

inspection report

Fostering Services

Foster Care Associates (North West)

Palatine House
53 Palatine Road
Didsbury
Manchester
M20 3PP

8th 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?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Foster Care Associates (North West)

Tel No

0161 448 8228

Address

Palatine House, 53 Palatine Road, Didsbury, Manchester,
M20 3PP

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

F550002006

Name of Registered Provider

Foster Care Associates Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Isobel Tempest Marshall

Date of first registration

27th April 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

27th April 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

YES

Date of last inspection

8/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	2	Chris Tucker	074724
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		Isobel Marshall (Manager)	

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
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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 Foster Care Associates (North West). 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.

Foster Care Associates (FCA) is a national organisation providing family placement to children/young people “looked after” by local authorities. FCA North West head office is located in Didsbury, South Manchester. Since the last inspection the assistant director who is also the fostering service manager had been promoted to the position of Director. As well as the Director there is 1 Deputy Director, 1 Assistant Director, (5) Team Managers, Family Placement Workers (12), Senior Supervising Social Worker responsible for recruitment (1) Administrators, (13) Therapists, (3) and Resource Workers (11), 1 Reviewing Officer, 1 Marketing Officer, 1 Panel Manager, 2 Teachers and 2 Education Workers based within the four (4) North West offices, these being, Manchester (Head Office), Cumbria, Liverpool, Chorley and Ashton. This inspection focused on the Manchester, Chorley and Liverpool offices. An inspection of the Cumbria office took place in 2003.

The fostering service provides short-term, long-term, emergency, bridging placements, assessment placements as well as parent and child placements for “children/young people looked after” by a range of local authorities. In addition there is a resource service, which is established to provide additional packages of support to children/young people. This ranged from educational programmes intended to support a child/young person in school to supervising contact between a child and their birth parents.

The service recruits, assesses, approves and support foster carers. It also operates a fostering panel.

Since the last inspection took place the fostering services registration application has been completed. The service gained registration on the 27th April 2004. This included the registration of the fostering service manager.

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.

During this inspection, the inspectors were able to meet with a group of Family Placement Workers, Resource Workers, Team Managers, Administrative Staff and a meeting with the fostering service manager. All staff members spoken to demonstrated sound knowledge with clear awareness and understanding of the legislative framework, which underpins their work.

The inspectors also met with two groups of foster carers as well as visiting foster carers in their home to meet with them and the children/young people. All the children/young people who spoke to the inspectors said they were happy and well supported both by the carers and the staff from the agency. The foster carers were complimentary about the support and assistance they received from the agency as demonstrated at various sections of this report.

Questionnaires were sent to children/young people, foster carers and placing authorities. The response from the questionnaires returned by children/young people and carer's is reflected at various sections of this report. It is disappointed to report that no response had been received from placing authorities.

This inspection demonstrated, as before, that the fostering service provides a good support to children/young people and to the foster carers.

Statement of Purpose (1)

This standard was met

The Statement of Purpose covered all the elements specified in Schedule 1 of the regulations. This document had been revised since the last inspection.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service. (2-3)

2 of the 2 standards were met.

The service manager had a number of years experience in family placement and childcare practice and held a Diploma in Social Work and Social Administration awards as well as a Degree in English and Philosophy. At the time of the inspection, the overall assessment made by the inspectors was that the service was being appropriately and professionally managed.

Management of the Fostering Service.(4-5)

2 of the 2 standards were met.

Appropriate processes and systems were in place to monitor the activity of the service. This included obtaining the views of the foster carers and children/young people about the service provided. The fostering panel assisted in the process of monitoring. In addition to this, the service had sought the views of placing authorities on the service provided. The views

expressed from the questionnaires responses were positive and confirmed that the service was being managed effectively.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (6-14)

All 9 standards were met

A full and detailed assessment was carried out to ascertain carer's suitability to foster. The service was committed to recruiting carers from varied backgrounds. Training in Child Protection was made available for staff and carers. Clear systems were in place to address child protection concerns and detailed records were being maintained of complaints and allegations of and suspicions of abuse. An anti-bullying and missing from home procedures were in place. Appropriate arrangements were in place for contact to be maintained. Overall children/young people's welfare was being promoted with adequate safeguards in place at the time of the inspection.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Carers (15-23)

All 9 standards were met

There was a good system in place for recruiting staff and carers. The same recruitment standards extended to the appointment of the independent assessors. The personnel systems seen were of a good standard. Staff members interviewed confirmed the level of support and supervision that they received. Foster carers spoke highly of the service, its staff and the support they receive. They were given appropriate training to assist them.

Records

None of the 2 standards were met (24-25)

The service maintained files on carers, children/young people and staff. A register of foster carers was maintained and the register was found to contain relevant and sufficient information. The records were securely maintained.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering service(26)

This standard was not met.

The premises at the head office were found to be adequate for the purposes of the service. However, the space at the Liverpool office was limited and concerns were highlighted regarding the fire precautions at the Chorley office. This with respect to fire doors/evacuation routes.

Financial Requirements (27-29)

3 of the 3 standards were met

Appropriate financial systems were in place. Foster carers said that they received their payment promptly and regularly. They had no complaints about this aspect of the Service.

Fostering Panels

This standard was met

The inspectors were able to observe a Fostering Panel. **(chris do you want to add to this)**

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:

This does not apply to FCA as they are not a local authority fostering service. It should be noted however, that amendments have been made to the Care Standard Act 2000, and this requirement no longer applies to the local authority fostering service.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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	YES
FCA (North West) operates a range of fostering services in the North West of England including: Short-term, long-term, emergency, bridging and assessment placements as well as parent and child placements for 'looked after' children/young people.		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	YES
The agency's key activities are carried out from the regional branch office. Area offices do not operate independently and only carry out ancillary activities.		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	YES
The organisation must at all times employ a suitably qualified and experienced manager who is registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Lolly Warren	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Chris Tucker	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	34	FS24	<p>The fostering service manager must ensure that:</p> <p>(a) Copy of the LAC Care Plan relating to the children discussed during the inspection feedback are obtained for the files</p> <p>(b) Where concerns are raised about the physical environment of the foster carer's home the health and safety assessment must be reviewed.</p>	28.2.05
2	30	FS25	The practice of using 'Tippex' on the records must cease.	15.1.05
3	23(3)	FS25	If not already in place, the fostering service must develop and make available to foster carers and staff guidance with regard the storage and security of information held on computers	28.2.05

4	23	FS26	<p>The fostering service manager must:</p> <p>(a) Request a visit from the fire service with regard to the sub-office located in the Chorley area.</p> <p>(b) A copy of any report produce by the fire service must be submitted to the Commission as soon as it becomes available.</p> <p>(c) Fire doors must not be wedged open.</p>	<p>31.12.04</p> <p>28.2.05</p> <p>31.12.04 and ongoing</p>
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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	CH11	A copy of any complaint should be placed on the foster carer's file.
2	FS24	It is suggested that the support workers maintain a list of when the next statutory review is due on the child placed with the foster carer they support so they can be alerted as to when the review is due.
3	FS25	The ethnicity basis of placement detailed on the front sheet of the foster carer's file should match that detailed on the form F and contained in the panel minutes.
4	FS25	Staff should make sure that they are consistent in signing the records.

* 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

11.00

Survey of placing authorities

YES

Foster carer survey

YES

Foster children survey

YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals

YES

- Directors of Social services

NO

- Child protection officer

YES

- Specialist advisor (s)

NO

- Local Foster Care Association

NO

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements

YES

- Interview with children

YES

- Interview with foster carers

YES

- Interview with agency staff

YES

- Contact with parents

YES

- Contact with supervising social workers

YES

- Examination of files

YES

Individual interview with manager

YES

Information from provider

YES

Individual interviews with key staff

YES

Group discussion with staff

YES

Interview with panel chair

NO

Observation of foster carer training

NO

Observation of foster panel

YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

NO

Date of Inspection

8/11/04

Time of Inspection

9.30 AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

92

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?

3

The Statement of Purpose addressed all the issues specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. The aims and objectives of the service were clearly defined in the document as well as information regarding all the services provided.

It was encouraging to note that the members of staff interviewed were aware of and had seen the Statement of Purpose. They considered that the Statement of Purpose accurately described the service provided and the aims and objectives of the service.

Written information about the service was available to children/young people in a 'File of Facts' which constituted the service's Children's Guide. There was also a leaflet designed for the younger children. Both these documents contained information about the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service manager holds the Diploma in Social Work and Social Administration in addition to a degree in English and Philosophy. The manager does not hold a management qualification. However, the manager has indicated in the pre-inspection documentation that she would be undertaking a management course commencing in the Spring of 2005.

The fostering service manager demonstrated a clear understanding of the management structures, which existed within the organisation at a national as well as a local level. There were clear line of responsibility and accountability, which were known and understood by the members of the staff team interviewed during the inspection. The inspectors interviewed two newly appointed members of staff from one of the area offices. Both were aware of the structures and lines of accountability.

As found on the previous inspection, the foster carers interviewed both as a group and individually told the inspectors that the service was effectively and efficiently managed.

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

The existing manager is an experienced child-care worker with over ten years experience of residential and family placement work. She demonstrated a sound knowledge of the issues regarding protection and safeguarding and promoting children/young people's welfare. This has been evidenced in the contacts made to the Commission for Social Care Inspection by the manager relating to various childcare matters and notifications received.

The Commission had taken up appropriate checks in respect of the manager for Social Care Inspection including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau and appropriate references.

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?	4
<p>Appropriate procedures and processes for monitoring and controlling fostering service activities were in place. This included the foster carers support group meetings, which were attended by the family placement workers. It was clear from the discussions with the foster carers groups that they were empowered to give their views and opinion about the service. Some told the inspectors that the fostering service was managed in a way that afforded them to opportunity to speak directly to any of the team managers, service manager and the regional director if and when necessary.</p> <p>The fostering service had also developed additional systems to elicit the views of all foster carers by way of questionnaires. In addition, foster carers told the inspectors that the service was proactive in obtaining the views of the children/young people.</p> <p>Since the last inspection, the service had carried out consultation with placing authorities using a questionnaire. The inspectors were able to view the returned questionnaires. Some of the comments included “ I am very impressed by the efficient manner in which FCA have addressed both educational and therapeutic issues”, another said that, the service provided was “Child focused and centred,” another authority commented that the service was “excellent”.</p> <p>The fostering service staff said that regular meetings took place. The fostering panel undertook a monitoring function in relation to the progress and quality of assessments. There was a reviewing officer who was responsible for ensuring that the assessments contained appropriate information.</p> <p>The fostering service manager and assistant director monitored the files and other written information to ensure that up to date records were being maintained in all offices. There was evidence to indicate that the service regularly reviewed and up dated its policies and procedures.</p> <p>Regular staff supervision took place when managers were able to assess the level of support and work taking place with the foster carers as well as a means of ensuring workers were undertaking, and had a clear understanding of, their tasks.</p> <p>Clear administrative procedures were in place. As noted on previous inspections, the administrative element of the service was organised with appropriate systems in place for checking the progress of assessments of carers, for recording placement, where vacancy exists as well as appropriate systems for ensuring payments are made to carers.</p> <p>Systems were in place to monitor the matters specified in Schedule 7 and notify Commission for Social Care Inspection of those specified in Schedule 8. The Commission had received a</p>		

number of notifications during the year.

From the evidence provided the inspectors concluded that the service was well managed.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months: 48

Death of a child placed with foster parents.	X
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	X
Serious illness or accident of a child.	27
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	X
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	X
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	5
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	6
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	10

Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months: 2

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

The job description in place relating to the role and responsibilities of the manager was appropriate. This document was accompanied by the person specification. All staff members interviewed and observed were clear about the lines of accountability. Foster carers were also aware of who they could contact should they have concerns about the service.

Since the last inspection, the person who would deputize in the manager's absence had changed. The assistant director with responsibility for social work operations would take on this role. Information contained in the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the assistant director had 15 years experience working within children and families service and had worked for the fostering service for 6 years.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A full assessment of the foster carers would normally be undertaken before foster carers were approved for placements. Family placement staff said that a health and safety assessment would be undertaken to ensure the home was safe, secure and one that would provide the children/young people with a healthy environment in which to thrive. Copies of the health and safety checklists were located on the files examined. Health and safety training was also provided for carers with detailed health and safety procedures located in the Foster Carers Handbook.

Foster carers confirmed that they received information relating to safety when transporting children in a car. Some told the inspectors about the measures taken to safeguard children whilst being transported. This included ensuring that their car were fitted with appropriate car safety seats and seat belts etc.

The fostering service had developed its 'Safe Care Policy' and each carer was expected to draw up a safe care policy for their home. These were in place on the foster carers files examined.

As part of the monitoring that takes place relating to foster carers, unannounced visits to the foster care's home took place.

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 inspectors were informed by the fostering service manager, team manager, fostering service staff and foster carers that training and development was ongoing to ensure that children/young people were appropriately placed and cared for.

There was training titled "Valuing Diversity" which, from the 2004 training programme indicated that this training had been planned to take place throughout the year at all the area offices. Foster carers indicated that they benefited from this training and there was evidence that the needs of children/young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled children/young people were being met.

The fostering service had detailed and comprehensive policies and procedures on diversity. Copy of the documents were made available to the inspectors. It was pleasing to note that the document contained information on working with children with disabilities, employment policies, a summary of the main religions etc. The fostering service should be commended

for its pro-active approach in this area.

There was evidence that the fostering service strived to ensure that the staff team and carers recruited, including the fostering panel reflected the diverse community in which the service was based.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Policies and guidance were available regarding placements. The policies addressed the issues around the need to take account of the particular needs of children/young people from different cultural/religious backgrounds in the matching process. This matter was also covered in the Foster Care Agreement, where it was noted that placements would take account of children/young people's cultural, racial origin, linguistic and religious background in the matching process. The fostering service had developed policies/procedures on matching and placement of children/young people.

As noted at the previous inspections, written information available indicated that although a child's ethnicity was an important consideration in the matching process, this would not in itself be the only consideration as the assessed needs of the child would be a priority.

Where the need arises to make a trans-racial placement, consideration would be given to the support that would be required by the carer to facilitate the placement. The inspectors were told that where a placement was made with a white foster carer appropriate care would be taken to ensure that the foster carer had an understanding of the needs of black and ethnic minority children/young people as well as whether the carer could offer a culturally sensitive service.

Foster carers told the inspectors that the diversity training gave them the opportunity to explore the issues around trans-racial placement.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

As stated on previous inspections the foster carers confirmed that they were expected to complete Child Protection training. Some said that this training was compulsory. They said this was included in their induction and updated as and when necessary and that information on protecting and promoting children/young people welfare was contained in the Foster Carer's handbook. Family Placement Workers had also participated in this training.

Each foster carer was required to have a 'Safe Care' policy for their home and monitoring of this, formed part of the annual review. Copies of these documents were located on the files examined. The foster carers demonstrated their understanding of Child Protection matters and any concerns that they would discuss with the staff. They said that they could also contact the out of hours service if this was necessary as well as having access to support from other carers. Foster carers confirmed their awareness of the local authority emergency duty service.

Foster carers were aware of the procedures should an allegation be made against them as well as the reporting procedures.

Written Child Protection procedures were in place in addition to a 'Whistle Blowing' policy, which was available in the Foster Carer's Handbook. The Foster Care Agreement identifies the carer's responsibility and the expectation that they would comply with the policies and procedures issued by FCA relating to protection and for notifying the service of any known or suspected involvement of a child/young person in prostitution.

As noted on the previous inspections, the service had established a system for collating information on instances of allegations of abuse/suspected abuse and of their outcomes. The inspectors were able to examine the records.

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

The fostering service had developed policies around bullying and children/young people going missing from home. During the discussions with foster carers they discussed the issues around children/young people going missing, particularly older children.

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**

Foster carer's interviewed told the inspectors that they considered contact to be very important for the children/young people they looked after. The foster carer's experience of contact varied. Foster carers recognised the need for children/young people to maintain contact with their birth family but some considered that on occasion this was not always a positive experience for the children/young people and sometimes had a negative impact on the child's behaviour.

Written guidance was available to staff around promoting contact. Resource workers could facilitate contact by taking children/young people to the contact or supervising the contact for the local authority. They told the inspectors that they would prepare a report detailing their observations made during the contact to the placing authority.

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?****4**

Foster carer's spoken to say that the views of children/young people were sought as part of the review process. They said that the children/young people would complete a form although they did not always want to complete the form. Some carers said that the children/young people were tired of "filling in forms"

Foster carers said that the children/young people were also supported by their own social worker who consulted with the children. They also receive visits from the Family Placement Worker on a regular basis. The inspectors were told that foster carers and staff were encouraged to keep contact with families.

In their response to the questionnaire, children/young people commented that their opinion was sought by the foster carer, the social worker and the family placement workers. From the questionnaire responses this ranged from views on activities, food, favourite hobbies etc. One young person commented that they were asked, "how I feel and are you alright", another indicated they were asked about "what I would like to do when my... visits, choosing clothes that sort of thing." Other children/young people listed things such as decorating their room, holidays etc. They were also asked their opinion of the fostering agency.

Foster carers met said their opinions were sought and that they felt that the staff listened to their views. This was also confirmed in the responses received from the foster carer's questionnaires. However, some carers voiced concerns that because of funding issues, at reviews the placing authorities were not making the "appropriate choice" for the children/young people. They said that they were not always invited to the children's review and find this concerning seen that they know the children/young people as they were the carers.

In the pre-inspection information the fostering service manager acknowledged that little face to face contact was made with parents, that this would happen via the review process. She

also made the point that the training offered to foster carers included encouraging them to consult with parents over issues such as pocket money, appointments etc.

Information on the pre-inspection document indicated that changes had been made by the service as a result of listening to young people. The service had developed the Young Peoples' Forum and in the pre-inspection information the fostering service manager indicated that the main area of contention for young people related to 'sleep overs.' Two young people in their response to the questionnaires highlighted the fact that they could not stay over at their "mates house without police checks". However, new government guidance issued in Local Authority Circular, LAC (2004) 4 should address this matter.

Children/young people responding to the questionnaires indicated that they were aware of the complaints procedure with two young people stating that they had made a complaint.

At the last inspection, requirements were made that the system for dealing with complaints must be reviewed and that family placement workers must receive training on dealing with complaints. It was pleasing to note that both these issues had been addressed. The service had organised complaints into folders. The inspectors were able to track complaints and how they had been handled and resolved. This included letter being sent to the complainant detailing the outcome of the investigation. A suggestion was made in one of the offices, that a copy of the complaint made against the foster carer should be placed on their file. In addition, a further suggestion was made that a summary sheet should be placed at the front of the file to show who had complained, when the complaint was received and concluded. The inspectors considered that this would assist in information being easy to retrieve. This matter was addressed prior to the conclusion of the inspection.

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?

4

Detailed information was contained in the Foster Carer's Handbook concerning personal health and development. The information covered a range of issues. This included the foster carer's responsibility and the expectation that they would familiarise themselves with the written information made available. In addition, the Foster Care Agreement made it clear that the foster carers must ensure that children/young people are taken to General Practitioner (GP) and for appointments.

Children/young people were issued with what was known as the 'Health Passport'. This was designed to stay with the young person throughout their period of being looked after. Additional support would be made available to the children/young people when required. The service provided therapeutic input if this was necessary. The therapists were qualified and accredited and received external clinical support and supervision.

Some of the foster carers told the inspectors that this service was very beneficial to the children/young people.

Appropriate arrangements and processes were in place to ensure that consent was obtained from the placing authority for a child to receive medical treatment. However, during the

discussions with foster carers some talked about the difficulties with regard to the consent issue. Some said that GP's were now insisting on parents giving consent. One gave an example of a child who had to visit the GP surgery. The carer said that they and the social worker had to wait until the child's parent arrived before the GP would attend to the young person. The foster carers said that stigma was attached to looked after children and voiced their opinion that GP's view children who are looked after, as different and therefore treated them differently.

Foster carers' training covered sexual health and development, health and hygiene and first aid.

The Resource Manager was responsible for providing support staff (Resource Workers) to assist children/young people. This included arranging outings, activities and holidays. The Resource workers can also provide a babysitting service to assist the carers. As found on the last inspection the support workers met enjoyed their work and the support offered to both the carer and children/young people.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The service had appropriate education policies and procedures in place as well as information available to foster carers in the Foster Carers Handbook.

Education features prominently within the Service. There was a team of education liaison officers who were qualified teachers with experience of special needs education. At the last inspection, the fostering service manager had informed inspectors that plans were in place to appoint two education support workers. It was encouraging to note that these workers were now in place. The service also provided part-time tutors to assist children/young people at home and those that have been excluded from school. Foster carers met during the inspection, spoke about the education support that was available to them. Some commented that they sometimes had difficulties getting young people into school but that they were encouraged by FCA to appeal the decisions made by education authorities. They also said that the children/young people could access education at the head office

At the time of the inspection, there was evidence to indicate that 100% of the children/young people placed by the agency were in school.

There was an expectation that carers would support the children/young people in their education. This could be with homework, attending parent's evenings and educational reviews. Foster carers were also expected to report to the service any concerns they had regarding the school placement. The Foster Care Agreement made it clear that the foster carer was responsible for transporting and escorting children/young people to school.

The fostering service maintained separate education files on each child. It was pleasing to note that the service had appropriate systems in place for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and attendance of the children/young people in education. The inspectors had access to year 11 summer of 2004 examine results. The result showed that two young people had achieved 10 GCSE's at Grade A-C, with one of these young people achieving an A*. One had achieved 7 at Grade A-G, two had gained 5 Grades at A-G and

one young person had achieved the Foundation Level NVQ Award in Hairdressing and Beauty etc.

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

A document 'Preparing Young People for Adult Living' was available. This detailed the role of the Service and foster carers in establishing an environment that facilitated this transition for young people. Information was also contained in the Foster Carer's Handbook although there was no requirement in the Foster Care Agreement that carers should help to prepare young people for independence.

Foster carers would assist young people in preparing them to move on. At the last inspection the service had muted its intention to develop its Leaving Care Service. At the time, a meeting had taken place with a group of young people to discuss the issues. During this inspection, there was evidence that things had progressed. Foster carers spoken to told the inspectors that they had been involved in Pathway Planning. In the response from the questionnaires, two young people commented that more advice should be offered on leaving care and the facilities that were available to 16+ or make available a list of organisation that they could contact for advice. This was drawn to the fostering service manager's attention.

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?

4

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 North West office. The fostering service manager was involved in the recruitment of Family Placement Workers. It was clear from examination of the files seen that the service had made improvements to its recruitment procedures since the last inspection.

All newly appointed staff would participate in induction training. The inspectors met with two staff members who had recently joined the team. They described the induction process and what was involved. Both workers considered that the induction was structured and that they had been given the opportunity to settle in. They indicated that the training was progressive over a period of time. One of the workers had previously done work as an independent assessor for the organisation. All new staff would be subjected to six months probationary period.

All family placement workers were qualified social workers. They were responsible for supervising, supporting and undertaking the annual review of carers as well as having involvement in the training of carers. The family placement workers met during the inspection had developed sound knowledge and understanding of their role and of the legislation that underpins their work. They were experienced workers most of whom had worked for local authorities before joining the fostering service. One worker interviewed talked about the change in role from being a social work advocating on behalf of the child to being the support worker for the foster carer but recognising that they still had a role to play in safeguarding children/young people's welfare.

Samples of staff personal files were made available for inspection. Overall the files were found to be in order with necessary references and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. There was a need for the CRB forms to be removed from the files already seen by the inspectors. This same principal applied to the checks on foster carers. A suggestion was made that a record should be made on the front sheet of the files of the date the CRB reference was received, the issue etc.

The inspectors were encouraged by the proactive approach adopted by the service to clarify any gaps in employment as noted on one file. A thorough process was observed.

It was pleasing to note that the declaration form held on the files had been further developed. The form told staff about the checks that the service would carry out. It was suggested to the fostering service manager that reference to CRB should be included on the form.

It should be noted that the same recruitment procedures would apply to the appointment of independent form F assessors. The organisation had developed appropriate procedures with regard to self-employed staff. The document detailed the expectation of the service as well as the checks that would be undertaken.

Overall the inspectors considered that the personnel procedures were good and well recorded.

Total number of staff of the agency:

56

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Appropriate management structures were in place. The assistant director and the fostering service manager undertook supervision of workers. Supervision took place on a monthly basis as confirmed by the family placement workers. Family placement workers had access to other managers within the service. Staff members spoken to including administrative staff said that they received a good level of support from their managers and that managers were flexible in their approach. All the staff members said that they considered the agency to be a good employer with the lines of accountability clear to the staff team.

There was a Placement Manager who was responsible for liaising with local authorities and carers, arranging payments etc. There was also an Office Manager. As noted at previous inspections the administrative team was well organised with the appropriate systems in place for tracking placements and ensuring all tasks were completed.

Adequate systems were in place for monitoring the work undertaken by staff with the senior managers having access to files, which they periodically checked. The staff team appeared to work closely and covered for each other where necessary.

Staff members interviewed were aware of the grievance and disciplinary procedures and copies of all the Policies and Procedures were made available to them.

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?****4**

Overall the foster carers' view of the service was that it provided good support and training and that the staff cared about what happen to them as carers as well as the children/young people placed. A high percentage felt that that the service was adequately staffed and that they had experienced no problems when they needed to speak to a member of staff. However, some of the carers in a particular location responding to the questionnaire commented that the service was in their view not adequately staffed. They commented about the poor communication between the staff of this FCA office and themselves. The fostering service manager acknowledged that they had experienced some problems in this particular area but that action had been taken to address the problems. This had included the appointment of a new team manager and family placement worker. One person had commented that additional sessional workers to support the carers were necessary. This matter was discussed with the fostering service manager who discussed some of the activities that some foster carers would like to see the support workers involved in, which the manager did not see as the most appropriate way to utilise this resource.

There was evidence to indicate that appropriate systems were in place as well as contingency to resolve any shortfall in staffing.

All the staff had a social work qualification in addition to degrees. This included both the fostering service manager and the assistant director who deputises in the manger's absence. All the fostering service staff had lengthy experience of childcare.

Policies and procedures were in place relating to the recruitment and retention of foster carers. The service used a number of methods to recruit foster carers such as advertising in local and national press, community links, word of mouth, website etc. They have been able to recruit carers from a range of backgrounds in order to be able to offer and meet the needs of different children/young people and the demands of the local authorities.

Foster carers spoken to said that the recruitment and approval process was intrusive and lengthy but that they understood the reasons for this.

The assessment of carers was carried out using the BAAF form F. The fostering service also uses independent assessors to carry out form F assessments. Part of the management structure included a Reviewing Officer and a Panel Manager. The Panel Manager allocated the assessors. The Panel Manager vets the form F's to ensure that any gaps in the information collated regarding the foster carer were addressed before the assessment document was sent to panel members. From observation of the panel, as well as discussions with the Panel Manager there appeared to be good systems in place to ensure that careful vetting of prospective carers was undertaken.

The inspectors were impressed with the quality and content of the form F assessments seen.

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?****4**

A range of policies were in place intending to support the Service and the staff. These included 'Whistle Blowing, Grievance, Disciplinary, Harassment and Anti-Discriminatory Policies and Procedures, Supervision and Appraisal.

The staff members had access to independent counselling as well as the employee and carer's forum including a Black workers support group. In addition, administrative staff was also supported via the Admin Conference, which takes place yearly. As noted on previous inspections the staff members met spoke highly of the fostering service in terms of the support, assistance and guidance offered.

Foster carers spoke about the out of hours service that was made available to them. Some said that a worker was always available for them to speak with and that they did not feel as if they were being left to manage difficult situations that they sometimes faced. During the discussions with the fostering service manager she talked about the Emergency Duty Service that was developing. She said that the service would be available Monday to Sunday and staffed appropriately. She talked about this service being trialled and was hopeful of its success. Out of hours visits could be arranged if this was considered to be appropriate and necessary.

The Foster Care Agreement set out the Public Liability Insurance cover for foster carers and children/young people placed.

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**

One member of staff described the induction training that they had received on joining the agency, which they considered was of a high standard.

The inspectors were able to examine the training schedule designed for the year with regards to both carers and staff members. The staff had participated on a number of training courses. These included Child Protection, Management of Behaviour etc.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>All staff providing support to foster carers received one to one supervision including the administrative staff. The staff members spoken to during the inspection confirm the level of support they received. They said that the support offered to them have been good and that their experience with the agency was an enjoyable one. One member of staff told the inspectors that they had joined the agency because they were aware of the level and quality of support the agency offered to their staff.</p> <p>There was clear structure for supervision in place. This included supervision of the team managers by the newly promoted assistant director. The fostering service manager was also involved in supervision of the managers as well, as having an overview of the process for staff support and supervision. In addition to supervision the organisation had established a process for staff appraisal.</p> <p>As stated previously, team meetings took place on a regular basis and staff meetings and senior management meetings took place to ensure that managers were kept abreast of development, any gaps in the service as well as monitoring performance and practice and to ensure tasks were being undertaken as agreed.</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?	4
<p>Written procedures were in place, which set out the strategies for working with foster carers. It detailed the level of supervision provided, the aim of the supervision, the fact that unannounced visits should take a place. The Foster Care Agreement set out the support the foster carer could expect to receive from the service.</p> <p>Foster carers spoken to during the inspection, were aware of the difference between the role and responsibilities of the staff provided by the service and that of the local authority social worker. Foster carers were complimentary about the level of support made available to them by the agency as well as the support and assistance made available to the children/young people. Some of the carers told the inspectors that there was a big difference between their supervising social worker and the children's social workers. They said the attitude of the Local authority social workers "left a lot to be desired". Some foster carers said that this related to social workers from particular authorities.</p> <p>Foster carers were able to take holidays with their own families and some interviewed described the process involved and the arrangements made for the foster child when they took a holiday.</p> <p>As previously stated foster carers were very positive about the level of support provided.</p> <p>In their response to the questionnaires the children/young people commented about the help and support they received from their foster carers. For example, one young person said "my foster mum helps me with my homework when I am stuck". Another said ".....supports me in anything I choose to do as long as it is not something that hurt others".</p> <p>Overall foster carers said they were able to participate in the child's review. This was confirmed in the response to the questionnaire although one person responding to the</p>		

questionnaire commented that they did not feel they were listened to at reviews.

It was pleasing to hear for the foster carers that they had access to all the managers including the fostering service manager and the directors of the organisation.

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?

4

As at the last inspection the majority of foster carers commented positively about the support and supervision that they received.

The Foster Care Agreement addressed all the matters set out in Schedule 5 of Regulation 28(5)(b). Information relating to supervision made available to the foster carers was detailed in the Agreement.

A detailed and comprehensive Foster Carer's Handbook was available to all the carers, which contained all policies, procedures and guidance 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?

4

The inspectors met with two groups of foster carers located at the two sub-offices as well as foster carers in their homes. The foster carers said that the training provided by the agency was intensive and of a good quality. They said that training such as Child protection was mandatory and that they had to attend. The foster carers saw the benefit of training in assisting them to work with sometime difficult and challenging young people as well as those children/young people with specific needs. A high percentage of the questionnaires returned by foster carers confirmed that they were able to participate in training. Training for foster carers started prior to them becoming approved. Foster carers were able to complete the NVQ Level 3 Award in Caring for Children and Young People. The foster carers have commented that the agency did well in the area of training.

Some of the training included Child Protection, Health Development, Valuing Diversity, First Aid, Education of Children in Public Care, Pathway Planning, HIV and Aids, Promoting Contact etc.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Files seen overall contained the Looked After Children (LAC) documents. However, the LAC Care Plan was missing from the files of two children in one of the sub-officers. It was also noted that a copy of the statutory review report was missing from these files. From the discussions with the family placement worker and team manager, it would appear that social work staff within the placing authority were involved in taking industrial action, which had not assisted in the children's review taking place as required. Further to this, the service had not been notified of the date, time or location of the review. A suggestion was made that each family placement worker should keep a list of when the next statutory review was due on the children/young people placed so that they could be alert to the impending reviews and therefore aware when one has been missed.

The inspectors noted on the file of one child that the placing social worker had raised concerns about the safety of the home environment due to the number of accidents the child had experienced. The assessment had been carried out but the inspectors considered that the assessment had not taken account of all the issues raised by the social worker. In addition, the foster carer's health and safety assessment had not been reviewed. There was a lack of information on the file to indicate that the social worker had been informed about the outcome of the risk assessment. The team manager, advised the inspectors that telephone contact had been made with the social worker. It was suggested that written information should have been sent to the social worker and a copy placed on the child's file.

The files contained the necessary information and foster carers were aware of the circumstances leading up to the placement of a child with themselves and the objective of the placement.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

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

The inspectors examined the records maintained in two sub-offices during this inspection. They also assessed staff records, which were made available at the head office. Separate records in relation to staff and carers were being maintained. Improvements were noted in the way information was held on the staff files.

Family placement staff was noted to do their own filing. The inspectors noted in one of the sub-offices that staff were using correction fluid on the records rather than crossing out the incorrect information. There was information to indicate that an audit of the files took place although some of the record made by the family placement staff in one of the sub-offices had not been signed. It was noted on the front sheets of the foster carers file that the ethnicity basis of placement did not correspond with the information detailed on the form F assessment and the panel minutes and this needed to be addressed.

As noted on the previous inspections clear information was evident on the files to indicate that the necessary checks were undertaken on the carers and members of their family where necessary.

There was information to indicate that reviews were taking place.

A register was maintained of foster carers, which contained the information required by the regulations.

Records were securely maintained and the premises was alarmed.

The fostering service had developed a number of policies and procedures relating to storage and management of information, maintain records etc. During the course of the inspection it was not clear whether appropriate guidance was available to foster carers regarding the safe storage of information on children/young people that they may hold on computer. During the discussions with the manager, she indicated that this document might exist and that the new out of hours service had processes in place to provide for the safe keeping of information on computer which could not be removed. If not in place, a policy relating to keeping information on computers safe should be developed.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

175

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

71

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

72

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

31

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

11

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

£350.0

Maximum £

£350.0

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The inspectors visited the main office of the service and the premises of two of the sub-offices. FCA North West is based in a large detached property that had sufficient space to enable the Service to carry out its function. This included space for therapy and education work and adequate space for the administrative and Family Placement staff. One of the sub-offices visited was located on a newly established industrial estate. The premises was fully equipped and furnished to a good standard. However, it was acknowledged that the space provided was not sufficiently adequate for its purpose; in particular to convene foster carers support group meetings. The organisation was actively seeking alternatives to addressing the current difficulties.</p> <p>The other sub-offices were located in a rural area of Chorley. The building had been converted to provide the required office space necessary to service the number of foster carers supported by this office. During the time spent at this office, the inspectors noted that a number of fire doors had been wedged open and this was drawn to the team manager's attention. There was a need also for clarity on which doors had been designated fire doors. From the discussions with the team manager it became apparent that a visit to the premises by the fire service had not taken place since the building was converted and the team manager was advised of the need to contact the fire service. Prior to the conclusion of the inspection the matter was actioned. A copy of any report produced by the fire service must be submitted to the Commission when it becomes available.</p> <p>As found at the last inspections foster carers commented that children enjoyed visiting the office and felt welcomed.</p> <p>Plans were in place to open another office of the agency in another area of Greater Manchester and it was proposed that some staff at the North West head office would be relocated to this office in the near future.</p>		

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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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

FCA is a national organisation. As noted at the last inspection and from the information seen and discussions with the manager, the service appeared at the time of the inspection to be viable. The overall financial responsibility is situated in the central office in Bromsgrove. However, there was information to suggest that the manager had responsibility at a local level.

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

Financial procedures were available. Appropriate systems were in place to monitor the operation of the service to ensure that it is financially viable.

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?**

4

Overall foster carers were happy with the systems for payment that was in place. The inspectors met with a group of foster carers who said that they received their payment on time. They said they could not fault the systems in place and had no concern about the way in which payments were organised. This was also confirmed in the questionnaires completed by foster carers. However, one foster carer had commented that they felt the withdrawal of the retainer fees was not helpful and that this should be replaced. Discussions with the fostering service manager and team managers indicated that existing and prospective foster carers were informed that a retainer would not be paid by the agency.

Appropriate administrative/computer system was in place and the administrative team had access to training to assist them in their work.

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?	4
<p>As noted on previous inspections appropriate and clear procedures were in place relating to the legal framework in which the foster panel was established. The information included the composition and membership of the panel. All panel members were CRB checked and have to declare any conflict of interests. There were also processes for decision-making, refusal and approval. The service had also developed its job description for panel members in addition to written agreement between the fostering service and panel members setting out the expectations to access whether any changes was necessary in the way the Manchester panel conducted its business.</p> <p>Composition of the panel was as specified in the regulations.</p> <p>There was an independent chairperson for the panel. The chair was not formally interviewed during this inspection but she spoke to the inspectors about the changes and development that had taken place since the last inspection. This had included attending another of the organisations panel in another region.</p> <p>The inspectors were able to observe the panel and as noted previously the chair was clear about their role and the process for decision-making and was aware of the processes involved should a concern arise from a panel meeting. The panel was conducted with care but with questioning of the form F assessors where necessary. Prospective foster carers were invited to the panel and the letter inviting them to attend the panel was clear telling the foster carer about the process involved. It was pleasing to note that the panel members put the foster carers at ease. It is worthy of note that agreement was reached between the panel members as to which member would put a question to the prospective carer. The inspectors met with foster carers who said that whilst the process of attending the panel was difficult it was made easy by the approach of the chair and panel members. Those involved should be commended.</p> <p>Training had been made available to panel members.</p> <p>The panel minutes were clear although a suggestion was made based on the observation of the panel that the name of the adults outside the immediate family to be CRB checked should be detailed in the panel minutes.</p> <p>It was pleasing to note that the recruitment manager had produced an annual report of the fostering panel. This report detailed information about the volume of business during a twelve-month period. This included the number of meetings held, the number of approvals,</p>		

number of terminations etc. The inspectors found this to be a useful document.

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?
Not a service offered by FCA.	9

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard does not applied to FCA.		

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 8th 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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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 17/01/05, 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 Martin Cockburn of Foster Care Associates (North West) 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 Martin Cockburn of Foster Care Associates (North West) 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 instances 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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