



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency**

Oldway Mansion

Torquay Road

Paignton

Devon

TQ3 2TS

5th,8th,9th,10th,11th,12th,15th,19th,22nd,23rd,24th,25th,29th March and April 1st 2004.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency

**Address**

Oldway Mansion, Torquay Road, Paignton, Devon, TQ3  
2TS

**Local Authority Manager**

Mr.V.Clark, Assistant Director of Social Services.

**Tel No:**

01803 201201

Ms.Georgina Dunk, Operations Manager.

**Address**

Oldway Mansion, Torquay Road, Paignton, Devon, TQ3  
2TS

**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**

NA

**Date of latest registration certificate**

NA

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NONE

**Date of last inspection**

NA

|  |          |  |        |                |
|--|----------|--|--------|----------------|
| <b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>  |          | 5 <sup>th</sup> March 2004- and dates as per front sheet |        | <b>ID Code</b> |
| <b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>  |          | 09:30 am   |        |                |
| <b>Name of Inspector</b>   | <b>1</b> | Christine Freestone                                      | 123716 |                |
| <b>Name of Inspector</b>   | <b>2</b> | Amanda Tudge.  |        |                |
| <b>Name of Inspector</b>   | <b>3</b> |  |        |                |
| <b>Name of Inspector</b>   | <b>4</b> |  |        |                |
| <b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b><br>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>  |          | Ms. G. Dunk, Operations Manager.                         |        |                |

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

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

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

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

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

**Part D: Provider's Response**

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

**D.2. Action Plan**

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

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency. 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.

Torbay Council is a small unitary authority in South Devon. The Foster Care Service is a part of the Children's Services provision within Torbay. At the time of inspection a review of the strategic structure of the services had been undertaken with the creation of a new Operations Manager post which will allow several specialist strands of provision to be managed along with fostering as a cohesive whole. This will include kinship placements, private fostering arrangements and the development of mother and baby placements.

As part of the overarching strategic plan for the services the authority is aiming to develop a Children's Trust by September 2005. To this end a Commission has been set up to look at integration generally, and the mechanism for working towards an integrated approach as required by the Green Paper. The aim is to use the Children and Young People partnership within Torbay to develop a "shadow" Children's Trust.

Recruitment to the Fostering Service is managed by a Central Human Resources team based within the authority. Foster carers are recruited by the Service utilising various methods such as newspaper advertisements. Foster carers currently in place generally enable the service to provide a choice of placements which are appropriate to the needs of individual children.

As an initial good practice model the Service completed and have since updated an audit of their provision against the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the Fostering Regulations. This action plan has ensured that staff and managers are aware of the requirements of the inspection model and are working towards compliance in all aspects.

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to the Service provision. Other relevant Authority policy and procedural guidance is also in place e.g. in relation to Equality of Opportunity.

## 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.)

#### Service Details:

Torbay Local Authority Fostering Service,  
Oldway Mansion, Torquay Rd, Paignton, Devon, TQ3.2TS.

#### Dates of Inspection Visits:

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> 2004.

#### Description of the strengths and issues to be addressed by the Service:

This inspection has highlighted key strengths of the Service and areas for development. The report must be read within the following context. The Authority chose not to use the questionnaires utilised by the National Care Standards Commission in relation to Placing Social Workers, Foster Carers and Children and Young People placed. This has resulted in an inspection process which is based upon a narrow sampling base of six foster carers, children and relevant documentation. Other inspection methodologies have been utilised as per the inspection framework.

The report is written to reflect the issues that the "Service" must and can address and those which the "Authority" must and can address. This report reflects the issues which impact upon the Service provision, but cannot be controlled by the Service. In particular this acknowledges the problems faced in relation to the staffing deficit within the Authority in the Family Intervention teams and Permanency Planning teams. This has been recognised at a strategic level and discussions with the Responsible Individual for the Service confirm that a plan is in place for recruitment to these teams.

The major strengths of the Service are :

1. The open, communicative style of a stable and established team. Staff observed felt able to express their views in a safe and professional manner. The team has a strong culture of peer support.
2. The supportive style and management of supervising social workers of their caseloads of carers. All carers interviewed were very positive in the level of support that they received.
3. A range of good practice models across the provision of care including access to leisure facilities at reduced rates, an effective Contract Care model, an effective protocol in relation to runaways, an independent advocacy service via the Children's Society, the Foster Force support group / network for the children of carers, the effective use of the Independent Reviewing Officer and the use of the Children's



Society in the provision of an independent advocacy service.

4. A sound professional insight into the requirements of the Fostering Standards as evidenced by the initial audit of practice against the standards and subsequently revised action plan.

The main area that the Service must address is as follows:

The service has a strong oral tradition in relation to the dissemination of information and the inspection process found outcomes to issues , but finding a clear audit trail of evidence of the process followed was problematic at times. The Service needs to develop robust auditable systems in order to clearly 'evidence its' practice.

The Service is in the process of some change as a part of the Authority Strategic Plan and this report identifies some of the anticipated developments which are planned for 2004 – 2005 and will be audited and inspected at the next annual inspection in February 2005.

#### **Summary of standards achieved:**

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

**1 of 1 standard achieved.**

##### **Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service. ( Standards 2-3)**

**1 of 2 standards achieved.**

##### **Management of the fostering service. ( Standards 4&5)**

**1 of 2 standards achieved.**

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

**6 of these 9 standards are met.**

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

**7 of these 9 standards are achieved.**

##### **Records. ( Standards 24&25)**

**1 of these 2 standards was achieved.**

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

**1 of these 1 standards was achieved.**

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

**2 of these standards do not apply to this authority. Standard 29 is achieved.**

**Fostering panels (Standard 30)**

**0 of this 1 standards were achieved.**

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

**Not applicable at this inspection.**

**Family and friends as carers \*( Standard 32)**

**Not applicable at this inspection.**

## 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:

Standard 15. 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.

In the light of the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations it is required that all administrative staff working with the Fostering Service immediately apply for enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks ( working with children ) Whilst acknowledging the Authority view that this is not standard practice for administrative staff in general , those working at Parkfield House have both day to day contact with children and access to children's files and IT databases. Such level of contact is recognised as being essential within the Fostering Service provision in order to support the Service role. This therefore demands that enhanced CRB declarations are in place.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Regulation | Standard | Required actions |  |
|-----|------------|----------|------------------|--|
|     |            |          |                  |  |
|     |            |          |                  |  |
|     |            |          |                  |  |
|     |            |          |                  |  |
|     |            |          |                  |  |

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

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

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

| <b>Condition</b> | <b>Compliance</b> |  |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| NONE             |                   |  |
| <b>Comments</b>  |                   |  |

| <b>Condition</b> | <b>Compliance</b> |  |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| NONE             |                   |  |
| <b>Comments</b>  |                   |  |

| <b>Condition</b> | <b>Compliance</b> |  |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| NONE             |                   |  |
| <b>Comments</b>  |                   |  |

| <b>Condition</b> | <b>Compliance</b> |  |
|------------------|-------------------|--|
| NONE             |                   |  |
| <b>Comments</b>  |                   |  |

**Lead Inspector**      Chris Freestone      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      Amanda Tudge      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**      Emmy Tomsett      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**      \_\_\_\_\_

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Regulation | Standard * | Requirement   |   |
|-----|------------|------------|---|---|
| 1   | 42         | FS4        | The Service must develop clear, auditable monitoring records in relation to Schedule 7.   | July 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004                   |
| 2   | 20         | FS15       | The Authority must ensure that all administrative staff working for the Service at Parkfield House apply for enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks .<br><br>The Authority and Service must ensure that telephone enquiries are made in addition to obtaining written references. | Immediate<br><br>July 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004. |
|     |            |            |   |   |
|     |            |            |   |   |

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

| No. | Refer to Standard * | Recommendation Action  |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1   | FS6                 | It is recommended that the Authority should aim to ensure that the level of unmet need in relation to the recruitment of children's social workers is substantially reduced by October 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004. |

|   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| 2 | FS8  | It is recommended that the Service ensure that foster placement agreements contain reference to specific elements of matching which have been taken into consideration in agreeing the placement.  |
| 3 | FS12 | It is recommended that the Authority should ensure that a written health record is maintained for each child , is updated regularly and moves with the child. This should be in place by September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004.   |
| 4 | FS16 | It is recommended that the Service ensure that all foster carers maintain a clearly structured and regularly updated training portfolio. This should be evidenced by the next annual inspection of February 2005.  |
| 5 | FS19 | It is recommended that the Service ensure that joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers is held on a defined , regular basis. This should be evidenced within the training plan for 2004 – 2005.   |
| 6 | FS22 | It is recommended that the Service ensures that all staff sign contact logs upon completion. This should be completed by June 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004.  |
| 7 | FS25 | It is recommended that the Service ensures that all foster carers undergo a refresher session in relation to report writing and note keeping This should be completed by August 31 <sup>st</sup> 2004..<br><br>It is recommended that the Service ensures the implementation of a formal system to routinely monitor the quality and adequacy of records. This should be in place by September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004. |
| 8 | FS30 | It is recommended that the Service ensures that the Fostering Panel receives management information in relation to all annual reviews and develops a systematic system of monitoring and feedback to the Service by the Panel. This should be in place by September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004.  |
| 9 | FS3  | It is recommended that the Human Resource department within the Authority match their existing policies and procedures to the regulations and standards in order to ensure compliance. This should be achieved by September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004.  |

\* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

## **PART B                      INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Number of Inspector days spent                  | 14     |
| Survey of placing authorities                   | NO     |
| Foster carer survey                             | NO     |
| Foster children survey                          | NO     |
| 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                   | NA     |
| • Contact with parents                          | NO     |
| • Contact with supervising social workers       | YES    |
| • Examination of files                          | YES    |
| Individual interview with manager               | YES    |
| Information from provider                       | YES    |
| Individual interviews with key staff            | YES    |
| Group discussion with staff                     | NO     |
| Interview with panel chair                      | YES    |
| Observation of foster carer training            | YES    |
| Observation of foster panel                     | YES    |
| Inspection of policy/practice documents         | YES    |
| Inspection of records                           | YES    |
| Interview with individual child                 | YES    |
| Date of Inspection                              | 5/3/04 |
| Time of Inspection                              | 9.30AM |
| Duration Of Inspection (hrs)                    | 112    |



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

A Statement of Purpose and Function is in place in relation to this standard. Staff interviewed were aware of the Statement of Purpose and its' role.

A Children's Guide has been recently developed. Two versions are available which are age and language appropriate. It is anticipated by the Service that it will be made available to all children and foster carers when printed.

The Service policy and procedural guidance demonstrates links to the Statement of Purpose and Function.

The new Operations Manager has been appointed and it is anticipated that they will become the Responsible Individual for the Service. The role of the Registered Manager will be undertaken by the Service Manager, which appointment is anticipated by the early summer.

## 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 |
|--|---|

The Service is managed within the context of an overall Authority structure.

The Operations Manager for the Service holds a dedicated budget for the Service within the overall business plan for the authority. This is monitored monthly .

The newly appointed Operations Manager holds a broad range of qualifications within the field. The staff team are all well qualified within the field with a broad qualification base and areas of specific expertise which are utilised positively within the team.

The Service will need to ensure that the appointee to the role of Service Manager holds or undertakes the requisite Level 4 qualifications as required by 2.2 of this standard.

Feedback from the staff team for the Service demonstrates a clear understanding of the Service structure and the role of the Service within the context of the Authority.

Staff interviewed comment very positively upon the open and communicative style of management in place. This was also noted by the Inspector during the process of the inspection.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

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

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | 2 |
|--|---|

Staff files sampled demonstrate that the fitness of those carrying on , managing or working for the Fostering Service are fit to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As recommended in standard 15 it would be to the benefit of the Authority to match their existing human resource and employment policies and procedures to the regulations and standards to ensure that there is compliance. ie. In relation to telephone enquiries being made and logged in order to follow up written references.

Notes of dates of CRB renewal dates are maintained.

## 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?

1

The structure and function of the Service within the context of the Authority is clear. It's annual strategic plan forms a part of the annual plan and targets for the Children's Services . Staff are clear in relation to communication structures within the Service and accountability within both the Service and Authority.

The Service must develop clear , auditable monitoring records of all issues related to Schedule 7. This will be developed by the current management team and will become the responsibility of the newly appointed Service Manager / Registered Manager.

No conflicts of interest had been declared at the time of inspection.

A range of payments is available to carers' in relation to the number of children placed, complexity and nature of placement. A system of Contract Care has been introduced whereby a wage is paid to specific carers for children and young people who present with particularly challenging behaviours and issues. The criteria for placements within the Contract Care system are clear.

Carers interviewed were generally happy with the system of payments and their accuracy.

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

NA

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.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

Staff interviewed are clear in their understanding of the current management structure and appear . All appear confident with the new Operations Manager role. There is a clear understanding of accountability at all levels and the deputising structure is understood.

During the inspection a staff meeting and a Panel were observed and both demonstrated clear understanding of the structure and accountability within the Service.

The current change culture within the Authority is well managed by the team. An open , communicative style is evident in supporting the process of change.

## 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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

There are currently 62 placements supported by the Service as well as 4 Contract Carers. Those foster carers visited as part of the inspection process were welcoming and demonstrated an assurance in their role. All spoke positively of the Service role in relation to matching and placement support. Homes were warm and comfortably furnished and foster carers were well aware of issues related to Safe Care and health and safety.

Some foster carers expressed concern in relation to a level of unmet need in the allocation of a specific social worker for the child or young person placed. There were also concerns voiced in relation to the continuity of the allocation of social workers to the child or young person placed. This was discussed with the Responsible Individual who reflected the issues related to recruitment and retention of staff by the Authority within the Family Intervention team and Permanency Planning team. This is currently being addressed by the Authority with a focussed recruitment campaign.

### 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 Authority has an Equality of Opportunity Policy.

The Service aims to ensure that cultural diversity and all aspects of equality are addressed throughout its' provision. The training session witnessed at the time of the inspection had a clear focus in relation to equality throughout.

Interviews with foster carers confirmed that they strive to support the child or young person in their individuality. Fostering social workers equally support this stance.

Valuing the diversity of individuals is a strand of practice noted throughout the training schedule for foster carers from the point of recruitment and assessment onwards.

Children and young people with a disability receive the specific support required including an intensive level of support for one young person with a range of complex disabilities.

Children and young people, foster carers and supervising social workers were positive that relevant and appropriate hobbies and leisure pursuits were supported.

The Service has developed a good practice model in relation to leisure in the allocation of some time to one supervising social worker to develop access to a range of leisure facilities within the area. These include reduced rates and in some cases free admission to local facilities. Carers are notified of all the offers available and commented positively upon the scheme.

**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

The co-ordination and procedure in relation to matching is clear and well understood by the staff team . The Placement Co – ordinator role is well defined and very effective procedures are in place. Planned placements and others are discussed with the foster carer, child’s social worker and fostering social worker. Emergency placements have sometimes necessitated taking a foster carer over numbers for which an exemption has been granted by the Service Manager. Statistical database evidence is readily available in relation to foster carers and placements. A weekly report in relation to “unmet need “ is generated for consideration at the team meeting. Discussion of such was observed at one of the team meetings held during the period of the inspection.

The Service must ensure that foster placement agreements contain reference to specific elements of matching which have been taken into consideration in agreeing the placement. It is anticipated that a form will be developed which will reflect the issues taken into account.

Where possible , particularly with planned placements an appropriate series of introductory meetings and visits are put into place. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that this process was undertaken and commented upon its’ effectiveness. No placement takes place without an initial risk assessment being in place.

Some carers did comment that they felt that whilst they received all the information in relation to a child given to the fostering service, this had sometimes proved to be limited, particularly in relation to an emergency placement.

**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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

There are clear written procedures for foster carers in relation to a child missing from home, safe care, managing behaviour and issues around self esteem. These themes are reflected within the training programme. The “Choosing to Foster “ session which was observed during the period of inspection reflected these key themes. The use of a long established foster carer as a part of the training team was very effective in reflecting these issues based around their own experience.

All foster carers interviewed were clear in their understanding of corporal punishment being unacceptable. Written guidance is clear. A positive behaviour management strategy is clearly understood.

Foster carers are clear that they are given all the information received by the fostering service in relation to a child or young person placed.

The Service utilises a good practice model in relation to children and young people who are missing from home ensuring the support of an independent advocacy service for children and young people who have been missing from home.

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

0

%

**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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

Contact arrangements for children and young people in care are clearly documented – file evidence seen in support of this standard. Foster carers interviewed were clear of their role in relation to contact arrangements or otherwise for the children and young people in their care. All were supportive of contact arrangements and positive of the support received by the supervising social worker in relation to contact. All were positive of the support received by the child’s social worker where such a worker was in place.

Contact issues are also reviewed under the aegis of the Independent Reviewing Officer as an integral part of any LAC review. This role is very clearly defined and represents a good practice model in its’ clear implementation and effectiveness. The Independent Reviewing Officer interviewed was clear in the central role that the child or young person and foster carers play in relation to contact issues and the impact of such contact. This role is subject to development. Clear structures and practices are in place. Multi agency working is seen as essential within the role. All children and young people who are looked after are formally reviewed, including those who have not yet been allocated a social worker. This latter mechanism ensures that children and young people do not “slip through the net” in terms of review and the central tenet of practice which places listening to children at its’ centre.



Financial support in relation to contact is in place. This was confirmed by the foster carers interviewed.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The Service and the Authority utilise various sources in order to ensure that children's opinions and those of their families are sought including :

1. The child / young person.
2. The information gained by the Independent Reviewing Officer.
3. The information received from the parent(s) for reviews.
4. Information received from the child's social worker.
5. Information received from the fostering social worker for the foster carers
6. Other multi – agency sources.

The Manager of the Service confirmed that the fostering service is seeking to develop this area during 2004 – 2005.

Foster carers are clear in their understanding of the importance of consultation with children and young people as are the staff team.

The mechanism for complaints is clear and utilised by children and young people.

**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?**

**2**

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard and foster carers interviewed were clearly aware of their responsibilities in relation to the health of the children and young people in their care.

File evidence demonstrates that an outline of health issues are documented within the LAC documentation. A broad and appropriate range of health services are available to children and young people including a range of specialist support services.

Interviews with foster carers demonstrated that a written health record for each child in their care is not available to them . The Authority must ensure that such a record is developed

and updated during the placement and moves with the child.

Appropriate training for foster carers is in place.

A Community Psychiatric Nurse is in place within the multi – agency team and an appointment is to be made in relation to a Nurse post for Looked After Children. A Named GP is also in place. Referrals for therapeutic support are made to the Specialist Assessment and Therapy Service ( SATS) and CAMHS team. Relevant grant monies have enabled the development of a therapeutic team. One aim of the team is to develop a tool kit to allow Looked After Children to self report in respect of their health. Interpretation of this report will help to define the route to be followed in order to target appropriate support for the child or young person.

A development is in progress in relation to a web site for Looked After Children with local health information for children and young people. It is anticipated that this development will be completed this year.

### **Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

4

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

A strategic approach has been taken in relation to the education of Looked After Children and several key initiatives are in place including the funding of IT equipment for children and young people.

Interviews with the education team staff demonstrates a clarity and focus in relation to children and young people in care. Approx.83% of Looked After Children have Personal Education Plans (PEPS) in place. The team has recognised the complexity of the PEP form and its use by many differing agencies. A review of the format of the document is under way in order to simplify its' use and applicability.

Key data is available in relation to Looked After Children including data related to key stages 1 – 3 and GCSE results. These results reflect small cohort sizes and a varying complexity of need and behaviours for each young person. (Key Stage 1 data for 2002/2003 shows a marked improvement for English. Key Stage 2 data for 2003/2003 shows a decline across the board.)The importance of such data gathering has been recognised in the appointment of a 0.4fte post to assist in data and information gathering. Support packages are available for children and young people within mainstream education and those outside of it. The teams within education and the fostering service clearly recognise the impact that being “ looked after “ can have upon a child’s education and achievements.

As a good practice model a member of the education team has visited all the foster carers with school age children in order to support them in their role and to explain the PEP to them so that they in turn can support the young person within their education programme.

Foster carers interviewed were clear and positive of their role in supporting the education of the child or young person including attending parents ‘ evenings, open days, liaison with teachers and support for homework.

**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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

The Fostering Service / Children's team liaises with the Leaving Care team in order to ensure that Pathway Plans are in place for the young person who is looked after.

The Service anticipates developing a range of packs in order to further support foster carers in their role with the young people in their care.

Foster carers interviewed who had looked after older young people were able to explain how they had supported them through the transition from foster care to independent living.

## 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?

1

There are clear procedures in place across the Authority with regard to recruitment. It would be of benefit however, for an exercise to be carried out against the requirements for standard 15 and associated regulations to ensure that all aspects are covered, including the making of telephone enquiries as well as the obtaining of written references.

All social work staff have appropriate qualifications and copies of all certificate evidence is taken and held on file. Unqualified staff e.g. social work students are suitably supervised during the duration of their placement.

Other professional staff are subject to the same personnel policies and procedures and checking mechanisms.

The Authority must ensure that all administrative staff working for the Service at Parkfield House apply for enhanced Criminal Record Bureau clearances in relation to working with children. Whilst acknowledging the Authority view that this is not standard practice for administrative staff in general, those working at Parkfield House have both day to day contact with children, access to children's files and relevant IT databases. Such level of contact is recognised as being essential within the Fostering Service provision in order to support the service role. This therefore demands that enhanced CRB declarations are in place.

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

16

**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?****2**

The structure , function , management and accountability of the service are clear and understood by all staff interviewed during the process of inspection. Foster carers interviewed were also clear in their understanding of the structure of the Service and who they would contact in various situations. All spoke positively in relation to the support offered by the relevant fostering social worker.

Staff within the Service have a broad range of appropriate skills and qualifications including specialist skills.

Workloads are defined with each member of staff as well as other specific roles and / or duties. Supervision structures are in place and are commented upon elsewhere in this report. Training for both Service staff and carers is ongoing. The Service should ensure that all carers maintain a clearly structured and regularly updated training portfolio.

Dedicated administrative staff carry out a range of complex Service specific duties (some are identified in standard 26.) as well as day to day administration within Parkfield House. The Authority may wish to look at expanding the level of staffing regarding administrative support to the service as this area of service provision is expanded.

Clear and effective structures are in place in relation to enquiries from prospective carers and service requests. All are logged.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

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

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

The recruitment processes within the Service are clear and understood by the staff concerned. The Service staff complement is currently functioning with one vacancy within the Senior Practitioner role. The Service is also undergoing change in relation to the strategic plan which the Authority has in place.

Staff are clear in their understanding of training opportunities and for regarding. Policy and procedural guidance from the Authority supports these processes.

There are clear procedures in place in relation to the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. The assessment process utilises the BAAF Form F . That presented at panel and those monitored during file sampling are comprehensive with relevant levels of detail . All audited met the requirements of 17.7 of this standard. All are carried out by qualified social workers. Foster carers interviewed commented positively upon the detail and length of the assessment process- commonly 9-12 months.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

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

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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard. Authority employment practices are implemented and managed both at a local level and via the central Human Resources department.

Out of hours management and support services are available for foster carers and all carers interviewed were clear in their use and availability.

Each foster carer is allocated a fostering social worker. Supervision of carers and the undertaking of the annual appraisal are in place. Guidance to carers is offered via the carers information packs- updated regularly.

Health and safety procedural guidance is in place. Risk assessments were demonstrated upon file sampling as part of the assessment and placing procedures.

A whistle blowing policy is in place.

**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?****2**

Annual staff appraisal and supervision are used in order to identify and support staff training needs. All new staff undergo an induction period .

Foster carers are offered training (as discussed elsewhere in this report) and an annual review is undertaken. The Service needs to develop clear systems to record the outcomes of the training for the individual and how the training will or does relate to their role.

The Service should ensure that joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers is held on a defined regular basis.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

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

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

Throughout the period of inspection it was clear that the lines of management and accountability within the service are very clearly understood by all of the staff team. Supervision for all staff is in place . Social work staff receive formal supervision approximately monthly with written records being held and agreed. Training requests and requirements are generally discussed and identified during supervision or appraisal.

Staff meetings are also used as a venue to update staff when required. One such observed during the inspection period was open and communicative in style and all staff were able to input their views in a confident and open manner.

It was noted during the inspection that the administrative staff receive supervision from a line manager within the administrative field. The Authority and the Service may wish to consider that , given the nature of their role at Parkfield House supervision by a member of the

Fostering Service team may be more appropriate.

**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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

Foster carers receive clear guidance in relation to the requirements of 21.2. of this standard. Foster carers had copies of the relevant information available to them.

Interviews with foster carers and fostering social workers demonstrated a clear understanding of the role of the fostering social worker.

**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

The management structure within the Service is clear and understood by the staff team. Interviews with some of the fostering social workers demonstrated that they have clear case loads and other defined duties. All are responsible for the supervision and support of the foster carers allocated to them as well as managing support groups for their carers.

Foster carers interviewed were clear in the role of the fostering social worker. Visits to the carers are monthly in general though two carers commented that these visits occur more frequently if needed. Foster carer interviews confirmed that Schedule 5 is generally being met. All were aware of the mechanism for making a complaint. Information in relation to complaints and allegations is held by the Manager. All carers have received policy and procedural guidance from the Service.

File evidence in relation to contact logs demonstrates that telephone contact is frequent and accurately recorded. Staff need to ensure that all logs are signed off.

Foster carers interviewed did reflect upon the issues identified in relation to unmet need or lack of continuity regarding the allocation of social workers for the child. This has resulted in the fostering social worker sometimes taking issues forward to the relevant children's team within the Authority. (This issue has been identified previously in this report with a rationale within the summary.)

**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**

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

Training is in place from the start of the foster carer recruitment process in the utilisation of the “Choosing to Foster” programme. One such session was observed during the inspection. It was a balanced session which also made use of the input of an experienced foster carer. Equality of opportunity and anti – discriminatory practice were key themes throughout the session .Training records held by the Service accurately reflect the training achievements .

The Manager for the Service recognises that there are issues related to securing the attendance of all foster carers at training sessions , particularly long established carers. Her quote accurately sums up the current situation –“.....there are pockets of enthusiasm balanced against other commitments .” In order to start to address this issue a male support group has been established which captures some training issues within an informal setting.

The Manager also stated that the Service is reviewing initial training and is to develop strategies particularly in the management of new foster carers. This view was reflected by members of the staff team who are involved within the training programme. Attendance at training for those carers who are Contract Carers is mandatory and stipulated within their contract of employment.

Training needs and achievements are highlighted within each carer’s annual review.

The Service have positively addressed the needs of the children of foster carers with a good practice model , in the establishment of Foster Force 2000. A session attended during the inspection demonstrated a very effectively led group session at which the young people present were clear in their articulation of their various views in relation to the impact of fostering upon their lives. A clear view expressed by the group was that the financial reward for fostering did not support the “true” cost of caring.



## 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 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.

Case records for children and young people are the responsibility of the allocated child's social worker. The Service does however, hold a file for each child which is updated as information is received. LAC documentation is present in each file. Notes and relevant information gathered by the fostering social worker are also present. File sampling demonstrated a clear structure to each file.

All foster carers interviewed were clear in their understanding of the reasons why the child or young person were being cared for and the likely duration of their placement. Some of those interviewed had supported "Life History" work and all (with the support of their fostering social worker) had been involved in supporting the child or young person to try to make "some sense" of past 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? | 2 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

Inspection of the records in relation to the service demonstrates that separate records are maintained as required. At present no formal system exists to routinely monitor the quality and adequacy of records – this is now to be developed with an audit system. Confidential records were held securely and the Authority holds a schedule of the requisite periods of time for the retention of records.

Foster carers recordings are maintained by the carers in various forms – this area needs some development as there are variations in the quality and consistency of recording.

Records related to recruitment are held by the central Human Resources department of the Authority.

Records of allegations and complaints are held by the Manager and recorded in the appropriate format within the relevant files.

|   |       |                  |        |
|---|-------|------------------|--------|
| <b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>               |       |                  | 66     |
| <b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>             |       |                  | 33     |
| <b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b> |       |                  | 11     |
| <b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>            |       |                  | 4      |
| <b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>     |       |                  | 9      |
| <b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>                       | 93.38 | <b>Maximum £</b> | 138.67 |

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The offices of the fostering service are based within Parkfield House – an Edwardian house left to the mothers and children of Torbay within the will of a Torbay family. It is based in large grounds and supports other Authority facilities. Dedicated administrative staff effectively support the complex role of the Service. Administrative staff interviewed undertake a wide range of complex responsibilities within the service some of which include day to day office management duties, administration of all aspects of new applications for fostering, administrative management of the annual review process, maintaining the training records for carers, project support, administration of the Contract Care project, issues around internal recruitment, preparation of all Panel papers, minute taking for panel and follow up.

Some local IT equipment is recognised as being outdated and slow. The staff commented upon “excellent IT support via the helpdesk.” The IT facilities are generally fit for purpose. An anti – virus package is in place as is a firewall system.

Parkfield house provides an equipped base from which staff work. Insurance is in place.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not applicable for Local Authorities.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not applicable for Local Authorities.

**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

All carers receive copies of the policy in relation to allowances. Foster carers interviewed confirm that they have details of allowances available. Most confirm that these are paid at the appropriate time.

There is a salaried rate for specialist Contract Carers of which there are 4 at present.

Foster carers and the group of children and young people in the Foster Force 2000 group all expressed the opinion that rates did not support the "true" cost of caring.

## 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

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in relation to this standard.  
CRB checks for all members are in place.

A fostering panel was observed on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2004 which was quorate. The panel chair is the head of the Child Protection Unit. Members include social workers, independent members and a Councillor. The minutes of three previous minutes were available for inspection purposes.

Panel approval for an application was sought as well as other issues related to approval, a complaint which had been investigated, and changes of registration. The panel chair led an open discussion in relation to all issues.

The panel is currently about to review its' terms of reference and to complete an evaluation of the work carried out in 2003 – 2004. Clear and positive feedback in relation to the approval request was offered to the social worker involved.

The Service needs to ensure that the fostering panel receives management information in relation to all annual reviews. It is recognised that general aspects of monitoring and feedback need to be systematic. It is anticipated that this model will be discussed during the review of the panels' function.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|                           | 9             |

## 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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Not applicable at this inspection. It is however noted that within the strategic plan for the Service and within a current funded project it is anticipated that kinship carers will come under the management of the service. | 9 |
|--|---|



**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 5<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The draft inspection report represents a fair and balanced view of the Foster Care Service in Torbay. It is helpful that the report differentiates between that which is within the control of the service, and that which belongs to the authority.

The service is proud of both the stability of its Foster Care base and that of its staff group. It was felt the report identified areas of good practice and team culture that influence this. The team have reflected on the comments within the report which has enabled them to become more focussed on the strengths and limitations within the team.

An action plan has been compiled which indicates the steps and time scales to address the statutory requirements and recommendations contained in the report. Action has already been taken to ensure all administrative staff within the service have enhanced CRB checks as required within schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations.

Torbay is a pilot authority for the implementation of the Healthy Care Standards, which will assist with progress of the action plan, in particular multi agency planning and cooperation.

Some minor factual errors were noted in the report the service currently has 63 registered foster carers, including three contract carers, who in turn care for 94 children and young people.

Overall the Foster Care Service experienced the first National Care Standards inspection as a positive way in which to focus on practice and service developments. In particular our administrators felt encouraged by the inspectors acknowledgement of the complexity of their workload and the key role they play in meeting the requirements of the standards.

Georgina Dunk

Operations Manager – Accommodation Service Torbay

**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 19<sup>th</sup> May 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 Torbay 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 Torbay 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.