruit and retain carers from all the different areas of the community.

### 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?

2

Generally placements are always attempted to be properly and suitably matched, however, this is not always realistically achievable due to the shortfall in resources. It is accepted that the service strives to make appropriate placements and recognises these shortcomings. However, care must always be taken to ensure that this does not allow for a complacent attitude and a simplistic justification of practice.

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b> The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>The foster carers spoken with had received training in caring for a child who had been abused. Safe caring guidelines based on a written policy were not evident in homes, though carers spoke of appropriate action they would take. Foster carers were clear that corporal punishment is unacceptable, and all those carers spoken to had developed reasonable methods of dealing with unacceptable behaviour that was understood and agreed with by the children. It is acknowledged that placements can not always fully protect some young people from abuse. It remains the case that carers do not always receive full information at the time of the placement regarding the child's history of abuse.</p> <p>The service does not appear to have a clear written procedure for carers to follow in the event of a child being missing.</p>		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	100	%

<b>Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)</b> 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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Contact arrangements appear to be properly maintained, where appropriate. Discussions with a number of foster carers indicated their understanding of the importance and necessity of these arrangements. Children and young people spoke of their contact arrangements positively and with an understanding of the purpose of the contact.</p>		

<b>Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)</b> 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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Children spoken with talked of how they felt they were listened to, and some gave examples of how their opinions had changed things within the home. All the children spoken with knew how to raise a complaint or concern, though they did not know of the existence of the NCSC. Completed questionnaires by service users provided a consistent and similar picture.</p>		

<b>Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)</b> 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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>Carers reported that they received as much information about the health needs of children placed with them as the placing officers had. As further information was obtained this was passed onto the foster carers. Some carers have received training on areas such as health and hygiene and first aid, and were aware of their responsibilities with regard to promoting the child's health needs. Specialist services were said to be accessible.</p>		

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

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

3

All the foster carers spoken with placed a high emphasis on the educational achievement of the children placed with them, which included being involved in children's educational reviews and attending open days and parents' evenings. Where appropriate these were in conjunction with the birth parents. Evidence from questionnaires completed by service users indicated support with school homework was provided.

**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

Discussions held both with a group of carers and a number of field social workers, along with the inspection of service users' case records indicated that appropriate preparation formed a part of the placement plans. A 'pathway planning' team exists within the department to support looked after children to move into independence and these workers were fully involved with the fostering service and clearly operated as part of an integrated support network.

## 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

Personnel records showed that due rigour is practiced in the selection and recruitment of staff into the service and that their backgrounds and experiences were appropriate for the roles and responsibilities they undertook. Discussions with workers and managers showed that they have a good understanding of child care work in general and foster care in particular. It was evident that the service as a whole is populated by people with a strong commitment to, and an understanding of, the principles underpinning the promoting of children's welfare.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service manager and team managers demonstrated clarity in the structure of the organisation and were able to show that there were systems in place to deliver support and monitor performance. The workers were happy with the management arrangements and felt that there was always access to support and advice. Supervision is an important aspect of the support arrangements and each team manager ensures that workers receive formal supervision at the required intervals. There is some difficulty in respect of administrative support for those workers who operate from area teams; the administration systems in the area offices are dedicated to social workers and only undertake duties for fostering workers as a 'favour'. Whilst it was said that this informal arrangement works most of the time it was also said that more discrete support would be preferable.



<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The service has a team of workers with a range of relevant experience, many of whom have worked in the service for a considerable time; the majority of the workers are fostering and adoption officers but there are others with more specific roles – recruitment officer, principal caseworkers and short breaks coordinator. Although the workload is demanding, it appeared that there are sufficient workers employed to undertake most of the responsibilities of the service, although it was found that there are some established carers who have not been allocated a link-worker. There is a foster carer recruitment policy and strategy in place that is aimed at recruiting a range of carers, from all parts of the community, to meet the diverse needs of children requiring placement. The recruitment, selection and assessment process for carers is robust, rigorous and ensures that all possible thoroughness is applied. The service never has sufficient carers to provide appropriate placements for all children who may need them, however; this is because there are difficulties in recruiting enough people willing to foster children and there are particular recruitment problems in some parts of the community where ethnicity is a placement requirement.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>1</b>
<p>The authority has a range of policies and practices in place that are designed to protect workers and carers, including well structured grievance and disciplinary procedures and a health and safety policy; there is also a whistle-blowing policy in place that both carers and workers are protected by. Out of hours support is available to carers through the Emergency Duty Team, which is limited in scope because of the demands placed on this service. As outlined in the previous standard, there are carers who do not have allocated workers which means that managed support is not always available.</p>		

**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**

Leeds Social Services training section have devised training programme for carers and the Fostering Policy declares that 'The dept. will produce an annual training strategy...'. Some of this training programme is jointly aimed at social work staff and carers but the emphasis is aimed mainly at carers. However, it is evident that some carers do not seek or partake in training and the service has little power to insist that those who do not receive a fee attend recommended training. This situation may improve with payment for skills that has a training element requirement attached. Carers pointed out that, although training is available for people who are new to the service, there is little follow up available; most training, it was said, is repeats of what has gone before and there is little, if any, specialist training available that takes into account the increasingly difficult demands of fostering; the programme, as presented, did not confirm this view but it was not possible to find definitive evidence because the titles of the training proposed did not give any suggestion as to the depth of information that may be provided. The programme did not have any dates.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

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

The service is informed and its responsibilities outlined in the statement of purpose, the Fostering Policy and the National Minimum Standards and regulations. All staff have job descriptions and it was clear that all workers were clear about their roles and responsibilities. Although support and professional supervision is available to all staff in the service, it was reported that its occurrence, at least formally, is somewhat inconsistent; the means of recording supervision is also not done to a corporate standard in that some records are maintained by the supervisors whilst others are kept in area offices in cabinets that are accessible to all. Regular team meetings are held that gives workers the opportunity to keep in touch with and contribute to the service as a whole.

**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**

Each carer is provided with a comprehensive pack that outlines the functions and responsibilities of the service, provides guidance on the role of carers and gives advice and direction on a range of issues. Carers explained that, in the main, foster service workers are conscientious and supportive and children said that they were satisfied with the arrangements in place. It was clear from discussions with the children's social workers that there is a coordinated approach to managing placements and case files supported this.

**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?**

2

Although a foster carer agreement is produced on every occasion they do not contain all the information required by regulations. Nevertheless, the carers spoken with understood fully their duties as they fall within the responsibilities of the service and appeared well informed and knowledgeable about most, but not all, of the issues relevant to the service and their place within it; it was noted that child protection matters were well understood, for instance. Not all children placed have an allocated social worker; it is therefore occasionally dependent upon the assertiveness of carers whether social work support can be accessed. There were some problems identified, particularly in respect of prompt and accurate fee payment, usually in respect of remand and emergency placements, the reason mainly being because of the somewhat disjointed administrative and IT systems. As outlined in the previous section, carers are provided with a manual that provides comprehensive information about most contingencies and that foster service workers are supportive and consistent.

**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

Although a foster carer agreement is produced on every occasion they do not contain all the information required by regulations. Nevertheless, the carers spoken with understood fully their duties as they fall within the responsibilities of the service and appeared well informed and knowledgeable about most, but not all, of the issues relevant to the service and their place within it; it was noted that child protection matters were well understood, for instance. Not all children placed have an allocated social worker; it is therefore occasionally dependent upon the assertiveness of carers whether social work support can be accessed. There were some problems identified, particularly in respect of prompt and accurate fee payment, usually in respect of remand and emergency placements, the reason mainly being because of the somewhat disjointed administrative and IT systems. As outlined in the previous section carers are provided with a manual that provides comprehensive information about most contingencies and that foster service workers are supportive and consistent.

## 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

A number of case records and files were inspected and were found to be accessible, up to date and in acceptable order. There are policies that guide the manner and content of the case records and inform expectations about what information fostercarers should maintain. Information retained on fostercarers files was found to be sufficient and appropriate in detail. Files inspected through a tracking process were also found to be up to date and kept in a manner that was sufficient in detail and would contribute to the service user's understanding of their life events.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Records required by regulation are available, however they are not necessarily easily accessible. The fostercarer database can, at the moment, only be fully accessed through a different section of the department and the information tends to be out of date because the changes are not under the control of the service. Foster carer records were found to be satisfactorily maintained and included all necessary information. Other records were found to be of a satisfactory standard. The service is aware of these shortcomings and has begun the process of enabling the system to be more responsive.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

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

X

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

X

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

X

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

Fostering officers continue to work in a number of different locations alongside other social work professionals, dispersed in area offices. The premises, therefore, are in the main suitably located, designed and arranged for their purpose. There remains limited access to IT and communication systems, with poor internet access and a partial email facility. The administrative support in most of the office locations appears to rest on the goodwill of staff, as there is no dedicated provision for fostering officers within these area offices.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This section does not apply to this service.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This section does not apply to this service.

### 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

It was reported that there could be problems for foster carers receiving monies due on time; this was particularly the case in respect of emergency, remand or rapid turnover placements. The main reason for this is that when a child is placed with or moves from a carer it is dependent upon the child's social worker, rather than the fostering service, entering this information on to the computer system in order to generate, or stop, payments. It was also noted that information regarding extra entitlements is not always shared with carers and carers are not encouraged to claim all allowances that they are entitled to.

## 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 service has policies and procedures in place in respect of the fostering panels – there are three panels operated at different times covering different parts of the city. The fostering panel that was observed as part of this inspection was somewhat chaotic and, despite the best efforts of the Chair, was not very well coordinated. Two new members arrived without introduction, neither of which had attended before and had not received any induction training; the Chairperson had not been informed that the new members would be attending. The inclusion of these new members, and their clear misunderstanding of the purpose and processes of fostering panels, gave the Chairperson a difficult job and the event had a general ‘feel’ of disruption. Although the inclusion of these two new members ensured the panel was a quorum as required by regulations, the means of introduction did not tally with the service’s policies. Much of the information presented to the panel was not well put together creating further difficulties for the Chairperson and it was clear that social workers needed to prepare more fully for this important occasion. The panel made decisions after its rather desultory analysis of the material presented to it and informed applicants that they had been approved; this is not a decision that a panel, or any member of it, can make – it must only make recommendations.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Discussions were held with the manager of this aspect of the fostering service. Comprehensive information was provided, which included various records and a range of material indicating the different emphasis on recruiting and training provided for carers of family placements. It was evident through this that parents retain a central role in the decision making and care of the child. At present the management structure of this scheme is attached to the adult disability services, though regular meetings are held with the fostering services manager. A statement of purpose specific to this scheme is being developed.	
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## 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?	9
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This section does not apply to this service.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

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

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

**Note:**

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

## D.2

### 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: <enter details here>

### Public reports

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I Keith Murray of Leeds City Council Fostering Services 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 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 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.