



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Manchester Fostering Service

Manchester Social Services

102 Manchester Road

Chorlton

Manchester

M21 1PQ

29th November 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

Manchester Children, Families and Social Care, Fostering Service

Address

102 Manchester Road, Chorlton District Office, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 1PQ

Local Authority Manager

Nick Moore Acting Service Manager
Ciaran Rafferty (Principal Manager)

Tel No:

0161 881 0911

Address

Manchester Children, Families and Social Care
102 Manchester Road, Chorlton District Office, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 1PQ

Fax No:

0161 881 0051

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

12/1/04

Date of Inspection Visit		29th November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		08:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	2	Sarah Oldham	106086
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ciaran Rafferty (Principal Manager) and Nick Moore (Acting Service Manager)	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

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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**

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Part D: Provider's Response

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D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Manchester Fostering Service provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Manchester. The fostering service provides emergency out of hour placements, short-term, long-term/permanent placements for children and young people who are 'Looked After.' There is a Disabled Children's Family Placement Team that provides short-term placements for families where there was a child with a disability or life threatening condition. The service also provides for family and friend carers (kinship) and supported lodgings. There is an additional service of Support Workers providing support to foster carers and children/young people ranging from educational support to community activities. At the time of the inspection plans were in place to expand this team. Further information on this team can be found at Standard 21 of this report.

Manchester Fostering Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. However, the Kinship carers are assessed by social workers based in the area teams. The service operates two fostering panels, namely the fostering and permanence panels.

The fostering service is divided into four teams, these being the Recruitment and Assessment, Duty and Support, Long Term Fostering and the Disabled Children's Family Placement Teams. Each team had its own designated team manager with responsibility for the management of the team. The team managers reported to the acting service manager. Each of these teams consisted of a group of Family Placement Workers. There was a Recruitment Officer based within the Recruitment and Assessment Team and a Lodgings Support Officer on the Long-term Team. It should be noted that information from the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the Lodgings Support Worker's post was vacant. These teams are supported by a group of administrative staff.

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.)

This was the third inspection of Manchester Fostering Service. This inspection took place over the period of six days. During that time the inspectors met with the Principal Manager, Acting Service Manager, Team Managers, Family Placement Workers, Manchester Foster Care Association, Health staff and Administrative staff. In addition to this, the inspectors met and observed the Fostering Panel.

The inspectors also met with Foster Carers at a foster carer support group and met individually with recently approved foster carers and the children/young people that were placed with them. The foster carers spoke about their experiences as foster carers, the support that they received and the process that they had gone through to become foster carers. Young people in placements were also consulted and contributed to the inspection process. There were mixed views and opinions given by foster carers with regard to the level of support that they received and identified areas that they felt that the service needed to improve on. Recently approved foster carers felt that the support received from family placement workers was appropriate.

The inspection of the fostering service revealed areas where further work and development was required. For example, training provided to foster carers, the level of information provided to foster carers about the children/young people looked after etc. However, from discussions with the acting service manager and principal managers areas for further development had been identified and acknowledged.

Statement of Purpose. (Standard 1)

This standard was met

Following the previous inspection the Statement of Purpose had been developed. A copy of this had been forwarded to the Commission. The Children's Guide had been developed and was available in draft.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service (Standard 2-3)

2 of the 2 standards assessed were met.

The acting service manager and principal manager had over twenty years of experience working with children and families respectively. They were both qualified social workers and held the Certificate in Qualified Social Work Award. Discussions with these managers indicated that they were aware of the shortfalls and gaps within the service and had identified systems and changes that they needed to make.

Management of Fostering Services (Standard 4-5)

1 of the 2 standards assessed was met.

The principal manager and the acting service manager were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of how the monitoring of the services was undertaken although in practice this was not always clearly evident as demonstrated in Standard 25 of this report. They acknowledged that due to recent changes within the management structure there were areas that required further development.

The service had taken measures to gather the views of foster carers by way of questionnaires and the views of the children/young people involving the Children's Rights Officer.

During the inspection the inspectors met with a number of foster carers, including recently approved carers, individually and a group of foster carers at a foster carer group meeting. Some foster carers felt that they were well supported by the service whilst others felt that the service did not provide an appropriate level of support and felt that they had been very much left on their own. There appeared to be a lack of clarity about the roles of the support worker, family placement workers and social workers on the part of the foster carers.

Members of staff spoken to by the inspectors were clear about their roles and responsibilities and had access to all documentation relating to the service including the Statement of Purpose. A staff training day had provided staff with the opportunity to share their practices and to promote cohesive working together. In addition to this, a new computer programme had been implemented within the authority that enabled managers and staff to have a greater overview of all placements and any significant events or issues.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standard 6-14)

5 of the 9 standards assessed were met.

During the inspection a number of foster carer assessments were inspected. It was noted that the level of information completed on the assessment format varied significantly. Some of the assessments presented to the Fostering Panel were inadequate. For example, information received on the behaviour of prospective foster carer as part of the assessment had not been sufficiently explored by the staff member undertaking the assessment. Further information can be found at Standard 30 of this report. This failure had been identified and plans were in place to address this via training and auditing of files.

Training for foster carers was provided at the pre approval sessions and at post approval training twelve months later. Training was also provided via foster support group meetings and in conjunction with the Manchester Foster Care association. It was however noted that not all foster carers attended support groups and that training was not mandatory. Files viewed and discussion with foster carers confirmed that some carers had not attended training and significant training with regard to Child Protection had not been updated for some carers for a number of years which was a matter of concern.

The matching process was discussed with the inspectors by foster carers and family support workers. Experience of foster carers regarding the process varied, some carers felt that the process had been comprehensive with appropriate consultation and introduction whilst others felt that there had been limited consultation. Family placement workers were able to explain the matching process in detail.

The service had developed an anti-bullying draft document for children/young people and had consulted with them via meetings with the children/young people and the Children's Rights Officer.

Arrangements were in place for contact to be maintained.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training of staff and foster carers (Standards 15-22)

4 of the 9 standards assessed were met.

All the family placement workers were qualified social workers. All the staff had lengthy experience in childcare and had been recruited under the Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunities Recruitment and Selection Procedures. Staff supervision and appraisal systems were in place although a personal development plan had yet to be implemented.

A foster carer recruitment and retention policy was in place. The information from the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that a recruitment management group met on a quarterly basis to discuss placements available and the strategies to meet any shortfalls. Some of the assessments presented to the Fostering Panel for approval did not have information about satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and some references had not been fully explored.

As previously noted training for foster carers was not mandatory and although pre and post approval training was in place other training did not have to be attended. Foster carers review documentation viewed indicated that some foster carers had declined training but the review process had not pursued this. The inspectors were concerned about the lack of specific training made available to those foster carers who looked after babies.

Annual reviews of the foster carers were not taking place as required with evidence of this from the files examined.

Records (Standard 24-25)

Neither of the 2 standards assessed were met.

Records for foster carers, children and young people were kept secure within the office. It was noted that some 'Looked After Children' (LAC) information was missing from some files. This included statutory review recommendations. The inspection highlighted the need for action to be taken by the authority to address some of the shortfalls in the manner in which case records were maintained, which indicated that current audit systems in place was not always effective.

Information passed on to foster carers with regard to the children/young people varied and although some carers felt that the information received was appropriate others stated that little or no information had been forwarded. This was particularly in the case of emergency placements.

The fostering service provided secure boxes for foster carers to store paperwork, however some carers stated that they had not received this.

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

This standard was met.

The premises met the requirements of the service.

Financial Requirements (standard 27-29)

All 3 standards assessed were met.

Foster carers were paid a regular allowance and there was an opportunity for carers to

receive additional payments made to foster carers who completed post approval and NVQ training.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was not met.

Following the previous inspection an independent Chair had been appointed. During the inspection the inspectors observed a Fostering Panel meeting. Significant areas of concern were raised regarding the omission in the level of information provided and in the presentation of information to the panel. As stated earlier some of the assessments presented failed to address and explore areas of concerns, for example one referee had given information to the assessor, which indicated that the prospective foster carer could lose their temper. The inspectors found no information to demonstrate that this information had been clarified or fully explored with the prospective foster carer or the referee. However, the inspectors did observe and commented to the acting service manager and principal manager that the assessment presented by the worker from the Disabled Children's Team was comprehensive and contained all relevant information required by the panel to assist in forming a judgement on the application.

The inspectors discussed their concerns with the Panel Chair, the acting service manager and principal manager about the attitude of some of the social work and family placement staff presenting the assessments to the Fostering Panel. The staff members appeared to lack understanding of the role, purpose and function of the panel as well as the processes involved. Plans were in place to address the issues via training and supervision.

The Chair was aware of her role and responsibilities as the Chair and had compiled some guidelines regarding the role of the panel, what information was required by the panel and the process undertaken. These guidelines were in draft format and had not been circulated at the time of the inspection. In addition to these guidelines the Chair was proposing to hold some training sessions for staff about the role and function of the panel.

Short-Term Breaks. (Standard 31)

This standard was met.

Workers from the Disabled Children's Team spoke positively about the service offered in respite care of children/young people. Foster carers were complimentary about the service they received from this team.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was not met.

Social work teams undertook the assessment of friend and family carers. The assessment of these carers was required to be the same as that for other carers. There was a need to review the level of training provided to these carers.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

As a result of amendments to the Care Standard Act 2000, the Commission is no longer required to make the above notifications.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
NA		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
NA		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Lolly Warren	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Sarah Oldham	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Mike Short	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 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 (1) Schedule 7	FS4	Appropriate and effective systems must be put in place to monitor the matters listed at Schedule 7 of the Regulations.	30/4/05
2	12	FS6	Each foster carer must have a Safe Care Policy for their homes. A copy of the document must be maintained on the foster carer's file. (Previous requirement of 31.12.04 had not lapsed.)	30/4/05
3	12	FS6	Foster carer's Safe Care Policy take account of the measures to be taken by the foster carer when transporting children/young people.	30.5.05
4	27 Schedule 3	FS8	Any additional support that may be required where a trans-racial placement is made must be clearly documented on the children/young person and foster carer's file.	30.3.05 and ongoing
5	12	FS9	The fostering service must ensure that foster carers are kept up to date with Child Protection training. (Previous requirement of 31.12.04 not lapsed)	30/5/05
6	11	FS11	Wherever possible young people's views must be obtained as part of the statutory LAC review.	30.3.05 and ongoing
7	15(d)	FS12	A copy of the statutory health assessments must be maintained on the young person's file.	30/4/05

8	16	FS13	<p>(a) A copy of the Personal Education Plan must be made available to the foster carer.</p> <p>(b) Copies of the Personal Education Plan must be maintained on the children/young people's files.</p>	30/4/05
9	28(5)(b)	FS18	The Foster Care Agreement must be amended to take account of the foster carer's liability.	30.5.05
10	29	FS21	<p>(a) Foster carer reviews must take place on a yearly basis and a written report completed. A copy of this must be retained on the foster carer's file.</p> <p>(b) A record must be made on the foster carer's file indicating reasons if annual review had not taken place.</p>	30/4/05 and ongoing
11	17	FS21	Support of carers must be further developed to meet the individual and specific needs of the foster carer.	30/4/05
12	17	FS22	The service must explore with its foster carers the sources of dissatisfaction expressed during this inspection, particularly in relation to consultation and the provision of information, so that they and their colleagues responsible for the children placed, can address these dissatisfactions.	30.4.05
13	17	FS23	<p>(a) The service must review the frequency of training offered to all its carers.</p> <p>(b) Annual Reviews must clearly detail all training undertaken as well as any training needs identified.</p>	30.5.05 and ongoing
14	11 & 17	FS23	<p>(a) Specific and relevant training must be provided for those foster carers approved to look after babies.</p> <p>(b) The service must ensure that national and local guidance is made available to those foster carers who look after babies.</p>	30.4.05

15	11(1) & 17(3)	FS24	The service must review the information provided to carers to ensure they are provided with the essential information to relating to the children/young people placed. (Previous Requirement of 16.7.04 not met)	30/4/05
16	11	FS25	The acting service manager must ensure that family placement workers address issues of practice with foster carers to ensure that children/young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.	30.3.05 and ongoing
17	30	FS25	The authority must undertake a review of case records as detailed in the report to ensure they comply with the regulations.	30/4/05
18	26	FS30	The purpose and function of the Fostering Panel must be made clear to the family placement and social work staff.	30.4.05
19	27	FS30	When an assessment report on proposed foster carers, including Kinship carers, is presented to panel for approval, the report must contain all the matters listed in Regulation 27, including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and written reports of interviews with referees.	30.4.05
20	27	FS30	Information obtained from referees relating to the prospective foster carer must be fully explored as part of the assessment. This is necessary in order to assess the suitability of the prospective foster carer.	30.3.05
21	17	FS32	Training for Family and Friend carers must be developed and given the same priority as the training for other carers.	30/4/05

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	FS1	A copy of the Children's Guide should be forwarded to the Commission when finalised.

2	FS4	It is recommended that the service review the level of information given to foster carers on the role of the family placement staff.
2	FS13	The foster carer review form should include a question about the Personal Education Plan.
3	FS13	Foster carers wherever possible should be actively involved in education reviews.
4	FS19	It is strongly recommended that a personal development plan for each staff member is implemented.
5	FS24	The service should review information given to foster carers on the safe storage of confidential information.
6	FS25	A content sheet should be placed at the front of the each file detailing the information to be to be held in each section of the file.
7	FS25	Communication sheets should be signed and logged in chronological orderly manner so as to make information easily retrievable.

* 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	6
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	29/11/04
Time of Inspection	8.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	72

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Following the previous inspection the Statement of Purpose had been reviewed and a copy submitted to the Commission. The Statement of Purpose details the aims and objectives, the range of services provided, the roles and responsibilities of the fostering panels and the teams. It is worthy of note that the Statement of Purpose included information regarding the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service and their impact on the work. Overall the Statement of Purpose met the essential requirements of Regulation 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made that the Children's Guide should be developed. This document was available in draft and the inspectors were told that it was due to be finalised. Once completed a copy of the final document should be forwarded to Commission.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Since the last inspection, changes had taken place within the management team. An external consultant had been appointed initially for a period of three months, however, this had been extended to a further six months. The brief for this role was to manage and develop the fostering service. In addition to this, proposals were in place to appoint a principal manager specifically for the Fostering and Adoption Teams. This would be a change from the current system whereby the principal manager was responsible for both Fostering and Residential Services. The establishment of a principal manager for the fostering service would subsequently lead to the disestablishment of the current service manager post.

The acting service manager had over twenty years experience of working with children and families and undertaken work with the former Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) as part of the performance action team looking at the Looked After Children's systems.

Both the acting service manager and the principal manager held the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). Neither held a management qualification and when appointed the principal manager, fostering, will need to hold a qualification in management at NVQ Level 4 or an equivalent qualification. It was noted that information contained in the pre- inspection questionnaire indicated that plans were in place for all managers to undertake NVQ training.

During the discussions with the acting service manager and principal manager they demonstrated a clear awareness of the organisational structure and of their roles and responsibilities within the structure. They were both aware of the shortfalls and gaps within the service and of the areas for development work had commenced or actioned to address this.

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

As stated earlier, the acting service manager had over twenty years experience of working with children and families both within residential settings and family placement for local authority and the private sector. He demonstrated a sound knowledge of the issues regarding protection and safeguarding and promoting children/young people's welfare.

The principal manager also had over twenty years experience in childcare including the post of the fostering service manager prior to his appointment to principal manager.

Appropriate checks had been taken up on the acting service manager.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The principal manager and the acting service manager were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of how the monitoring of the service was undertaken and were aware that due to recent changes within the management structure there were areas that required further development.

The current systems in place for monitoring the service includes the foster carer's support groups which were attended by the family placement workers, however, during the discussions with the foster carers some stated that they did not always feel able to contribute fully to the discussions as the meetings were dominated by the service agenda. Some referred to feeling being 'talked at' rather than involved.

The acting service manager had introduced a monitoring system to audit foster carers files, placements, annual reviews, complaints and the significant events as specified in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

The fostering service had also developed additional systems to elicit the views of foster carers by way of questionnaires and had undertaken a large-scale audit of foster carers in 2002. A copy of the results of this audit was made available to the inspectors. In addition, the service was proactive in obtaining the views of the children/young people using questionnaires and the involvement of the Children's Rights Officer. The inspectors were able to attend a meeting, which had been arranged by the Children's Rights Officer to discuss the Anti-bullying Policy with the children/young people.

Although some issues were identified with regard the functioning of the Fostering Panel, the Fostering Panel undertook a monitoring function in relation to the progress and quality of assessments. The acting service manager was also responsible for ensuring that the assessments contained the appropriate information. Further information on the panel can be found at Standard 30 of this report.

The inspectors met a group of newly approved foster carers at their homes. These foster carers expressed their satisfaction at the efficient manner in which the fostering service staff had addressed areas of concerns. This was however, not the view expressed by those foster carers who had fostered for the agency for a long period. Some of the foster carers met at the foster carers group felt let down by the service and did not consider the service was efficiently managed.

The inspectors concluded that this view was not helped by the fact that a high percentage of the foster carers met appeared to be confused and unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the fostering service staff.

During discussions with staff members it was acknowledged that further clarity regarding the

specific role of the social workers, family placement workers and support workers needed to be explained to foster carers in greater detail. It should be noted that the fostering service staff said that the role of family placement staff would be explained at the initial recruitment of foster carers, however it was felt that this should also be formally discussed at post approval training.

The members of staff met informed the inspectors that they had access to the Statement of Purpose and ongoing training and development. A recent service day had enabled the staff from all teams to join together and to share their practices. Staff felt that this had been beneficial. They confirmed that a programme of regular supervision was undertaken and regular staff meetings held to support staff within their role, identify any specific areas of concern or training issues, and to promote cohesive working within the teams.

The authority had recently updated the computer system, which will enable managers and staff to be able to have greater overview to monitor all placements and any significant incidents.

The requirement to notify the Commission of significant events as specified in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Service Regulations is not a requirement that applies to a Local Authority Fostering Service. However, as a matter of good practice the service had kept the Commission informed of serious incidents affecting foster carers and children/young people. There were at the time of inspection, appropriate systems in place for monitoring significant incidents, this includes appropriate records being maintained of all significant events. Monitoring of the matters specified in Schedule 7 was required.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	4
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	2
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.	1
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.	1
Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	1
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Discussions with the acting service manager and principal manager provided clear indication of the roles and responsibilities that pertained to the positions held by them.

The principal manager who had previously been the manager for the fostering service stated that in the absence of the acting service manager he was able to advise, support and monitor the service and had regular meetings with the acting service manager to discuss the ongoing development of the service.

There were clear lines of accountability within the service and all staff spoken to were aware of who was responsible for different parts of the 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?

2

During the inspection, a number of foster carer assessments were inspected. It was noted that the level of information completed on the assessment format varied significantly. This was highlighted at the assessments presented at the Fostering Panel.

One assessment presented, did not contain sufficient information regarding the accommodation available and the number of people within the household, another assessment detailed the number of bedrooms available but contained no further information regarding the rest of the accommodation. Health and Safety reports, which would indicate whether or not the foster carer's home was safe, secure and one that would provide the children/young people with a healthy environment within which to thrive were not available. It is worthy to note that one particular assessment presented by a member of staff from the Disabled Children's Team to panel demonstrated that the prospective foster carer's home had been comprehensively assessed to ensure that the placement was appropriate and safe for a foster child.

The service had developed Safe Care Guidance. The format used included information relating to bedrooms, mode of dress, playing, bedtime routines use of bathrooms etc. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering states that each foster carer should have an individual Safe Care Policy for their homes. Not all foster carers' files inspected contained a copy of the Safe Care Policy. Some seen were general and not individualised for the foster placement. During the inspection feed back this was drawn to the principal manager and acting service manager's attention.

During the visits of the foster carers' homes, the inspectors noted that appropriate safety equipment was in place at the home of a particular foster carer caring for younger children.

Foster carers were also informed about safety precautions when transporting children within a car however no mention of this is made in the Safe Care Policy. A recommendation has been made that information with regards the measures to be taken by foster carers whilst transporting children is included in the Safe Care Policy.

A number of foster carers interviewed stated that the preparation training had covered health and safety issues and written guidelines issued regarding this.

As part of the monitoring that takes place relating to foster carer placements unannounced visits took place.

Foster carers had been informed about the inspection via the foster carers newsletter produced and distributed by the authority

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 promoted equal opportunities through the foster care recruitment policy and equal opportunity policy. Issues around diversity and equality were discussed in the preparation groups, post approval training and NVQ training. The needs of children/young people in respect of their cultural, religious, language, and disability needs were outlined in the Statement of Purpose.

The recruitment and selection team members interviewed stated that the recruitment of foster carers was targeted to encompass carers from within the black and minority ethnic communities. Recruitment of foster carers was undertaken via a variety of ways including advertising in local/national press and open days/community based promotions. During the discussions with the acting service manager, principal manager and staff the inspectors were informed that the authority was experiencing difficulties attracting foster carers from within a specific minority group to work with children with disabilities but had identified the work that was required to attract foster carers from within this group.

The Disabled Children's Team enlisted the help of approved foster carers to promote the needs and equal opportunities of children with disabilities at the preparation training. Specialist equipment was arranged to support the child in their placement to maximise their full potential.

Support Workers provided support to the foster carers and child to ensure equal access for all children in foster care to access community facilities and promote the child's interests. The number of support workers was in the process of being increased as it had been recognised that the current number was insufficient.

At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that the service needed to develop more effective ways of matching children/young people according to their cultural, ethnic and religious needs. This matter was discussed with the acting service manager and principal manager who stated that they considered that the service had good systems in place as well as good and adequate matching procedures although they indicated that the matching process involving emergency placements can at times be compromised.

Another area discussed during the inspection with the managers related to children and young people who were asylum seekers. The inspectors were told that work was currently taking place with the Asylum Team to discuss the issues for these children. The service had identified a group of Somali carers who were due to go to panel.

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 group of staff interviewed detailed the matching process. Race, culture, gender, composition of the family, experiences and resources available to support the placement formed part of the assessment as well as identifying physical space in the house, the location, community and the environment.

As identified previously in the report, the inspectors viewed a number of files, attended the Fostering Panel and met with foster carers. Documentation viewed varied in the amount of details recorded and where trans-racial placements had been made the support required by the young person in placement was not always detailed.

Family placement workers informed the inspectors that with regard to trans-racial placements, the foster carers would be supported in gaining the knowledge on how to meet the children's needs. This would include ensuring that the foster carer had an understanding of the needs of black and ethnic minority children/young people as well as whether the foster carer would be able to offer a culturally sensitive service. Training regarding trans-racial placement formed part of the preparation training, this included a video and discussion groups.

The pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that there was a demand for short-term placements which was compounded by a shortage of carers from a black and ethnic minority group, however, the service had recently recruited four extra black short term carers who were needed to provide care for younger black children.

Foster carers views and experience varied with regards the matching process. Some felt that the consultation and process of introduction was very comprehensive and managed well whilst other carers felt that consultation and the process of introduction was minimal.

During the inspection, the inspectors visited a white foster carer who was looking after a mixed parentage child and whose previous foster child placement had been of mixed parentage. The carer was able to demonstrate an understanding of the child's needs and the planning of an alternative and more appropriate long-term placement to meet the child's cultural needs.

The support workers said they would provide links to facilities available within the City and to facilitate life story work. During the discussions with this group of staff one support worker said that they had supported a trans-racial placement on issues regarding identity, culturally sensitive books, skin care and the preparation of appropriate meals

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?

2

The Local Authority had developed Child Protection, Whistle Blowing and Safe Care policies and procedures as well as appropriate policies on the management of behaviour.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that foster carers must receive up dated Child Protection training. It should be noted that the timescale of 31 December 2004 for addressing this requirement had not lapsed at the time of this inspection.

Child Protection training was undertaken as part of the preparation training along with Safe Care practices. Further Child Protection training was also available as part of the post approval training. However, the post approval training could not be undertaken until foster carers had completed twelve months as a foster carer. During the foster carer's meeting attended by the inspectors, it was identified that some foster carers had not undertaken updated Child Protection training for a number of years. This was also evident in foster carers files assessed as part of the inspection process. From the discussions with foster carers it would appear that the majority of training took place during the foster carer's group meetings. However, not all foster carers attended these meetings on a regular basis. A variety of reasons were given. These included the time of the meeting, where the meetings were held and travelling costs.

During the inspection feedback to the acting service manager and principal manager, the inspectors expressed their concern that certain training including Child Protection was not mandatory and therefore foster carers were able to opt in or out of this training. It would appear from the discussions that the view held regarding foster carers being volunteers might be one reason why training was not mandatory. Training information received indicated that for the year 2004 Child Protection training had been offered on three separate dates, which were attended by a total of thirty six foster carers out of the 457 foster carers including family and friend carers listed in the pre-inspection information.

It was acknowledged that the training officer had recently vacated their position and this had left a gap. The principal manager said that the authority had funding to recruit an additional trainer but had not been successful. In addition to this, the authority was working in conjunction with Manchester Foster Care Association (MFCA) presenting co training.

A draft anti-bullying policy had been completed, a copy of which was made available to the inspectors. In addition there was a pictorial leaflet entitled "What to Do About Bullying". It was encouraging to note that this leaflet included the name, telephone number and address of the Commission and detailed information on the Children's Rights Service, Childline and Pupil Line. The inspectors attended a children and young person's group where the policy was being discussed and the views of the children/young people obtained regarding the format and content of the policy. The young people present at this meeting highlighted a number of issues with regard bullying in school which the Children's Rights Officer needed to take further and address on behalf of the individual children. Some feedback was given to the acting service manager and principal manager on this.

Foster carers were aware of the fostering services views on corporal punishment and restraint. The Foster Care Agreement made clear that corporal punishment was not acceptable.

The service maintained a record of all allegations of abuse and neglect. This information was made available to the inspectors.

There was a guide for foster carers about children who went missing. This document provided information about the reasons why young people may go missing and guidance about what they needed to do if young people absconded.

The questionnaires used as part of the inspection did not ask about bullying therefore the information required below cannot be given.

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

The service promoted contact arrangements for the child/young person in care. This was undertaken by looking at each individual need of the child/young person. The Disabled Children's Team provided link care workers to work with parents and foster carers. The staff team stated that they promoted contact with birth parents. Foster carers confirmed this. Although it was acknowledged that due to a lack of contact workers, contact arrangements were not always undertaken as identified on the child's care plan. This was an area for further development.

During the discussions with a few foster carers they raised concerns about the conflict that can arise between what they consider to be in the best interest of the child compared to the views of the birth parents.

Reports regarding contact arrangements and outcomes were recorded on the child's/young person's file.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The statutory review format recorded the views of the child/young person, however details were limited and did not give the opportunity for the young person to express themselves in their own words. However, from evidence seen and discussions with the acting service manager and the principal manager plans were in place to address this.

The inspectors visited a number of foster carers and spoke with the children/young people placed with the foster carers. The views of the children/young people were that they were given the opportunity to say how they felt about their placement.

In their response to the young peoples' questionnaires, those responding indicated that the foster carer and social worker sought their opinion. This ranged from choices over their clothes, trips pets etc. One young person indicated that they had asked for support with their schoolwork and that with the support and help of their carer they have been able to design a

school newspaper.

Members of staff told the inspectors that the family support workers were developing a booklet for children to use as part of the consultation process and that a similar imitative would be developed for foster carer's own children. They also said that they consulted and actively encouraged the children of the prospective foster carer's involvement in the assessment process. This was evident at the Fostering Panel.

Some of the foster carers said that although their views would be sought they did not always feel that their opinion mattered.

The children/young people met were aware of the complaints procedures and who they would contact. Those young people responding to the questionnaires confirmed that they had been given information about how to complain. Appropriate written information was available to the children/young people on complaints.

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

Information in the Foster Carers Handbook, the Foster Care Agreement and the Placement Agreement detailed the role and the responsibilities of the foster carer with regards registering children/young people a GP and for taking them to their health appointments etc as required to meet the health and welfare of the child/young person.

There was evidence on some files viewed of involvement of the 'LAC' Nurse. In addition health assessments had been undertaken but copies of the assessment were not available on all files viewed.

Work was ongoing to promote awareness of the medical needs of children in care. The inspectors met the nurse for vulnerable children whose role was that of having an overview of health provision for 'looked after children'. In addition to this individual, there were also three link LAC nurses who the inspectors were told, had in the past provided training on the foster carers induction. The inspectors were told that there were a number of health developments including the issue of who gives consent for medical and emergency treatment and that discussions had taken place with other health professionals such as dentists, GP's etc with regards this issue. Other areas under discussions and review included the processes for referring children/young people to the LAC Clinical Psychologists and whether there was not a role for link nurses in process. There was some discussion with the nurse with regards the key principles from the Every Child Matters Initiative.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

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

The Foster Care Agreement contained information about the promotion of educational attainment, including arrangements for meeting educational needs and targets.

During the meeting with the foster carer group, they raised issues about education. This included the support that they received in ensuring that the educational needs of the children/young people were met. Some foster carers expressed concern that they had not always been involved in the educational reviews nor had they received copies of the Personal Education Plans. However, information on the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that foster carers were involved in the education reviews and that they would routinely receive copies of the Personal Education Plan. The foster carer review form includes a section relating to education, consideration should be given to adding a question that asks whether or not the foster carer had received a copy of the Personal Education Plan. The inspectors did find evidence, which indicated that the service worked closely with foster carers to support and encourage young people to attend school.

Issues regarding exclusion from school had been difficult to resolve and some carers reported that they did not always feel supported with this by the fostering service. Members of the staff team spoken to did not support this view.

The inspectors were told that there were a number of initiatives in place to support education such as the volunteer reading scheme.

Records were being maintained of young people excluded from school.

Foster carers confirmed that computers had been provided to support the young people with their educational needs, however, the general view held by the group was that when the computers failed or were in need of maintenance this back up facility was unavailable.

The inspectors viewed a number of children/young people's files, not all contained details regarding the Personal Educational Plans. One file viewed contained no reference to educational needs.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The fostering service continued to use the Banardos Manchester Leaving Care Service to prepare young people who had reached the age where preparations needed to be made with respect to independent living. Foster carers attending the foster carer group meeting confirmed this. Some carers felt that this information was delivered to the young people too soon prior to leaving care, which they saw as unsettling for the placement. However, it was acknowledged that the move towards independent living should be planned over a period of time to ensure a smooth transition to independence for the young person.

It was not a requirement that foster carers support young people in the transition from care to independent living, however, foster carers spoken with stated that they would support the

young person during this time.

One foster carer visited by the inspectors, confirmed that the young person placed, had been consulted regarding their Pathway Plan.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Appropriate recruitment procedures were in place relating to the recruitment of carers and staff. Job descriptions were available as well as an equal opportunity policy. Recruitment of staff was centrally managed but decisions about short-listing, interviews etc were completed at the Chorlton Office. The acting service manager and principal manager were involved in the recruitment of family placement workers. It should be noted that the inspectors did not on this occasion inspect the staff personnel files. A separate date will be arranged to undertake this task. However, discussions with the principal and acting service managers indicated that sound systems were in place to ensure that careful vetting of all staff employed by the service took place. This included checking of references and CRB checks.

All newly appointed staff would participate in induction training. The inspectors met a newly appointed staff. This staff member confirmed that they had received induction training and considered that it was of a good standard. All new staff would be subjected to a probationary period.

All family placement staff were qualified social workers. They were responsible for supervising, supporting and undertaking the annual review of carers. The family placement workers met during the inspection demonstrated clear understanding and knowledge of their roles within the teams and of the legislation that underpins their work. This included work undertaken with respect to the National Minimum Standards. They were experienced workers, most of whom had worked for local authorities before joining the family placement team.

Total number of staff of the agency:

43

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

3

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**

As stated at the start of this report, the fostering service is a large provision consisting of four teams supported by an administrative team.

Arrangements were in place for supervision of staff. This was the responsibility of the principal manager, acting service manager and team managers. Family placement workers confirmed that regular supervision was undertaken every two to four weeks and that a copy of the supervision notes was available to them. Staff appraisals had also been undertaken.

The acting service manager had begun to review all the work undertaken by staff with the implementation of an audit check, which will ensure consistency in terms of record keeping, organisation of the files as well as ensuring that staff have undertaken all the necessary checks and that foster carers have been given all the relevant information.

Staff members interviewed was aware of the fostering service policies and procedures. They were aware of the lines of accountability and were in general able to discuss issues/areas of concerns with the team manager. This was further supported by the team day that had taken place.

There was an office manager who was responsible for a group of administrative staff. At the time of the inspection, development of the IT system was in process to make the system more accessible to all staff within the teams.

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**

As stated earlier the authority promoted equal opportunities in the Foster Care Agreement and through its policies/procedures on equality of opportunity. Recruitment of foster carers was undertaken in a variety of ways including advertising in local and national press, open days and community-based forums.

A foster carer recruitment and retention policy was in place. The information from the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that a recruitment management group met on a quarterly basis to discuss amongst a number of things, the range of placements available and the strategies to meet any shortfalls.

Some foster carers spoken to said that the recruitment and assessment process was intrusive and lengthy but that they understood the reason for this. This view was also reinforced by the comments from those foster carers who had completed the foster carers questionnaire. The foster carers met during the inspection, had no adverse comments with regards to the staffing of the service, however, as stated earlier, the different roles of the family placement staff did not appear to be clearly understood by foster carers

The assessment of foster carers was carried out using the BAFF form F. The exception was of the kinship carers and further information can be found at standard 32. The acting service manager vets the form F's to ensure that any gaps in the information collated with respect to

the foster carer were addressed prior to the assessment document being sent to panel members. However, from observation of the panel and discussion with the Panel Chair the systems for vetting the forms did not appear to have worked in a number of the assessments brought to the attention of the panel. The acting service manager indicated that the system for vetting the forms had commenced over recent months and recognised and acknowledged that this area of work required a more systematic approach. (See also Standard 30)

At the time of the inspection, appropriate action had been taken to address the shortfalls in staffing. Agency staff had been appointed to cover vacancies within the teams. There was a genuine concern from all including the staff team that the number of support workers needed to be increased. It should be noted that the service had taken appropriate action to address this with plans to recruit an additional six support workers.

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

All staff working within the fostering service had been recruited within the Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunities Recruitment and Selection Procedures. There were a range of policies and procedures in place to support the service and staff. This included Whistle Blowing, Grievance, Disciplinary, Harassment and Anti-Discrimination, Supervision, Appraisal etc.

Overall the staff members felt that they were supported and assisted in their work by their respective line managers.

During discussion with foster carers they spoke about the duty service. The general feeling was that they were not always supported by this service, as at times it was not sufficient to meet their needs. During discussions with family placement workers, they stated that a member of staff was on duty throughout the day and that they offered a good service. Plans were in place to develop a service with the Manchester Foster Carers Association to address this issue.

The fostering service had public liability insurance cover in place. However, it was not clear whether this covered foster carers and the children/young people placed. The Foster Care Agreement should be amended to include this information.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>As indicated previously, staff induction was a feature within the service. Staff appraisal had been undertaken, these identified training and developmental needs.</p> <p>During the discussion with the family placement workers various training undertaken was discussed. This included training with regards the National Minimum Standards, Safe Caring, Assessment training etc. In addition to this, the workers had had a planning day with all teams of the fostering service discussing and formulating plans to build and develop good practice. Information on the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that all staff had access to the PQ level 1 and 2. Six (6) family placement workers had achieved PQ Level 1. Two (2) staff members had achieved the Practice Teachers Award, and one of the team managers was an Approved Social Worker.</p> <p>From the discussions with staff there was a need for the service to put in place a personal development plan for each of its staff.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>All staff providing support to foster carers received one to one supervision, this included the administrative staff. The staff confirmed the level of support that they received. They said that the support offered to them had been of a good standard.</p> <p>Clear structure for supervision was in place. This included supervision of the acting service manager by the principal manager. The acting service manager supervised the team Managers. There was a separate supervision structure for the staff of the Disabled Children's Team.</p> <p>Team meetings took place on a regular basis as well as senior management meetings to ensure that managers were kept up to date about the service, gaps in the service and managing monitoring performance and practice to ensure that tasks were being undertaken.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Written procedures were in place, which set out the strategies for working with foster carers. The Foster Care Agreement set out the level of support that foster carers would expect to receive from the service. It states that foster carers would receive visits from the family placement worker at agreed intervals although this was dependent on the carer's skills and experience. In the Statement of Purpose this was stated as a minimum of once every three months, which served to confirm the comments made by some foster carers that visits by family placement workers were limited.

During the discussions with foster carers some indicated that the timescale for visits were inadequate as they needed to see the family placement worker on a regular basis especially when they were experiencing difficulties with the child. However, the inspectors met a group of newly approved foster carers who were complimentary about the level of support they had received from the family placement worker. One of these foster carers said that they could not fault the support they had received from the family placement worker and saw the relationship with the worker as a partnership.

Foster carers had access to the Family Intervention Team (FIT) and the Child Psychology Service for 'Looked After Children.' One foster carer met said that they had received good service from the psychologist in managing the behaviour of the young person placed with them. Foster carers also had access to Manchester Foster Care Association. All were provided with membership to the Association.

The foster carers could attend the foster carers support groups, which were available in different areas of the City. However, as indicated earlier not all foster carers accessed these groups for a variety of reasons including difficulty with venues. One particular foster carer had no idea of the role of the support group. During the inspection feedback, the principal manager and the acting service manager were advised that the supervising worker needed to explain in more detail to this particular foster carer the support that was available to her.

Not all the foster carer's files examined demonstrated that annual reviews had taken place. On one file there was no record of the foster carer review being undertaken since 2002 and on another it was over a year since their last review. The inspectors raised concerns to the acting service manager and principal manager regarding an incident involving one particular foster carer. In this case no review had taken place since the incident occurred which would determine and establish the foster carer's approval status and the support/training required.

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

Discussions with a group of foster carers disclosed a general discontent/unhappiness with the way some felt they were regarded within the fostering service. They expressed dissatisfaction with regard to the lack of information or insufficient information regarding significant matters relating to the children/young people in their care. For example, one carer stated that arrangements would be made by the social worker for the child without their knowledge. Also that the social worker might appear when the foster carer had arranged an activity with young person but would be told they had to fit in with the social worker's time.

Some foster carers commented that there was no consistency about receiving background information about a child and that LAC documents either took some time to be received or had still not been received. They felt that their views about a child were not valued. Some carers felt that if they did raise issues with the department, then the carer would be "punished" by not having a child placed with them. The word "punished" in this context was used a number of times during the discussions. Some commented that the attitude of some of the children's social workers "left a lot to be desired". Some foster carers said that this related to social workers from a particular area. The acting manager and principal manager were advised of this during the inspection feedback. There was a general feeling of not being valued and their opinions and experience not being respected by the social workers who supervised the children placed with them.

It is worthy of note that the views expressed by the two carers who were supported by the Disabled Children's Team present at the meeting was in contrast to those held by the other carers. They felt that they were valued, that their opinions respected and that they worked in partnership with the staff from this team.

There was a Foster Care Agreement which overall addressed all the matters set out in Schedule 5 of Regulation 28(5)(b). However, as stated earlier in this report some amendment was required.

A Foster Carer's Handbook was available to all the carers, which contained policies and procedures needed to assist the carer.

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?**

The fostering service identifies in the Foster Care Agreement and in the Foster Carer Handbook the training that would be provided. The Foster Care Agreement states that preparation training would be given and that foster carers would be provided with ongoing training to enable them to carry out their role effectively and improve their skills. It further states that training programmes would be regularly reviewed. The Foster Care Agreement did not make clear the number of training sessions that foster carers would be expected to attend throughout the year. Indeed, three of the foster carers files viewed did not identify that the foster carers had attended any training.

The staff confirmed that pre-approval training was given to all potential foster carers. At this

training a current foster carer would attend to discuss the role of foster carers. Post approval training was provided 12 months after registration as a foster carer. The staff felt that this time scale should be reduced. The fostering service planned to further develop training over the next twelve months that included linking post approval training more clearly into pre approval work and foster carer induction.

The inspectors spoke with a group of foster carers many of whom had been registered as carers for a number of years. The views regarding training varied. It was stated that foster carer group meetings were a forum for receiving updated training, however not all foster carers attended the meetings and therefore missed training. It was not mandatory for foster carers to attend these meetings. Foster carers spoken to said that the reason for not attending was due to a variety of reasons that included issues with locality, transport, the costs involved and the timing of the group meetings. Other foster carers felt that as they had been undertaking the role for a number of years they did not feel that training would be beneficial to them.

The inspectors also spoke with a number of newly registered foster carers who confirmed that they had undertaken pre-approval training and had found the training helpful and thought provoking.

It was noted that on the carers Annual Review a designated section regarding training was available to review the carer's training needs. Where carers stated that they did not wish to undertake any training this was not pursued at the review. It was noted that on one foster carer's file there was no record of any training undertaken although there had been issues regarding the care delivered and a complaint received regarding the care. This was discussed with the principal manager and acting service manager who informed the inspectors that this foster carer was going forward for review.

The inspectors raised their concerns to the principal manager and the acting service manager about the lack of specific training on offer to those foster carers that cared for babies. The inspectors met five foster carers who looked after babies, none had received any specific training about the care of babies. Further to this, no local and national policies or guidance had been issued to these carers with regards to the care of babies. The principal manager and acting service manager agreed and acknowledged that this was an area that needed to be addressed.

The principal manager and acting service manager also acknowledged that the absence of a learning and development officer had hindered training to be delivered particularly to kinship carers This had been recorded in the pre-inspection questionnaire and the acting service manager's self assessment form.

A list of training that had been provided to foster carers within the last year was supplied to the Commission, which detailed the numbers of foster carers that attended training sessions. Training included Meeting the Needs of Looked After Children, Working with Others, Separation and Loss, Trans-racial Placement, Child Development, Attachment, and other related training. The number of foster carers attending these sessions ranged from five to fifteen for any one session.

NVQ level 3 training was also offered. A total of 39 foster carers had received their NVQ in Caring for Children and Young People Award. The NVQ training was linked to the scale of foster carer payment although some foster carers did not wish to undertake this training.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The local authority had a Recording and File keeping and Access to Files Policy. The Foster Care Agreement set out that the foster carer should have essential information in relation to the basis, purpose and duration of placements and details of the child's legal status. Following discussion with the foster carer group this did not always appear to be the case. Some foster carers said that they had children placed with them without relevant details being forwarded. Some examples given related to medication and allergies. One foster carer had had a child placed who was intolerant of dairy foods and no information regarding this had been given to the carer. Another carer had a diabetic child placed with no information given about diabetes or the signs and symptoms to be aware of. This was of particular concern when the child became ill.

One foster carer stated that they had two children placed with them without any information. This was an area of concern that was fed back to the principal manager and the acting service manager. Some foster carers felt that they would be penalised if they refused to take a child on placement without the relevant paperwork.

The inspectors met with new foster carers. One family felt that all relevant information had been given to them and felt that they had been well supported by the family placement worker in addressing issues of the children's life history and had documented events that had taken place prior to and since placement via photographs and records.

The fostering service had piloted a new diary format for foster carers to compile and plans were in place for this to be reviewed in twelve months. The aim of the diary was to provide greater detail of events that included health checks, contact arrangements and significant events that had taken place that could then be taken to the LAC reviews.

The fostering service provided secure boxes to store information in an appropriate manner. Family placement workers confirmed that they took this box out to the foster carers. When the inspectors met with foster carers, one foster carer stated that she had not received a box and was unaware of where the information was or what she had received. Another stored the information in a communal area of the home. However, it was pleasing to note that other foster carers visited had been supplied with storage boxes and were aware of the importance of keeping documentation secure and confidential. The issues regarding appropriate storage was fed back to the principal manager and the acting service manager who said that they would ensure an audit of storage arrangements is undertaken via the family support workers.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

Separate records were maintained for staff, children/young people and carers.

The inspectors viewed a number of files pertaining to children/young people and carers. The following observations were made

- Not all LAC documents were completed.
- Not all LAC documents were signed.
- Not all communication sheets were signed or were stored in a systematic order.
- Some files were difficult to follow due to filing of paperwork in different sections of the file, which would make it difficult for a new worker to case track and find information. The inspectors were told that files would be audited by the acting service manager and that appropriate written guidance was to be made available to staff. A recommendation was made that it would be beneficial to have a content sheet placed at the front of the file detailing what should be placed in each section of the file.
- There was difficulty in identifying which reviews undertaken were statutory reviews.
- Some of the statutory reviews did not detail the recommendations/decisions made at the review.
- Lack of clarity regarding CRB on foster carers file – whether one had been completed.
- References for one foster carer did not explore her previous approval as a foster carer although reference was made to it in the Form F assessment.
- Mention was made on the file of one carer that they had been involved in a court case. The information gleaned from the records would indicate that the foster carer had failed to notify the service of this change and no records was found which would demonstrate that the matter had been fully discussed and explored with the foster carer.
- It was noted that one supervising worker had recorded that a foster carer was witnessed treating the children placed differently from the foster carer's own children.

There were no records of any follow-up to this issue raised and how or if it was addressed. This was drawn to the acting service manager and principal manager's attention during the inspection feedback.

At the last inspection, requirements were made for improvement in the system for dealing with complaints. It was pleasing to note that this matter had been addressed. A register of complaints was being held which detailed the date a complaint was received, details of the complainant, progress of the complaint, outcome etc. The inspectors were able to track complaints and how they had been handled and resolved.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			648
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises were found to be appropriate for the purpose of the service. The fostering service is based in Chorlton. This is the main office for the Adoption and Fostering Service with the teams being supported by an administration team.

Due to the recent move of all fostering services to locate them within the same unit, space was noted to be at a premium and if recruitment expanded this could place additional pressures on the staff based there.

Additional IT equipment had been made accessible for staff. A new electronic communication system had been introduced since the last inspection to enable workers to obtain information about children/young people and carers. A system administrator had been appointed to assist in the development of the new system and to support workers with training on the system.

The Fostering Panel was held in a meeting room at the offices and it was observed by the inspectors that prospective foster carers and family members who attended the panel had to wait in the general reception area for all the building with no refreshment facilities. This was discussed with the principal manager who acknowledged this but lack of space restricted a more appropriate area being identified.

Files were stored in lockable filing cabinets in the office area.

The insurance liability certificate was displayed on the wall in the administrative office.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service was funded from the budget allocated by Manchester Children, Families and Social Care and operated within the City Council's financial regulations.

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 operated within the local authority's policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. The manager reported that financial management information was regularly made available to managers in the service. There was a computer system that was used to record and monitor expenditure and the finance department continued to make payments to carers on the basis of information received by the fostering service. These payments included 'payment for skills' increments where applicable.

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 of the foster carers received an allowance to care for children and young people. This included a 'payment for skills' allowance made to foster carers who had completed their Post Approval training and NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

Administration systems were in place to facilitate the payment to foster carers, however, it was noted that if social workers did not ensure the relevant paperwork was submitted in time this would delay the payments to foster carers.

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

Policies and procedures were in place with respect to the panels. The inspectors attended the foster placement panel to observe the process of the panel. Following the previous inspection an independent chair had been appointed to ensure a level of independence.

Discussion with the chair confirmed that she was aware of her role and responsibilities and had a background in working with children and families. The chair was in the process of further developing guidance and information about the role of the panel and the requirements of relevant documentation to be submitted prior to panel to enable effective administration of information to panel members prior to panel.

The composition of the panel was in accordance with the regulations.

The inspectors observed the following points.

- Lack of clarity of the role of the panel and awareness of the process of the panel from the presenting assessors i.e. what they needed to present and why.
- The language used by one presenting one worker was inappropriate, they did not appear to understand the concept of risk and risk assessment. The inspectors considered that for the particular case presented the risk assessment was a crucial part of the assessment process. The Panel Chair picked this up.
- The quality and content of some of the assessments seen was of a poor standard. Some of the assessments presented failed to address and explore areas of concerns, for instance one referee indicated that the prospective foster carer could lose their temper.
- Form F's and forms completed for family and friend carers did not detail sufficient information around accommodation of the potential foster placement. For example, it was difficult to work out from the information provided how many people would be or were in the household.
- Health and Safety check lists were missing from some of the reports presented.

It is worthy of note that one Form F assessor had submitted a comprehensive and

professional assessment and had obtained all relevant detail to submit to the panel. Further to this, the worker had also prepared the foster carer and the foster carer's own child about the role and process of the panel prior to them attending. It was noted that the panel members put the potential foster carer and her child at ease.

Some of the assessments did not have information about satisfactory CRB checks and no explanations as to why the checks were missing. Not all references had been obtained or requested and this was picked up by the panel chair. The inspectors were particularly concerned that some key issues had not been explored by the assessing social workers as part of the assessment. This was discussed with the principal manager and the acting service managers who both acknowledged this and were addressing this via training and supervision.

Regulation 28 requires there to be a completed assessment before the Fostering Panel approves a carer. Regulation 27 requires a CRB disclosure and written report from referees to form part of the assessment. The Fostering Panel must only give approval to a carer when they have received all the required information and a requirement has been made to this effect.

It was noted that the panel members were seen to raise relevant and pertinent questions about the applications and the Panel Chair was noted to have scrutinised the papers presented to panel and had made the decision that two particular Form F's did not meet Regulation 27 and 28 and therefore withdrew these applications pending further information including references.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The service had policies and procedures in place to support children/young people with disabilities who were given care as short-term breaks within the fostering service. The manager reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that the Disabled Children's Family Placement Team provided link carers. The workers from the Disabled Children's Family Team also spoke positively about this arrangement.

The inspectors were told that potential foster carers for children with disabilities mainly had previous experience of work within this field, however, this did not exclude prospective carers who had no previous experience. Potential foster carers were supported by family placement workers to understand additional needs of children with disabilities. In addition to this, as part of the training, experienced foster carers were involved in pre-approval training.

It was acknowledged by staff that post approval training was often difficult for carers to attend due to their own work commitments. They said that discussions were and had taken place about making training available at weekends.

Equipment was provided where necessary, however, there were issues regarding accessing the major adaptation funding for short-term placements.

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?	2
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The process for the approval of family and friends carers is different to other carers in that it is social workers who are responsible for carrying out the assessment. The assessments for kinship carers did not use the Form "F" which is the practice for all other carer assessments.

There was recognition of the value of the work by these carers. The inspectors met a small group of these carers and there was generally understanding amongst them that they should be subjected to the same checks including CRB as other foster carers.

As with other carers, some family and friend carers met during the inspection talked about their dissatisfaction with the support that they receive, with poor communication between the social workers. As part of the assessment, commitment to long-term care did not appear to be fully explored in some cases. Some foster carers felt that they had limited option regarding the placement.

These carers reported that the paperwork they received was poor and they had to wait for lengthy periods to obtain written information from the social workers. The service needs to address this.

Training did not appear to be considered sufficient by carers or limited training offered. This was not helped by the absence of a training officer.

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 29th November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

NO

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Ciaran Rafferty of Manchester 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 Ciaran Rafferty of Manchester 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.

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