



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Southampton City Council Fostering Services

315 Coxford Road

Lordswood

Southampton

Hampshire

SO16 5LH

24th February 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

Southampton City Council Fostering Services

Address

315 Coxford Road, Lordswood, Southampton, Hampshire,
SO16 5LH

Local Authority Manager

Leigh Clarke

Tel No:

023 8079 9100

Address

315 Coxford Road, Lordswood, Southampton, Hampshire,
SO16 5LH

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

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NA

Date of last inspection

16/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		24th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Wendy Hughes	074847
Name of Inspector	2	Sara Goodinge	
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		Leigh Clarke - Manager	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

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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)

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- 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

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D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Southampton City Council Fostering Services. 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.

Southampton Foster Care Service is part of the Children and Families division of Southampton City Council. The service recruits, assesses and approves carers who provide a range of foster placements, including short-term, long-term and respite care in addition to specialised project and intensive placements. Support and training for carers is ongoing and the service works closely with Southampton Foster Care Association. Dedicated teams within the City provide support for carers in helping them to meet health and educational needs of the young people. A multi-disciplinary Therapeutic Panel identifies specialist support when necessary.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

During this visit inspectors spent two days with the fostering services team, meeting with a range of staff, and spoke with nine carers and young people accommodated. One inspector met with a group of five young people one evening, and observed a meeting of the fostering panel prior to the inspection.

The manager and team clearly very committed to and enthusiastic about what they do.

Pre-inspection information was received from the manager. In January 2005 the record shows there were 165 carers, including 22 Friends and Family carers, 3 Treatment foster carers, 2 Bridge to Fostering carers, and 15 were resting. 2 carers were said to be under investigation.

The service has developed good working relationships with local independent fostering agencies, and monthly meetings are held to review placements.

During this inspection the service was assessed against nineteen core standards.

Statement of purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was not assessed

Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

These standards were not assessed

Management of the fostering service (Standard 4)

From discussion with members of the family placement team it was apparent that staff have clearly defined roles and accountability is clear.

The content of files relating to the carers was variable.

There are systems in place for the payment of foster carers, and no carers spoken with reported problems with their payments. Payments are under review, with the aim of linking this more closely with competencies.

CSCI has not been notified of events under the provisions of Regulation 43 as required.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

Inspectors visited the homes of seven foster carers. All were comfortable, and appeared appropriate to meet the diverse needs of children and young people accommodated.

Homes appeared safe, and no hazards were noted.

When an emergency placement is made it is not always possible to contact the social worker of other children placed in order to carry out a risk assessment, and consideration might be

given to ways in which this might be achieved.

The ability of the service to fully match young people with placements remains compromised by the lack of carers.

The inspectors had the opportunity to review the process of assessment and matching in relation to a young person planned to be placed in one of the intensive placements with a carer from a different minority ethnic background. Extensive work had been undertaken, including a video link. Most placements are made in an emergency, and a planned introduction is not always possible.

Safe-caring is part of carers induction and foundation training, which includes child protection. The current handbook includes minimal information regarding punishment and behaviour management.

There was evidence from the files and through discussion with young people and carers that contact with family and friends is encouraged and facilitated where appropriate.

There remains room for development in relation to developing formal processes for consulting children and young people. The 'Children's Guide' is now available, and the inspector was able to speak with some of the young people involved in its development.

The manager told inspectors that training in specialised methods such as Makaton is planned together with the use of pictures to facilitate communication with those children and young people who communicate by means other than verbally. The 'Children's Guide' is now available, and the inspector was able to speak with some of the young people involved in its development.

Pre-approval training for carers is provided on health-related matters, and the current handbook provides some guidance for carers.

A range of therapeutic services for young people can be accessed via a multidisciplinary panel, with a worker from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) involved in the process.

Foster carers spoken with confirmed they are supported in promoting the health of young people. The 'Children's Guide' includes health care information for young people. There is a dedicated health care team for looked after children within the city.

From discussion with carers and the family placement team it is apparent that education is given a high priority.

The programme of installing computers for the use of young people and carers has continued, and it is understood from the manager that 80% of fostering households now have access to a computer.

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

CRB checks are undertaken at the appropriate level.

The assessment of foster carers is undertaken by experienced and qualified senior practitioners and supervising social workers

Recruitment of carers remains an issue. There is a comprehensive recruitment and assessment process for new carers.

There is a system of supervision and appraisal, with senior practitioners supervising the social workers. Staff interviewed felt well supported.

A programme of supervision for carers is in place, although the quality of supervision was noted to be variable.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Minimal information was maintained on files in the fostering services office in relation to children and young people in foster care. Increased access to the electronic records should make key information available to all social workers involved with the children and the foster family.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standards 26)

This standard was not assessed

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

This standard was not assessed

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

An inspector had the opportunity to observe a fostering panel meeting, and to talk with the chair of the panel and other members. The panel was noted to carry out its functions in a professional and thorough manner.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

There are respite carers available. Young people were able to have a break at a camp during the summer.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

The service recognises the important contribution family and friends can make, and there are policies and procedures to support 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:

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	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Regulation Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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	43(1) Schedule 8	FS4	Notifications of significant events must be made to relevant authorities as detailed in Schedule 8 to the regulations.	1/04/05
2	31(2)	FS23	Action must be taken to ensure placements are in accordance with the terms under which a carer is approved, and that that register is accurate.	1/10/05

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	FS4	A system should be developed to ensure key information is available on carers files, so that audit trail can be identified in relation to decisions made.
2	FS11	Systems and processes for consultation with young people should be further developed.
3	FS24	A case record should be available for each child or young person in foster care.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	4
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• 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	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	24/02/05
Time of Inspection	9:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	25

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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?
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	0
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The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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?
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	0
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Staff recruitment files were not inspected at this visit. The standard was fully met at the last inspection.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

From discussion with members of the family placement team it was apparent that staff have clearly defined roles and accountability is clear.

The content of files relating to the carers was variable. Some key information was easily accessible, however on some files an audit trail relating to decisions made and action taken was not there. This was discussed with the supervising social workers and the manager in respect of specific files.

There are systems in place for the payment of foster carers, and no carers spoken with reported problems with their payments. Payments are under review, with the aim of linking this more closely with competencies.

CSCI has not been notified of events under the provisions of Regulation 43 as required. A system must be developed to ensure notifications are made to those authorities detailed in Schedule 8 to the regulations.

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

0

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.

1

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.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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

Inspectors visited the homes of seven foster carers as part of the inspection. All were comfortable, and appeared appropriate to meet the diverse needs of children and young people accommodated. Homes appeared safe, and no hazards were noted. Health and safety training is part of the pre-approval process for carers, as are safety checks on the households. Annual household reviews are carried out as required, and health and safety matters are considered during this home visit.

The manager told inspectors that carers are being encouraged to develop fire procedures. Officers from the fire authority are to check all carers' homes and install 10 year smoke detectors.

There was discussion with the supervising social workers regarding how risk is assessed with regard to potential abuse when a placement is made in a foster home where a young person is already living. It is understood discussion and risk assessment is undertaken by the area social worker. However when an emergency placement is made it is not always possible to contact the social worker of the first child placed in order to carry out a risk assessment, and consideration might be given to ways in which this might be achieved.

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 ethos of the service is valuing of diversity and promoting equality, and there are policies and procedures supporting this. There are relatively few carers from minority ethnic groups. An inspector visited a carer supporting a young person with a severe learning disability and associated physical and health care needs. The carer was supported by the fostering service to access appropriate services and equipment.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)		
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
The ability of the service to fully match young people with placements remains compromised by the lack of carers. There was no evidence of any matching process seen on files, and placements are frequently made over the number or outside the age range for which carers are approved.		
The inspectors had the opportunity to review the process of assessment and matching in relation to a young person planned to be placed in one of the intensive placements with a carer from a different minority ethnic background. Extensive work had been undertaken, including a video link. Most placements are made in an emergency, and a planned introduction is not always possible.		

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
Safe-caring is part of carers induction and foundation training, which includes child protection. The current handbook includes minimal information regarding punishment and behaviour management. Guidelines to be followed when a child is missing are clearly detailed. The revised handbook mentioned in the previous inspection report is not yet complete.		
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
There was evidence from the files and through discussion with young people and carers that contact with family and friends is encouraged and facilitated where appropriate. Details of contact and restrictions on contact were seen on carers' files.		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There remains room for development in relation to developing formal processes for consulting children and young people. The pre-inspection questionnaire states that discussions with children or young people looked after take place prior to the household review. No information in relation to this was noted on files seen. Consulting children procedures are still being developed, and it is intended that partnerships with organisations such as Barnardos will result in increased participation of individuals and groups in planning of services and procedures.

The 'Children's Guide' is now available, and the inspector was able to speak with some of the young people involved in its development. It is understood from the manager that this will go out in future with each new placement, and this will stay with the young person. Young people spoken with as a group expressed the view that they would feel more comfortable in a new placement if they were given information about the 'rules' specific to that household, such as where crockery or cutlery are kept, whether they can make drinks or help themselves to food, and so on. This was felt to be particularly significant as most placements are made as an emergency – the proportion is believed by staff to be 95% of placements.

The manager told inspectors that training in specialised methods such as Makaton is planned together with the use of pictures to facilitate communication with those children and young people who communicate by means other than verbally.

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

Pre-approval training for carers is provided on health-related matters, and the current handbook provides some guidance for carers. A range of therapeutic services for young people can be accessed via a multidisciplinary panel, with a worker from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) involved in the process.

Foster carers spoken with confirmed they are supported in promoting the health of young people. The 'Children's Guide' includes health care information for young people. There is a dedicated health care team for looked after children within the city, and the aim to provide a health care plan for each child within 28 days of being received into care. There is a clinic at a local leisure complex where young people can make an appointment or drop-in for a chat or advice. Specialist nurses for sexual health are available, including expertise with young people who have a learning disability.

The service is involved in a pilot of the Treatment Foster Care initiative. Inspectors had the

opportunity to meet with the team implementing this. The initiative was not fully operational at the time of the inspection, but is intended to provide intensive support for young people who may have mental health needs.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

From discussion with carers and the family placement team it is apparent that education is given a high priority. The city has an educational support team for looked after children, with an education suite for young people not in school. It is understood from the manager that, with one exception, all young people have an educational placement, although all children may not attend school. There was evidence that carers fully support educational placements. One carer spoken with had been supported to take a child with disabilities out of school for health reasons, and to provide appropriate learning at home. The programme of installing computers in carers' households has continued.

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion. The need to develop this area was highlighted at the previous inspection.

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

CRB checks are undertaken at the appropriate level, and are renewed every three years for carers, and other members of the household. A dedicated member of the business services team is responsible for ensuring these are renewed as required.

The assessment of foster carers is undertaken by experienced and qualified senior practitioners and supervising social workers. Unqualified staff undertake social work tasks only under the supervision of a qualified worker.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Supervising social workers spoken with felt their caseloads to be generally manageable. There were no vacancies in the team, however there were two staff on maternity leave. There are dedicated workers to carry out household reviews, and to provide an out of hours service.

Good administrative support is available. Staff had a clear understanding of their roles. It is felt by staff that if they were based in closer proximity to the field social work team this would result in more effective working relationships.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a comprehensive recruitment and assessment process for carers. Inspectors were able to review documentation on file, and discuss the procedure with social work staff, carers and members of the fostering panel, who approve carers. Assessment is competency based, and is carried out by qualified staff.</p> <p>Recruitment of carers remains an issue, and the lack of carers results in little choice of placements. At the time of the last inspection a recruitment officer had been recently appointed, this post was vacated at this time, and it is understood the post was to be advertised for April.</p>		

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?	0
The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Training is provided to ensure staff are kept updated. New staff have a planned induction, and inspectors were able to discuss this with staff who were more recently appointed. Two staff were undertaking post-qualifying training at the time of the inspection. There is a system of supervision and appraisal, with senior practitioners supervising the social workers. Staff interviewed felt well supported.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.		

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
<p>The service has a clear strategy for working with carers, which includes supervision, out of hours support, respite and household reviews. The role of the supervising social worker is clear and understood by foster carers.</p> <p>The out of hours support scheme started in June 2004, to offer crisis support until midnight. Workers provide telephone or face-to-face support, and it is understood from the manager that they will go out to see the child on the first day of a placement.</p> <p>It was felt by staff that communication between the fostering social worker and the child's social workers could be improved. Consideration should be given to how this might be achieved.</p>		

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
<p>A programme of supervision for carers is in place. Records were seen on carers files, and the quality of supervision was noted to be variable, with some supervision sessions focusing solely on the young people. It is understood from discussion with that a senior practitioner is to provide some guidance to those undertaking supervision of carers. Out of hours staff within the family placement team now provide support, and there is duty support provided by the team during office hours. One carer spoken with felt she had less contact with her supervising social worker now they were part of the duty team, and felt that alternative arrangements made did not always respond to her needs.</p>		

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?

2

All carers are required to participate in extensive pre-approval training, which includes input by experienced carers. One senior practitioner has lead responsibility for foster carers' training. Some carers have completed NVQ Level 3 in 'caring for Children and Young People'. The training needs of carers should now be addressed through supervision. It is understood that carers' own children have participated in 'safer caring' training. A range of training has been undertaken by carers in the last year including specific topics such as an ADHD workshop and Adolescence and Mental Health.

As a result of the shortage of carers a number of children are placed long-term with carers approved for short-term care. The manager, or a senior practitioner in her absence agrees a temporary variation. It is understood from talking with the team that they are working to ensure all variations are formalised, and priority should be given to this.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Minimal information was maintained on files in relation to children and young people in foster care, and in the case of one child funded by Hampshire there was no information available, either on electronically held records or on paper. It was noted that the records for looked after children were not always full, however the quality of the information is the responsibility of the field social worker rather than the members of the fostering team. For LA fostering services the standards allow for children's records to be kept in the part of the social services department responsible for supervising the child's 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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	240
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Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	X
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Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	X
---	---

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

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

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X
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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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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?

0

The service was not inspected against the standard on this occasion.

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

An inspector had the opportunity to observe a fostering panel meeting, and to talk with the chair of the panel and other members. The constitution was noted to comply with the relevant regulations, and the panel chair was fully aware of the legislation governing the functioning of the panel.

The panel has an independent chair, which is good practice. The panel was noted to carry out its functions in a professional and thorough manner, and had prepared for the meeting by reading through all documentation sent in advance. Panel members gave feedback to the assessors, and raised matters identified in the assessments with the prospective carers in a sensitive but robust way. Independent panel members have expertise in education and child health.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Some carers provide only short term respite care. There was good practice in this area when young people were able to stay in a camp set up during the summer.

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 service has a policy supporting family and friends as carers. A young person can be placed when a CRB check has been undertaken and a health and safety check carried out on the home. Interim approval can be give until a full assessment is undertaken. There is flexibility in relation to payments which is aimed at keeping young people out of care and with their families or friends.	3
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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 24 February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 26 April 2005, 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

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 Southampton City Council Fostering Service 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.

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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