



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Stockton Borough Council Fostering**

Council Buildings

Town Centre

Billingham

Stockton-on-Tees

TS23 2LW

1st – 5th 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**

Stockton Borough Council Fostering

**Address**

Council Buildings, Town Centre, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 2LW

**Local Authority Manager**

Mrs Jackie Ward

**Tel No:**

01642 397212

**Address**

Council Buildings, Town Centre, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 2LW

**Fax No:**

01642 397147

**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**

17/02/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		1st December 2003	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Stephen Smith	073899
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Shaun Common	
<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.		No Lay Assessor	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		No Specialist	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mrs Jackie Ward	

**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 Stockton Borough Council 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.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has an integrated fostering and adoption service. The Child Placement Team is located within the Children and Young People's Division of the Health and Social Care Directorate. The fostering aspect of the service provides placements in respect of short term/temporary, long term/permanent, bridging, parent and child, short breaks/sharing the caring (children with disabilities), respite care and emergency carers. At the time of the inspection there were 87 foster carers registered with the service, most of whom live within the boundaries of the borough. 15 of these carers are approved as family/friends foster carers or have children placed under Regulation 38 (emergency placements with family/friends). At the time of the inspection there were some 127 children placed in foster carer by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Child Placement Service.

## **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.)

Stockton's Child Placement Service overall provides an effective service to its foster carers and the children in foster care placement. The placement team supervising social workers are experienced social work practitioners, many of whom hold post qualifying social work qualifications. The team is well managed and receives sufficient resources to support the current numbers of foster carers. The service works hard to recruit new foster carers, but like many local authorities this task is becoming more difficult as the service seeks to attract carers from the same prospective carers pool as the private and voluntary fostering agencies, which are able to offer significantly higher placement allowances.

It is evident from the inspection that great efforts have been made since the last inspection to develop the records maintained in young people's files. The files observed at this inspection were generally well maintained and contained detailed information in line with the Looked After Children's recording system. Further detail within the Assessment and Action records would improve this area further. Similarly, foster carers' records were observed to be generally well maintained, though records did not always contain sufficient evidence of the work undertaken by supervising social workers with foster carers. Evidence was available to demonstrate a thorough and careful foster carers recruitment, supervision and management process and in addition it is clear that a great emphasis is placed upon providing foster carers with appropriate, high quality training and support. Some further development of written information for foster carers to sit between the foster carers' handbook and the department's policies and procedures would provide additional support and guidance. Some minor amendments are required to the foster placement agreements used by the child placement service in order to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Foster carers interviewed were positive about training provided and spoke very highly of the support provided by the fostering team.



## **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:**

The fostering service does not comply fully with Regulation 34 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

## 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
			There are no requirements outstanding from the last inspection.

**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.**

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

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

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

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

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	Stephen Smith	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	Shaun Common	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	Christine Wharton	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	17 May 2004		_____

## 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	34	FS8	Foster placement agreements must be amended to refer to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.
2	34	FS13	The foster placement agreements must identify more specifically the financial responsibility for educational activities, equipment and uniforms.

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS2	The manager should continue to work towards completing NVQ Level 5 in Management by January 2005.
2	FS5	It is recommended that clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.
3	FS8	The Foster Placement Agreements used by the fostering service should specifically set out the elements of matching considered and the arrangements for additional support for foster carers to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer.
4	FS8	Clear information should be retained in foster carers' files in all situations in which children are placed outside foster carers' terms of approval.

5	FS9	All existing foster carers should develop a safe caring policy for their home.
6	FS12	Foster placement agreements should contain more detailed information about how to obtain the necessary consents for medical treatment.
7	FS13	Foster cares should receive copies of young people's Personal Education Plans.
8	FS14	Information for foster carers regarding the promotion of skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living should be developed further and compiled into one document.
9	FS15	Telephone enquiries should be made as part of the staff recruitment process to assess suitability of prospective employees for the responsibilities to be undertaken.
10	FS17	Full information of checks carried out on foster carers and their homes, including a health and safety checklist, pet safety check and car insurance, MOT and registration checks should be retained within foster carers' files.
11	FS17	Criminal Records Bureau checks at Enhanced level should be carried out on the few foster carers who have not yet been checked as soon as possible.
12	FS17	A clear record of all changes in a foster carer's approval that may occur over time should be retained and the foster carer should receive written notification of every change.
13	FS18 FS22	Additional information and guidance for foster carers should be developed to link the broad, strategic departmental policies and the brief information in the foster carers' handbook in order to support foster carers' practice more effectively. This guidance should contain additional health and safety information.
14	FS22	The foster carer agreement should specifically set out the requirement to comply with the organisation's policy on unauthorised absence as is set out in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.
15	FS22	Records of supervising social workers' visits to foster carers should state clearly whether they were announced or unannounced.
16	FS22 FS25	The fostering service should ensure that the records it retains provide sufficient evidence of the work it undertakes to address concerns about foster carers.
17	FS23	Records of foster carers' reviews should include specific reference to the training undertaken by the foster carer.
18	FS24 FS25	The Assessment and Action records in young people's files should be completed in more detail.

19	FS24	All young people's files should be retained and structured in such a way as to enable the child to reflect on and understand his or her history and background.
20	FS25	Tippex should not be used within foster carers' files.
21	FS30	The fostering panel should include a person who has lived in foster care or the parent of such a person.

\* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	01/12/03
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	35

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

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has produced a clear Statement of Purpose, which reflects the service. The Statement of purpose includes the aims and objectives of the services and includes details in respect of the information detailed in Standard 1.4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The local authority's elected members have approved the Statement of Purpose. A number of placing officers stated within their questionnaires that they had access to the Statement of Purpose and this was confirmed during interviews carried out with children and families social workers. The statement of purpose had been reviewed and updated by the fostering service shortly before this inspection in order to ensure that the information contained about numbers and type of placements and staff members in the Child Placement Team was up to date and accurate. The local authority has a comprehensive children's guide in place which is given to all children within the care of the local authority. This meets the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and this information contained in this guide is presented in a professional manner that aims to be attractive and accessible for young people.



## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager of the service is an experienced practitioner having a great deal of experience of working with children and families within residential childcare and in positions within field social work, education social work and child protection. Foster carers and placing officers within their questionnaires and when interviewed stated that they considered the service to be well managed and it is apparent that the manager of the service is held in high regard by the placement team supervising social workers, foster carers and placing social workers. She holds a social work qualification and at the time of the inspection was undertaking NVQ Level 5 in Management with the intention of completing this by January 2005.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a robust recruitment procedure in place for the recruitment of the manager and of placement team staff. This procedure includes the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Clear records are maintained of checks made as part of this recruitment process including records of Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures.

## 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

It was evident throughout the inspection process that the manager has a clear understanding of the operation of the service and gives a priority to monitoring and controlling its activities and the quality of its performance. At the time of the inspection evidence was available to demonstrate that the manager monitors many of the activities of the fostering service to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the work and the record keeping. This system included all those elements of the service set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Clear staff roles and accountability is in place and an established and well-developed staff supervision and appraisal system is operated within the Child Placement Team. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and minutes are taken and retained. The manager is responsible for the budget of the fostering service and clear procedures are in place to monitor financial arrangements. Information is made available in the statement of purpose and in other forms about the bandings and levels of fees paid to foster carers.

At the time of the inspection the fostering service of Stockton Borough Council Child Placement Team had a system in place to monitor significant events and the manager demonstrated that this system includes notification to the National Care Standards Commission of the events set out in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

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

2

**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.**

0

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

1

**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**

The manager of the service has a clear job description and clear lines of accountability are defined and in place. Arrangements are in place to cover for the manager in her absence although this is undertaken by the Service Manager (Resources) within the Health and Social Care Department. This means that no one within the fostering service maintains direct management control in the absence of the manager. Taking into consideration the other commitments and responsibilities of the line manager it is unlikely that this person will have sufficient time to “deputise” for the manager in such a way as to give sufficiently close management oversight and it is recommended that clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent. The manager said that consideration is being given to the creation of two senior supervising social worker posts for the Child Placement Team and that, if this was to occur, one of these posts would be as a “deputy” with regard to the fostering service.

## 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 local authority carries out in-depth assessments in relation prospective foster carers. The assessment includes a number of visits to the carers home, the taking up of references, interviews with friends, relatives and referees and where necessary the carers own children to determine the suitability of carers. Evidence was available within the foster carer assessments examined of a close consideration of the health and safety and environmental issues relating to the foster home and of safe caring issues. Foster carers receive as part of their training, support and training in safe caring practice, child protection and health and safety and information gained during the inspection showed that all parties interviewed commented very favourably about the amount and quality of foster carer training offered.

During the inspection process four foster carers who had young people placed with them were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors welcome in their home and co-operated fully with the inspection process. It was evident from these visits and discussions that foster carers provide warm, comfortably furnished accommodation that reflects the needs of the young people placed with them.

### 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

Training offered to prospective foster carers includes a training session on valuing diversity. Information on managing and valuing diversity is available to foster carers within the foster carers handbook. Carers interviewed individually and those spoken to in a group discussion said that they are given appropriate training and equipment. Evidence was available during the inspection to show that foster carers receive appropriate equipment and support to care for young people with disabilities and that arrangements are made to ensure that young people receive the specialist services they require from the appropriate professionals. All young people spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that they were happy with their foster placement and their carers and said that the placement met their needs. Evidence was available to demonstrate that young people are encouraged to develop friendships and become involved in clubs and activities based on their interests.

It is evident from the records of prospective and approved foster carers examined that the agency encourages and welcomes diversity amongst the foster carers working for it although the manager said that the service has difficulty in recruiting sufficient foster carers from ethnic minority groups.

**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**

Foster carers reported that they are kept appropriately informed by their supervising social workers. Additionally it is clear that the process for ensuring that foster carers receive full information about the young people within their care has improved since the last inspection with a great majority of foster carers stating that they received enough information about the young people they care for. This represents a significant improvement over the situation at the last inspection and it is clear from interviews with supervising social workers and the manager that the service has made great progress in this area. Evidence was available to show that the placement team, on occasions, undertakes tasks relating to the gathering of additional information about children needing placements in order to carry out the matching process. The placement team staff meet weekly to share information and to allocate any new referrals although it is evident that, as with the majority of local authority fostering services, the team operate within the constraints of the department's statutory duties and an insufficient number of carers. The Foster Placement Agreements used by the fostering service do not specifically set out the elements of matching considered and the arrangements for additional support for foster carers to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer. Additionally the Foster Placement Agreements used by the fostering service require updating as, in the section that requires compliance with the foster carer agreement, the previous regulations, now superseded by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, are cited.

It was noted at this inspection that a significant number of children are placed with carers outside of the carers' registration approvals mainly in respect of age and number of children placed. The manager, however, was well aware of all these situations and had clearly documented the reasons for this and any additional support or training necessary to support the situation was identified. This information was not always well documented in foster files however. Placing officer, foster carer and young people's responses at interview and in questionnaires show that the fostering service works hard to provide positive placements for young people that meet their individual needs. One young person asked, in the questionnaire she completed, for the following statement to be included in the inspection report. "The fostering service is exceedingly good and I don't know where I would be without them."

**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**

Foster carers interviewed said that they had received information and training in relation to child protection and safe caring practice. Policies and procedures are in place in relation to the management of child protection referrals, and carers interviewed demonstrated an appropriate level of understanding of their role and responsibilities in dealing with child protection issues and referrals. Most children said that they had been informed either by their social worker or foster carers how to make a complaint and arrangements are in place for independent investigations of serious complaints or child protection allegations made

against foster carers.

No children spoken reported instances of bullying but information regarding the percentage of children who report never, or hardly ever bullied is not available for this report, as it was not gathered in sufficient quantity to be valid.

New foster carers are expected to develop a safe caring statement for their home but this expectation has not yet been applied to existing foster carers and it is recommended that this be the case.

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

X

%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

It was evident from discussions with foster carers of children and young people who are in contact with their families that they work hard to facilitate this contact. This inspection demonstrated that foster carers now generally receive comprehensive and complete information about the young people they care for that includes details of contact arrangement and responsibilities. Placement agreements observed during the inspection contained appropriate information about the contact arrangements and foster carers interviewed were well aware of the expectations of them in this area. The majority of placing officers who completed questionnaires said that they thought foster carers work well with young people's families.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Children, carers, placing social workers and supervising social workers spoken to during the inspection said that children's views are sought regarding their care planning. All children who returned questionnaires said that foster carers take their views into account and involve them in decisions about their lives. The majority of foster children consulted said that they are aware of how to make a complaint and those spoken to who were able to comment said that they thought their complaints would be treated seriously. All supervising social workers interviewed described how young people's views are sought and, although one person expressed the view that this was more the responsibility of the placing social worker, further discussion demonstrated that the views of young people are taken into account in the person's daily work.

**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 examination of young people's files showed that the health care needs of young people placed are given appropriate consideration by the fostering service. This was confirmed by interviews with staff members, placing social workers, foster carers and young people. It is clear from this inspection that significant efforts have been made to ensure that foster carers receive full Looked After Children documentation regarding the young people they care for and this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection of the service consequently foster carers receive more complete information about the young people they are caring for. Foster Placement Agreements were observed to contain information about how to obtain the necessary consents for medical treatment though this information was not always recorded in sufficient detail. Minutes of reviews contained appropriate information, where necessary, about the young person's health care needs.

**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**

The local authority generally has developed extensive and effective arrangements to support and promote the educational achievements of looked after children and evidence was available to show that significant efforts are taking place to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEP) are in place in respect of each child. Some foster carers interviewed during the inspection, however, said that they do not receive copies of the young persons PEP.

Information is available about educational arrangements within the foster carers handbook and clear guidance is available for foster carers covering situations in which young people are not attending school. A young person living with one of the foster carers who was case tracked as part of the inspection had considerable success in her GCSEs and both she and her foster carer deserve commendation for this achievement.

The Foster Placement Agreements used by the fostering service is not sufficiently specific in identifying the financial responsibility for educational activities, equipment and uniforms.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

It is clear from the inspection that information is provided for foster carers regarding the promotion of skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Written information setting out this requirement is contained within different documents however and would benefit from compiling and some further development. All foster carers working with older children spoken to commented particularly favourably on the quality of some recently undertaken training provide by the authority's Child Placement Team and Youth Team regarding moving on and the preparation for independence. Foster carers interviewed spoke knowledgably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood and evidence was available in young people's files of work being carried out with other professionals and agencies.

Foster carers interviewed who had experience of working with the Youth Team spoke very positively about its effectiveness.



## 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?

2

It is evident from the inspection that staff recruitment practices within the fostering service are thorough and comply with Stockton Borough Council's recruitment policy, which was examined during the inspection. All staff members' files examined contained evidence that Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures had been received in respect of the staff members and a clear record is retained of the date of these CRB Disclosures in order that a programme of three yearly renewal can operate.

All staff members' files examined contained proof of the person's identity and a photograph and records showed that a full employment history is obtained for each individual staff members with and explanation of any gaps in employment and the reason for leaving previous posts. Records of interviews are retained however examination of files and a discussion with a representative of the council's Human Resources department showed that telephone enquiries are not made in addition to receiving written references. This should be carried out in order to assess suitability of people working in or for the fostering service.

Social work staff members' files examined showed that the staff members concerned are appropriately professionally qualified and those interviewed demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

13

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

1

**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**

Observation of policies, procedures and records and interviews with staff and the manager demonstrated that staff members are appropriately managed and that the organisation provides an efficient and effective foster care service. Foster carers interviewed spoke highly of the staff and manager of the agency and the support given to them by it, though some carers expressed the view that support from young people's social workers was not as good. The manager and some placing social workers spoken to described difficulties experienced in providing sufficient numbers of children's social workers over the past several months and said that action had been taken to address the situation and that it should now be much improved. A clear management structure is in place and staff members interviewed said that lines of responsibility, accountability and the level of delegation are clear. Evidence of regular, structured and minuted team meetings taking place was available at the inspection, as was evidence of a formal and well documented supervision system. Staff members all receive clear job descriptions and contracts of employment.

The service has clerical and administrative support, which is clearly effective and appreciated by the staff team and response gained by foster carers from the team clerk when they call the fostering service was highly praised.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The service benefits from having an experienced practitioner group of staff, a number of whom have undertaken post-qualifying training in childcare. Caseloads vary as the service provides both a fostering and adoption service. Most staff carry a mixed caseload of fostering/adoption carers and in addition carry out training for carers. Each foster carer is allocated a named supervising social worker although carers may contact the service and speak to any placement team worker. The service operates a duty officer system to ensure there is always a member of the placement team on hand to answer queries or deal with emergencies and appropriate arrangements are in place for out of hours support for foster carers. Training provided by the service to its carers incorporates the areas listed in Standard 17.7 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and foster carers spoken to during the inspection spoke very highly of the training provided by the fostering service and external agencies.

Examples of the foster carer assessment reports (Form F) sampled demonstrated that supervising social workers undertake comprehensive assessments on prospective foster carers. If any issues of concerns are identified or it is considered that the case may be complex, procedures are in place to appoint two placement team staff to undertake the assessments. A clear process exists in order to ensure that all necessary checks are carried out as part of the assessments process and records within foster carers' files of this assessment process were generally well maintained although some pieces of information were missing from some files examined including a health and safety checklist, pet safety check and car insurance, MOT and registration checks. The manager said that she has plans in place to ensure that this information is recorded and maintained up-to-date. Additionally, although all foster carers recruited prior to the formation of the Criminal Records

Bureau, whose files were examined had been police checked, not all had applied for or received Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures. The manager said that she understood that these were not necessary until it becomes necessary to up date the police checks after three years. Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures should be carried out on the few foster carers in this situation as soon as possible.

Within some files examined there appeared at first sight to be a contradiction between the conditions of approval applying to the foster carer in recorded in different place in the file. For example, in one file the approval categories were stated differently on the Foster Carer Agreement and the foster carer's reviews. On closer examination and following discussion with the manager it became apparent that the terms of approval had been varied over time and that there was no conflict in the information recorded. Nevertheless the records of how the situation had developed were not sufficiently clear to explain this and a clear record of all changes in approval should be retained. A letter should be sent to the foster carer advising them of each change of approval and a copy retained on their file so that no confusion can exist.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that the service operates within its own sound employment procedures. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Fostering Service provides regular supervision to all of its carers undertaken by a named supervising social worker and arrangements are in place through a duty system within the fostering service and a system of out of hours contact to ensure that appropriate support is available to foster carers. Guidance is produced and available to staff and carers in the form of handbooks, policies and procedures and practice guidance. There are specific policies and procedures dealing with whistleblowing, health and safety and child protection, though the development of information regarding health and safety to sit between the broad, strategic departmental policies and the brief information in the foster carers' handbook would guide and support foster carers' practice more effectively. The local authority has appropriate public and professional indemnity insurance cover for staff and carers.

**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**

All social work practitioners within the service hold an appropriate social work qualification. A number of staff have subsequently undertaken post qualifying training in child care and other development courses. Staff interviewed said that the department offers good training and development opportunities, and the manager demonstrated during the interview the importance she places on staff training. A record is maintained of staff training completed and evidence was available to demonstrate that forward planning takes place base on training needs identified in supervision and appraisal. Foster carers and staff members spoken to told the inspectors about training undertaken jointly by staff members and foster carers.

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

Evidence available at the inspection showed that a formal, structured supervision system exists for all staff. This takes place regularly and is minuted with records being maintained and stored confidentially. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Appraisals occur annually for all staff. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members.

**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**

Foster carers stated in their questionnaires and when interviewed that they receive good support from supervising social workers within the placement team. Guidance is available to carers in the form of the foster carers handbook, and both carers and staff had a good understanding of the role of the supervising social worker. Foster carers said that communication is good with the placement team and that support or advice is always available from team members through the system of duty employed. A significant number of carers contrasted this good level of support with what they described as unreliable and inconsistent support from children's social workers. Foster carers said that they felt that the training they receive is good and that a lot of training takes place. Some foster carers expressed the view that the provision of a crèche for young children to allow foster carers to take part in training would be helpful and said that this had been offered once but that there was little take-up. The manager confirmed that this was the case and explained that various methods of encouraging training and support groups are employed including offering daytime and evening courses and the option of a crèche if enough people expressed interest.

The fostering service employs a scrutiny panel in addition to the child placement panel. This scrutiny panel considers the annual reviews of each foster carer after the first one.

**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**

It is clear from the inspection that foster carers are issued with and sign a foster carer agreement that complies with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. This agreement includes a statement requiring foster carers to comply with the all the organisations policies and procedures and specifies that they comply with the policies on behaviour management and child protection. It does not specify compliance with the policy on unauthorised absence as is set out in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and it is recommended that this policy be amended to comply with this more fully. Foster carers receive a handbook which covers the policy, procedures and guidelines of the agency in a manner that attempts to be readable and accessible to foster carers. In achieving this, the handbook is not completely comprehensive and as such there is a need for additional information for foster carers in some areas that will sit between the handbook

and the broad policies and procedures of the organisation.

Foster carers are supervised by an appropriately qualified named worker and have regular supervision meetings with full records of being retained; records of all visits to foster carers are recorded in foster carers' files though, in some files examined this record did not state whether the visit was announced or unannounced. It is recommended that this be recorded in every instance. Clear systems are in place to record any complaints made or any allegations of abuse and well-developed reporting systems are in place.

In one file examined the decision making process around a difficult situation was not clearly documented and it appeared that a situation of potential risk was being allowed to occur. In discussion with the manager it became clear that this was not the case, it was apparent that the fostering service had taken appropriate actions and that the issue was one of a lack of clear recording.

**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**

Foster carers receive pre-approval training as part of the process of assessment and this training is appropriate and cover the elements set out in Standard 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that are appropriate at the time. Foster carers supervision considers carers training requirements or strengths that they wish to develop and all foster carers spoken to during the inspection said that training offered is of a high standard. Training is offered at differing times of the day with, usually a daytime and an evening session being offered. The manager explained the various methods used by the fostering service to encourage the take up of training and although two foster carers said that they thought training was inaccessible to some foster carers because of a lack of childcare it was evident that the fostering service has offered additional support including crèche facilities. Joint training for foster carers and social service staff members is offered as a matter of course with foster carers being able to join any appropriate courses offered to the borough council's staff members. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection particularly praised some recent training offered by the Youth Team, which included presentations from ex-looked after children.

Although discussions with supervising social workers and foster carers showed that training undertaken is considered at the annual foster carer review the records of these reviews sighted during the inspection did not include specific reference to this.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Policy and procedural guidance is in place in the organisation regarding the purpose, content and structure of young people's files and evidence was available to show that appropriate levels of information are made available to foster carers regarding the young person in their care. The young people's files examined, were generally well maintained and clearly structured although the Assessment and Action record in the majority of files examined were not completed in sufficient detail. In one young person's file examined, the information contained was not sufficiently well structured or compiled to enable the child to reflect on and understand his or her history and background.

Foster carers interviewed said that they were well aware of the identified needs of the young person in their care and were involved in reviews and case conferences appropriately. The majority of foster carers spoken to said that they now receive the majority of information about a young person they take within the established timescales and this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Evidence from observation and discussion showed that carers work with young people to make a record of their life events and that information in the carers' households is retained confidentially. The work of one foster family to collect and present life story information for the very young children cared for prior to and during their placement was viewed by the lead inspector during a visit to their home. This work deserves the highest commendation for its thoroughness, thoughtfulness and sensitivity.

Files and confidential information are securely and safely stored in line with the organisation's own policy.

**Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

At the time of the inspection the fostering service's administrative records were generally well maintained. The children's register and register of foster carers, include all the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Foster carers' records were observed to be generally well maintained though the recording in half of those examined was in places not sufficient to evidence or explain the work undertaken. Recording in files was noted to be clearly evidence based and records of the approval process showed a clear separation between facts and their interpretation. In one foster carer's file examined it was apparent that a signed foster carer agreement had been amended using Tippex; this should not be the case. Evidence was available within the files of foster carers and young people to show that the manager regularly monitors the files to ensure their quality and completeness.

Young people's records held are maintained by the children's social work teams in line with the Looked After Children recording system. These files were observed to be more satisfactorily maintained and structured than at the last inspection of the fostering service though one file examined did not give clear information to explain the background and history of the child and in most files the Assessment and Action records were not completed in sufficient detail. Generally foster placement agreements were observed to be completed more fully than was the case at the last inspection though further work is still needed in this area. Foster carers spoken to stated that generally they receive the necessary information about young people within specified timescales. Policy and procedural guidance regarding record keeping and recording are in place as is information about the requirements managing confidential information.

Records of complaints and allegations are clearly recorded on the relevant files and a central record is retained to collate and manage this information.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	127
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	103
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	52
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	10
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	7
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	76
<b>Maximum £</b>	302

## 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 operates from appropriately furnished offices in Billingham shared with field work staff from children's teams. The offices have appropriate storage facilities for the storage and retention of records. There are efficient administrative systems, including Information Technology (IT) systems in place. At the time of the inspection visit the service was gaining additional space on the same floor of the building.



## 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

At the time of the inspection the manager of the fostering service was able to provide a detailed annual budget for the agency that showed that it operates on a secure financial footing. Evidence from interview with the manager and examination of the services budget statements showed that the financial situation is monitored and reviewed by the organisation regularly.

### 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 fostering service is operated by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. Financial resources are managed separately from the service though the manager has responsibility for the service's budget within the framework of the council's financial procedure and receives regular budgetary updates.

**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

Evidence was seen which confirmed that Stockton Child Placement Service makes prompt payments to its foster carers. Fees are paid according to an age banding and range from £76.00 to £152.00. The payment scheme pays an additional allowance based on foster carers skills, competency and experience with the maximum weekly payment being £302.

## 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?

2

Stockton Borough Council fostering service operates a joint adoption and fostering panel that considers the assessments of foster carers and makes recommendations regarding approval or otherwise to the agency decision maker. This panel also undertakes the first review of all foster carers. The borough council also has in place a second panel that deals with fostering matters; this panel considers all subsequent reviews of foster carers. A procedure is in place to ensure the approving panel receives management information from the review panel and also information regarding the review of foster carers.

The examination of minutes of foster panel meetings and records within foster carers' files demonstrated that panel gives a careful and thorough consideration of the information presented to it and only makes decisions when it is quorate in terms of number and composition. The composition of panel meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 though it should include a person who has lived in foster care or the parent of such a person in order to comply with Standard 30.9 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council fostering service has a 'shared care' service provided to parents of children with disabilities. This work is underpinned by its own policies and procedure.

## 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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The local authority recognises the particular relationships and position of family and friend carers. Assessment is undertaken in the same way as for other foster carers and training is offered, however, the service is sensitive to the fact that many of these carers do not view themselves as foster carers within the normal sense of the term, and therefore direct their involvement according to the need and the wishes of those involved. The manager said during the inspection that work is being undertaken to link work with kinship carers more closely with the mainstream fostering service.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

There was no Lay Assessor available for this Inspection.

**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 1 December 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Provider's comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office where these have been submitted.**

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 15 April 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

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

**Public reports**

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



**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

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

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

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of Stockton Borough Council Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

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

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.