



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

**North Yorkshire County Council
Fostering Service**

County Hall
Racecourse Lane
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8DD

10th January 2005

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

North Yorkshire County Council Fostering Service

Address

County Hall, Racecourse Lane, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8DD

Local Authority Manager

Mr John Heron

Tel No:

01609 780780

Address

County Hall, Racecourse Lane, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8DD

Fax No:

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

9/1/03

Date of latest registration certificate

9/1/03

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

2/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		10th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Michael McCleave MBE	076193
Name of Inspector	2	Mrs. Monica Hargreaves	
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		Mr. John Heron	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 North Yorkshire County Council Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.

North Yorkshire County Council provides fostering services through the Children and Families Business Unit of the Social Services Department. There are three teams that are responsible for the recruitment, approval, support and monitoring of foster carers. Each team is managed by a Service Manager who in turn are accountable to the Group Manager. The services provided are as follows:

- Task centred foster care.
- Respite care.
- Permanent foster care.
- Family and friend foster care.
- Specialist foster care.
- Emergency foster care.

There are three foster panels for the county that relate to the geographical areas of the three teams covering Scarborough / Ryedale, Hambleton / Richmond and Harrogate / Craven.

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.)

The inspection was carried in the Hambleton Richmond area of the county one of three distinct divisions that has a fostering service. The Service Manager is based in area office located at Brompton on Swale and there is a satellite office in Selby.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1.)

This standard is met.

The Statement of Purpose is approved by elected members. It is available to all foster carers.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 to 3).

1 of these 2 standards was met.

The registered manager is in the process of completing a management qualification.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4 to 5).

2 of these 2 standards were met.

The service is well managed and staff are clear about lines of accountability. The Service Manager has an additional responsibility for the office in Selby. This has an impact on the Service Manager's time.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 to 14).

8 of these 9 standards were met.

Foster carers provide the children with warm, clean, comfortable and safe environments to live in. Attempts are made to match children appropriately with carers. Contact is actively encouraged between the children and their families where assessed as appropriate. Good joint work is carried out between the Education Department and Fostering Service.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15 to 23)

8 of these 9 Standards were met.

A county recruitment policy is in place. A system to record telephone reference checks needs to be developed and located in staff files. Formal supervision and appraisal is in place. The Selby office IT. System is not efficient. The staffing levels are good. The Out of Hours duty system is being improved to support foster carers.

Records (Standards 24 to 25)

2 of these 2 standards were met.

Foster care records are well maintained and kept secure. Some records provided by field social workers need to have appropriate signatures.

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

This standard partly met.

The office space in Selby needs increasing.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 to 29)

3 of these 3 standards are met.

Efficient financial controls are in place to monitor the budgets.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard is met.

The Panel is appropriately constituted. An experienced Social Services manager is the chairperson. Good administration is provided.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not inspected.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard is met.

Appropriate checks are carried on all family and friends who are recruited as carers. Good support is provided by the foster care workers.

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:

YES

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:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Mike McCleave</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>N/A</u>	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Stephen Sharp</u>	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	7	FS2	The registered manager should obtain a qualification in management at NVQ Level 4 or equivalent by 2005.	31.5.05

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	FS15	A clearer system for indicating that telephone checks on references have been carried out should be developed.
2	FS16	The office accommodation and IT systems need to be improved at the Selby office.
3	FS21	Consideration should be given to improving the support to children placed in a foster home by field social workers using more locally based social workers.
4	FS24	All recording of information should have signatures of the relevant parties.
5	FS26	The Selby office should be linked into the NYCC network. Consideration should be given to increasing the available office space in Brompton and Selby.

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

Number of Inspector days spent	12
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	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	10/1/05
Time of Inspection	0930
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	100

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 sets out the aims and objectives of the fostering service. It has been approved by elected members and is widely available throughout the organisation. Copies are included in the Foster Care Manual that is issued to foster carers. A Children's Guide was seen and includes a summary of what the service sets out to do for children. The guide also contains information on how a child can make a complaint.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Service Manager has a professional social work qualification and he is experienced in foster care management. The Group Manager is professionally qualified and is currently completing the NVQ Level 5 in management. It is anticipated that the qualification will be achieved in March 2005. There was evidence to indicate that the registered manager exercises effective leadership of the staff and operations of the service.

See Requirements from this inspection no 1.

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 managers responsible for the service have been cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau and evidence of this was seen on personnel files. In addition, references were available for inspection in each file.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are clear roles for the managers and staff and well established lines of communication and of accountability between managers, staff and carers. The Service Managers are responsible for their own budgets and they report budget outturns to the Group Manager each month during supervision. The county has robust financial controls in place as well as procedures concerning conflict of interest.

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

5

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Group Manager is supported by three Service Managers who are based across the county. The Service Manager for the Hambleton Richmond division is also responsible for a team of foster care staff located in Selby. This arrangement is necessary due to the large size of this division. However, it does entail the Service Manager having to divide his time between the two office sites. When there is growth potential in the staffing budget consideration should be given to the appointment of a deputy to the Service Manager to be based in Selby. In the absence of the Group Manager a Service Manager is nominated to be in charge.

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.g from

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

Each of the foster homes visited during this inspection were found to be clean, comfortably furnished and welcoming. The children accommodated had their own beds and private space. There were no health and safety hazards identified in the homes seen. The foster care workers carry out an annual check of all the foster homes and a report is presented to the foster panel. This annual check is in addition to the routine visits made to the homes by foster care workers and social workers as part of their visiting duties.

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

Foster carers spoken to demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibility to provide high quality care for children irrespective of the child's background, religion, disability or sexuality. The foster care workers and social workers monitor the placements to ensure that the foster carers support and encourage the child to develop skills and to maximise their potential. There was evidence as part of the case tracking exercise to indicate that children are well placed and that they are encouraged to pursue leisure activities and hobbies. One young person who was a keen angler spoke of his enjoyment at living in a foster home that was a private angling business that had a large fishpond in the grounds.

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

Foster care workers and social workers are aware of the importance of ensuring that children are appropriately matched with foster carers. The foster service has recruited a diversity of carers across the county in order to attempt to meet the needs of children requiring a family placement. This does at times entail some children being placed a long distance from their families to secure a good match for the child. The service has recently completed a successful recruitment campaign to boost the pool of foster carers. In addition the service has appointed a dedicated recruitment and marketing manager to be responsible for this process.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8) The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All foster carers spoken to during the inspection were aware of their responsibility to protect the children in their care. Training is provided in child protection specifically related to foster care. The Foster Carers Handbook has been updated and this contains detailed guidance on the county policy as regards punishments, sanctions and child protection. The Hand Book contains a very useful section titled “ What If”. This provides foster carers with guidance on how to proceed in certain situations where the safety or well being of a child is in question. Foster carers are provided with information about the children to be placed with them and rely on social workers to provide as much information as possible.		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%

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
There are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained monitored and reviewed. The size of the county and availability of suitable foster carers that can be matched with a child means that some children are placed a considerable distance from their families. Contact is only arranged after a detailed risk assessment is carried out by the social worker. There was evidence on case files examined of such assessments.		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5) The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Those children seen as part of the case tracking process confirmed that their views on issues connected with their placement are routinely sought by their social workers. There was evidence on case files to indicate this. Foster carers spoken to are aware of the importance of seeking the views of children placed with them. There were some good examples of foster carers acting as an advocate for the child to ensure that the social worker was kept up to date on a particular child’s views about an issue.		

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
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There was evidence in case files of Looked After Children documentation containing health information. Foster carers are provided with detailed health information of each child placed and there is a clear expectation that the foster carer will ensure that all health needs will be met whilst the child is placed with them. However, there is a need to ensure that the agreement with foster carers clearly states who is responsible for decision making as regards medical treatment for a child. It is important that there is no opportunity for misunderstandings.

See Requirements from this inspection no1.

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
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It was evident from discussions with foster carers and managers of the fostering service that the local authority places a high priority to helping carers to meet a child's educational needs. A joint arrangement between the Social Services and the Education Department has seen the setting up of a Looked After Children's Education project team being established. The project is funded for three years and provides support for looked after children who are experiencing problems at school. This team will work closely with the foster carer, child and school to deal with issues that could have a detrimental effect on a child's place at a school. The team are actively involved in ensuring that Personal Educational Plans are prepared in conjunction with the child and the school. It would enhance the value of this service if the team were brought in at an early stage to be involved when a fostering placement is initially being planned. This commitment by Social Services and Education to work jointly to improve the educational opportunities of the children is commendable.

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
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Those foster carers spoken to demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities in preparing the children for independence living when they leave the placement. Although training and support is available for foster carers to enable them to provide effective support and guidance preparing to move on, foster carers spoke of their own experiences as parents as being the most valuable form of training. The foster care staff seen during the inspection emphasised the importance they attached to ensuring that the young people are fully consulted about their future.

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

The Social Services Department has clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. An examination of a selection of staff files indicated that appropriate checks are undertaken prior to an offer of employment is made. All people who work in the fostering service are required to have Criminal Record Bureau checks. Although there was evidence to indicate that telephone checks are made in respect of references, it was not always clear in some files that these checks had been made. The registered manager confirmed that all new staff now had their references checked. It would enhance good practice if a standard checklist were designed to clearly indicate that a telephone check had been carried out showing the date and a signature of the person responsible for the enquiry.

See Good Practice Recommendations from this inspection no 1.

Total number of staff of the agency:

46

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There is a clear line management structure in place indicating accountability. The fostering teams are located in three distinct geographical areas of the county. Each has a Service manager who in turn reports to the Group Manager. The level of management delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and each Service Manager is professionally qualified. There are structures in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of foster carers. The Group Manager confirmed that where an independent fostering agency is used there are systems in place to monitor the quality of the placement. All foster care staff and managers are subject to formal supervision and annual appraisal. There is an adequate level of administrative support provided for the foster care service. However, the staff in the Selby satellite office have to work in a room that is not adequate in size to accommodate them comfortably. In addition this office is not linked to the internal IT system and foster care staff have to use computer equipment located in another part of the building belonging to a different service to obtain information. As staff numbers increase at the Brompton office, it is likely that office space will be at a premium.

See Good Practice Recommendations from this inspection no 2.

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
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The fostering service is currently appropriately staffed following a successful recruitment campaign. A number of foster care support staff work alongside the foster care workers and assist in a variety of tasks to support foster placements. The Social Services senior management have invested positively during the year 2004/2005 to increase the foster allowances and this has helped to increase the number of carers who have applied to North Yorkshire foster care services. This move has also assisted the authority to retain existing carers. Those carers spoken to felt that the selection process for new foster carers is thorough.

The fostering service has additionally provided extra funding to appoint a dedicated marketing and recruitment manager whose remit is to increase the available foster carers within the county. This will be achieved through use of the media and other campaigns throughout North Yorkshire. This investment is commended.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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North Yorkshire Social Services has a supervision and appraisal system in place for all staff. The authority has sound employment policies and staff stated that they are generally well supported by their management. The Group Manager confirmed that an out of office hours duty system is currently being developed whereby a foster care worker will be on call to deal with any queries from the emergency duty team. This move is welcomed by foster carers who feel strongly that by having a foster care worker available to discuss situations which they are familiar with could prevent placement breakdowns.

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
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There is a training plan developed each year by the training department for the training and development of all staff involved in fostering work through induction and in house events. All new staff are expected to undergo induction training which is monitored by the Service Manager. The developmental needs of staff are identified mainly through supervision and appraisal. Staff felt comfortable with this process. Some foster carers commented that they would welcome more joint training opportunities with foster care workers.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All foster care staff have a job description and a sample of these were seen. It was evident from interviews that staff are clear about their responsibilities and accountability to their manager and the local authority as a whole.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All carers have a foster agreement with the service and a copy is available in the new handbook that is currently being issued to a foster carers. The foster carers spoke positively about the links and support they received from the foster staff. However, some carers and children stated that they often experienced difficulty in having routine contact with the social worker because of the large distances across the county. The management should consider how best to utilise the resources available locally to a foster home. The Group Manager indicated that consideration was being given to more locally based children looked after teams.		
See Good Practice recommendations from this inspection no 3.		

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?	3
All foster carers have an allocated link foster care worker who is responsible for supervising and monitoring the quality of the service provided. A foster care agreement is issued to all carers and a new handbook that provides comprehensive information is currently being issued to all carers. There is an expectation by the management that foster carers and their link worker will maintain regular contact and that visits to the foster home take place at least every four weeks, although the norm is generally for such contacts to be more frequent. Group meetings are held regularly between the foster carers and foster care workers. There was an opportunity for inspectors to attend such meetings during the inspection. These forums enable carers to share concerns and issues as a group. All foster carers are reviewed annually and reports are presented to the foster panel. Records about allegations of abuse are kept and monitored by the Service Manager and there is a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster care register.		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9) The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
There is an expectation by the foster service that all new carers will undergo initial induction training. There is an ongoing programme of training and development for foster carers who decide what training to attend in consultation with their link worker. All training is delivered within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.		

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The case files examined provided appropriate evidence of essential information, care plans and records of ongoing contact with the foster home. The foster carers confirmed that they know why the child is in foster care and they clearly understood the basis for the current placement, its intended duration and purpose. All case records held by foster carers are kept secure and carers are aware of their responsibilities in respect of confidentiality. Some LAC records provided by the field social worker did not have the appropriate signatures to confirm the author of the record or signatures of parents and children indicating agreement to the record.

See Good Practice Recommendation no 4.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The administrative systems in operation are efficient and records held at the area office were easily accessed as required. However, the files maintained on staff are kept at the central personnel section in county hall and these were less orderly than the fostering files making it more problematical to seek information. (see standard 15). The records are kept in a secure location and only authorised staff are permitted access.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

247

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

219

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

181

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

60

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

30

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

108

Maximum £

611

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

The fostering service has recently completed a successful recruiting campaign and this has had an impact on available office space in the Brompton and particularly in the Selby office. Also the IT system in Selby needs to be improved to enable staff to link into the communication network. The number of computers available to foster care staff is not deemed sufficient by them and consideration should be given to increasing this resource.

See Good Practice Recommendation no 2 and 5.

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 is part of the North Yorkshire County Council Social Services Department's Children and Families Business Unit. The fostering service has benefited from an increase in budget thereby enabling the managers to recruit more staff and foster carers. In addition the service has increased the fostering allowances to nationally recognised level and this is welcomed by all the carers.

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 financial systems of this service are properly monitored and audited by the County Council Finance Department.

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

There is a policy in place governing all aspects of payments to foster carers. Foster carers reported that generally payments are administered promptly.

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?

3

There is an established fostering panel that meets regularly. The inspector attended the fostering panel and was able to meet with the Panel Chair and Advisor. The panel is properly constituted and all members are subject to the required clearance checks before taking up their place. It was evident from meeting with panel members and through observation that members are able to contribute fully to the discussions that took place. The decisions reflected the views of the members. The secretary to the panel is responsible for ensuring that the administrative functions are efficiently carried out and for members to receive all documents prior to the panel convening.

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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Not assessed. This function is contracted out to Barnardo's and NCH Action for Children. These services are subject to separate inspections.	9
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The fostering service approves all family and friends as carers and they are subject to the same checks as required for task centred foster carers. The foster service carries out the annual review of these placements and evidence of this was seen on files. Family carers spoken to commented positively on the support provided by the foster care workers and it was evident that they valued this professional relationship.	3
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not Applicable

Lay Assessor N/A **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 10th-16th January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Please find attached action plans following the inspection of North Yorkshire's fostering services in January 2005. I have completed action plans for both 'Statutory' Requirements and 'Good Practice Recommendations'.

I have extended slightly the date by which I will have completed my NVQ 5 to the end of May 2005. I think this is a more realistic date. I hope this is acceptable to you.

Work has already commenced at Selby and my understanding is that they will be on the wide area network very shortly.

The review of accommodation is slightly trickier. Selby should be sorted out reasonably quickly but The Close at Brompton is more problematic. Planning applications have been put in to change some of the bathrooms into offices. As far as I understand, there have been several objections from the public to do with the 'listed building' status and additional parking requirements.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

John Heron
Group manager, Child Placement Services.

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

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

YES

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 within 28 days, 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 _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ 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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