



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

The Health Resource Centre
2a Newton Road
Cadbury Heath
South Glos
BS30 8EZ

27th September 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

Address

The Health Resource Centre, 2a Newton Road, Cadbury Heath, South Glos, BS30 8EZ

Local Authority Manager

Tamsin Cowls & Nicky Godfrey

Tel No:

01454 866232

Address

The Health Resource Centre, 2a Newton Road, Cadbury Heath, South Glos, BS30 8EZ

Fax No:

01454 866261

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

15/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		27th September 2004 to 1st October 2004		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am		
Name of Inspector	1	Jacqueline Sullivan	072862	
Name of Inspector	2	Sam Chisholm		
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)		None		
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Tamsin Cows & Nicky Godfrey		

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 South Gloucestershire 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

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.

South Gloucestershire Council was established as a Unitary Authority on 1/4/1996 as part of the local Government reorganisation of the former county of Avon. It includes the former districts of Kingswood and Northavon.

The Family Placement Team is part of the Children's Service Division of the Social Services Department.

The services provided include:

- Fostering service
- Family Link/Short break service
- Adoption Service
- Step-parent Service
- General Registry Office Service
- Birth parent Counselling Service
- Post Adoption Service
- Administration of Letter Box Scheme
- Foster Panel
- Adoption Panel

Britton house for young people leaving care (aged 16 to 25 years) is owned and managed by Bromford Housing Association.

The aim of the Service is to provide family placements for children aged 0-18 years who need to be accommodated by the council. The fundamental service review in Feb 2003 for looked after children in South Gloucestershire made a recommendation to South Gloucestershire Council in relation to a remodelled in house service with additional fees and additional support for foster carers. At the last inspection the managers told the Inspectors that, by 2004 this would be implemented. At this inspection the Inspectors noted that the implementation has started to take place. The foster carers are now paid amounts varying according to the needs of the children. The new system, when complete, will include:

- Out of hours scheme by experienced foster carers
- Buddying scheme for new foster carers
- Additional support workers
- New recruitment officer post
- Review of the processes within the Service.

Foster carers have been invited as part of the consultation process to form working parties to look in detail at the support systems and have been consulted about the new payments. The managers stated that the majority of carers are significantly "better off" with the new payment scheme. The scheme is not currently available for the family link service. A new recruitment officer is now in post.

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 Inspectors noted that the findings of this inspection indicate a positive and dynamic fostering service, which is well organised and well managed.

All of the requirements of the last inspection dated 15/3/2004 were met. As were the majority of the recommendations. There are only three recommendations made at this inspection and no requirements. This is a reflection of the high standard of the service.

As stated in the introduction the Out of Hour's system is being reviewed by the service in order to meet the needs of both the foster carers and the children they care for. Foster carers have been invited as part of the consultation process to form working parties to look in detail at the support systems and have been consulted about the new payments.

A new recruitment officer is now in post and she has started to assess the current recruitment strategies and put in place new ideas on how to extend the service.

Foster carers who were interviewed and /or completed Inspection questionnaires were broadly satisfied with the Service. Some foster carers had concerns about young people who are excluded from school.

The children/young people who were interviewed and/or completed questionnaires were positive about the care they received.

The staff members spoken with as part of the inspection were very knowledgeable about the needs of both the children and the foster carers. Staff morale was high and communication between the teams was good.

The Inspectors were told that South Gloucestershire has been chosen to be part of a Government pilot scheme called Treatment Foster Care involving specialist foster carers. The local authority was chosen on the basis of the high standard of the current service.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

At the last inspection the Inspectors required that there was a system in place to ensure that all children receive a copy of the statement of purpose. This has now been completed.

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

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

The staff files checked as part of the inspection demonstrated that the necessary information is available as required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

There are two managers. One manager has the lead on the Adoption Service and the other has the lead on the "Family Link" Scheme, which organises carers who provide short breaks placements for disabled children. The managers were able to demonstrate a high standard

of commitment and knowledge.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

9 of 9 standards assessed were met

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

8 of 9 standards assessed were met

The systems in place for the Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers were seen to meet the required standard.

The 'Out of hours' service provided by the Emergency Duty Team for the Avon area and a support line provided by one of the Child Care Teams is currently being reviewed and may involve foster carers providing an 'Out of Hours' service with social worker supervision. At the last inspection the foster carers who contributed to the inspection were positive about the new 'Buddying system' where foster carers support each other but were, broadly, unsatisfied with the current "Out of Hours" system. This remains the case.

Feedback from the questionnaires completed by foster carers who provide emergency care for young people stated that they often find it difficult to receive payments from other Local Authorities. The EDT(Emergency Duty Team) system is jointly run between Bristol, B&NES, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset with South Gloucestershire having the larger bank of foster carers available for emergency admissions. These foster carers stated that the information they receive could be far ranging from full to scant. The foster carers stated that they currently liaise directly with the Local Authorities over payments and there have been difficulties in receiving payments. The managers told the Inspectors that they had already identified this as an area of concern and that in future, the service would pay the foster carers themselves and then arrange to be reimbursed.

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

Scrutiny of the files and discussions with social workers confirmed that the format of the records are consistent with those adopted by the Authority. The LAC (Looked After Children) information was seen to meet the required standard.

There was clear consistency of recording and filing information, and evidence that the files were monitored regularly.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering services (Standard 26)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

The premises are bright and spacious, except for the meeting room, which is small.

Discussions with the staff teams confirmed that they are satisfied with the accommodation.

Parking is limited but supplemented by ample off site space for cars.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 of 3 standards assessed were met

The family placement team fostering services are funded as part of the local authority Social Services department. The Service Plan determines how the annual allocated budget is spent. The managers receive a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending patterns. This was seen by the Inspectors to be satisfactory. The Finance Department provides advice about budgets

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

0 of 1 standard assessed were met

The standard was largely met. The panel has made great efforts to recruit a member who has been placed with foster carers or whose child has been placed with foster carers, but have so far been unsuccessful.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

The Family Link Service provides short-term breaks for disabled children. The Family Link Carers are subject to the same assessments and checks as mainstream foster carers and receive the same training and support.

Discussions with the staff team and the manager confirmed that close links are maintained between the child's family to provide support and facilitate information sharing. A leaflet has been produced by the Family Link Service, which provides information about the service.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

This standard was seen to be met.

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	Jacqueline Sullivan	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Samantha Chisholm	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Michael Miles	Signature	_____
Date	11th February 2005		_____

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	

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	FS13	Foster carers are consulted about their views of the service they receive when young people who are excluded from School.
2	FS18	The review of the Out of Hours service available to foster carers is completed. The method of reimbursing foster carers who are available for emergency admissions is reviewed.
3	FS30	The recruitment campaign for panel members is successfully completed.

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

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	27/09/04
Time of Inspection	9:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70.0

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 Inspectors read the statement of purpose and noted that it met the required standard. At the last inspection the Inspector recommended that there is a system in place to ensure that all children receive a copy. Scrutiny of the young peoples files and discussions with the staff team confirmed that this was now in place.

The number of approved foster carers is included in the statement of purpose, which is updated monthly after the Fostering Panel meeting.

The family Link Service does not currently have a separate statement of purpose and children's guide.

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?	4
<p>The two managers of the service are Nicky Godfrey and Tamsin Cows. Both are professionally qualified (CQSW) and have many years experience in family placement social work. Jointly they work 7.5 days per week.</p> <p>Both managers were able to demonstrate good lines of communication and the knowledge and skills to effectively manage the service.</p>		

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
<p>The staff files checked as part of the inspection demonstrated that the necessary information is available as required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.</p>		

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

The Inspectors read the staff job descriptions, which detail their roles and responsibilities and noted that they met the required standard. All of the staff consulted as part of the inspection had a clear understanding of their role.

Staff supervision was seen to meet the required standard. Some of the administrative staff stated they would welcome more formal supervision.

The majority of the fostering service staff were interviewed. They could identify the lines of accountability in the organisation.

Written procedures are available for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. These include: recruitment and supervision of staff and carers, recording of the child's progress in placement, supervision, referral; matching and placement of children.

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.

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.

4

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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?**

4

There are clear lines of delegation and in discussion staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities and to whom they were accountable.

As previously stated there are two managers. One manager has the lead on the Adoption Service and the other has the lead on the "Family Link" Scheme, which organises carers who provide short break placements for disabled children. The Inspectors were told that they divide the Fostering between them. One manager has a developmental role and was able to provide evidence that the Service has a programme of development in place.

Discussions with the staff team, foster carers and scrutiny of the evidence supplied by the service for standards 1-4 confirmed that that the managers were able to manage the service effectively and efficiently.

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?

4

Four foster carers, including kinship carers were visited at their homes as part of the inspection. They were all found to provide a child friendly, safe and homely environment for the children and young people.

All carers are inspected annually, including a Health and Safety assessment, copies of which were available on the files. The carers receive health and safety training appropriate to the needs of the children in their care.

Risk assessments in relation to young people sharing a room are available in their files.

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

South Gloucestershire Council has a same race placement policy, to ensure that the cultural needs of all the children are met by the placement. The Family placement team have a strategy for the recruitment of black and ethnic minority foster carers. At the last inspection the inspectors were told that this work would be further developed with the introduction of the new recruitment officer.

The Inspectors met with the recruitment officer who had been in post since September 2004. She said that she has started to assess the current recruitment strategies used by the service by sending a questionnaire to all people who had made an initial enquiry in the last eighteen months. She is monitoring the uptake from the black and ethnic minority communities and is evaluating the material sent out by the service. The effectiveness of this work will be a focus of the next inspection.

The managers stated that if the service is unable to meet any young persons linguistic needs then services are purchased from the Independent Fostering Services or specialist agencies. For example interpreters and signers have been purchased.

Several of the carers who were spoken to or responded to the questionnaire were able to demonstrate an awareness of the discrimination that the young people in their care may experience.

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

Scrutiny of the foster carers files, information about the young people provided by the placing authority and discussions with foster carers and staff confirmed that the matching process mostly works well. The managers stated that the introduction of the new recruitment officer should assist the service attract more foster carers which will assist in the matching process, especially in those cases where matching takes place at short notice. The managers stated that the newly appointed Safeguarding Manager has been employed to ensure that the Independent reviewing managers check with foster carers and the young people at the statutory review, that they have the appropriate paperwork. The service have acted on the comments made at the last inspection that foster carers are not always given full information about the child or young person in advance of the placement. This was discussed at the Children's Management Group and the Inspectors saw a memo circulated to teams by the service manager requesting that every effort is made to share information with carers prior to placement and as new information emerges. The information from the foster carers questionnaires and discussions with the carers at this inspection indicated that the information sharing remains an issue for some carers. Others stated that they receive appropriate information in a timely manner. The Inspectors saw the software and referral form for the matching process. The practice supervisors attend the fortnightly staff team meetings where matching is discussed. One staff member takes responsibility for liaising with teenagers and foster carers, so as to be proactive in reducing the number of placements.

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 receive Child Protection training, as part of the preparation course, and further training is provided as part of their ongoing development. All foster carers attend the new 'Skills to Foster' training from the Fostering Network. The managers stated that the new software used by the service is able to assist the staff monitor foster carers attendance at training. The new financial review links attendance at training to payments for the foster carers as an added incentive.

The foster carers sign an agreement that they will not administer physical punishment to the young people. All of the carers spoken to agreed that physical punishment is unacceptable and gave examples of acceptable sanctions they implement when necessary, for example 'time out' with younger children.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

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

The Fundamental Service Review in Feb 2003 for looked after children in South Gloucestershire highlighted the need for the Service to develop practice in relation to consultation with children. Subsequently there was a children and young persons consultation document. Following the comments made by the young people the team manager of the looked after team attended a national conference on good practice in prompting contact and reported back to the resource managers group. The Inspectors were told that the service intends to commission the presenters of the conference to present their research findings locally as part of the services evidence based project group. The presentation will include foster carers. Further work will include work groups involving the young people.

“Total Respect” training is available to staff and carers by the young people. A programme of training has been developed for all social workers and foster carers who are involved in working with looked after children.

The Inspectors observed that the children's files contained a comprehensive section on how to communicate with children.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

The inspector spoke to the Children’s Participation Officer who explained that he has planned a ‘Have Your Say’ day for looked after children. This will give them the opportunity to say what they would like to see as part of their service. This will be an annual event. It is also planned to make a video with the young people saying what they would like to change about the service and what they think of it generally. The video will be shown to Councillors as part of the authority’s Corporate Parenting scheme.

Current projects include revamping the guide to being in care. Young people are involved in re-designing this. Young people have also delivered Total Respect training to staff and it is intended that this will be ongoing. There is also a youth group for looked after children aged 12+ held fortnightly. This has been well attended and is a useful forum for sharing experiences and being involved in consultation processes.

The inspector and Children’s Participation Officer agreed that it would be useful to work together to find a group of young people willing to participate in giving feedback about the service at the next inspection.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The Foster Carers Handbook clearly sets out the responsibilities of foster carers in relation to the health and development of the children and young people.

Since the last inspection a nurse for Looked After Children has been appointed. The managers told the inspectors that there has been an agreement from CAMHS Strategy to fund a Clinical Psychology post who would be based in the Resource Centre. Their brief would be to provide assessments/direct interventions and “fast track” consultation to foster carers and social workers.

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?**

3

The Inspectors met with the head of Central Teaching and Inclusion Service whose brief includes the Education Welfare Service, the behavioural support team, the pupil referral unit, the traveller education service, the management ethnic minority achievement service and the inclusion support service. She described a comprehensive service that was user led. The reading programme for young people was highly praised by foster carers. One young person in the questionnaire stated that they did not like having an educational meeting at school as it made them feel different. The Inspector was told that the young people do not have to attend these meetings. The general consensus from foster carers at a meeting attended by the Inspector was that the young people are not fully aware of this.

All of the foster carers visited by the Inspectors confirmed that the young people were attending school.

A post has been created in the ‘looked after children’ team to provide a link between Education and Social Services to ensure that children’s needs are met. A practice supervisor links directly to central teaching service to identify children looked after who are experiencing difficulties in the educational system. The Inspector attended a Foster carers meeting/training event where this supervisor was explaining his role and ensuring that the foster carers were clear about the identified designated teachers they should liaise with in the Schools attended by the young people they care for. Some of the foster carers at this meeting stated that were not wholly satisfied with the service they receive when young people have been excluded from school. They stated that short-term exclusions at short notice were most problematic. They also had concerns about children being excluded from the provision for excluded children. The Inspectors were not able to determine whether these views were shared by the majority of carers and recommend that the service investigate this further.

Since the last inspection a “Post 16” multi agency panel has been set up. This panel meets once every half term. Its purpose is to identify any young people experiencing problems in

further education or training, address these issues and monitor progress made. The panel has a twice-yearly development meeting with a wider membership, for example representatives from the Learning Skills Council have been invited to consider strategic issues.

Foster carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the help line that is available to them.

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?
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Since the last inspection, the managers stated that the foster carers and the managers of the Looked After Team and the Continuing Support Service have met together and established a framework for earlier support to foster carers in providing preparation for young people in placement. These meetings are ongoing.

Multi agency "leaving care" training has been held. One young person has been sponsored as an apprentice over three years with the council's Direct Services Department. Social Services is also paying a care leaver for two months in order to provide extended work experience in another Council department. This is commendable.

The Inspectors met with social workers working with young people leaving care and they were able to demonstrate that pathway plans were being followed appropriately.

Discussions with foster carers and information from the questionnaires confirmed that young people and foster carers were broadly satisfied with the service they receive. Some highlighted the need for earlier input in relation to pathway planning.

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
<p>There are clear written recruitment procedures, which follow good practice guidelines. Inspection of the files of the staff members recruited since the last inspection showed the information required by Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.</p> <p>Each job has written criteria of essential and desirable skills and qualities. Staff recruited are subject to a six-month probation period. There was evidence on the files to demonstrate that staff members receive an appraisal at the end of the six-month probationary period. Scrutiny of the staff files confirmed that they include a recent photograph, evidence of qualification and a written record of telephone enquiries made to follow up written references.</p> <p>Social workers and foster carers references and checks met the required standard.</p>			
Total number of staff of the agency:	17	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	3

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16) Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.			
Key Findings and Evidence		Standard met?	3
<p>The clear organisational structure was the same as at the last inspection, and staff members demonstrated that they were clear about the lines of management and accountability. The managers were able to demonstrate that they are suitably qualified and experienced for their role, with experience of working both in the statutory and voluntary sectors with prior management responsibilities.</p> <p>The Childcare Community team manager interviewed explained that she has a monthly meeting with the family placement team managers to discuss and deal with any issues that arise. She felt this was an effective way for the teams to work together and that it supported the joint assessment work undertaken by the teams with regard to kinship carers.</p> <p>Members of staff were satisfied with their working conditions and had manageable caseloads, to ensure they can respond promptly to requests for support. All staff receive formal support from their line manager at the recommended frequency, and staff members commented that it was a forum for discussion about practice issues and professional development.</p> <p>The service is supported by a strong administrative team, who demonstrated awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Some staff stated that they would welcome a service review of the role of the receptionist in the organisation.</p>			

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
<p>All staff with support and supervisory responsibility for foster carers are qualified social workers. The resource team workers are all experienced in childcare. Two experienced managers with social work qualifications manage the team. The team also now has a new recruitment officer with a public relations background to focus on improved recruitment of foster carers.</p> <p>Prospective carers are assessed appropriately and carers spoken to said they feel valued and well supported by the fostering service. Staff members also said that there was a high level of commitment to their professional development, and training needs were identified as part of the annual appraisal and through staff supervision.</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?	2
<p>All staff members receive an induction programme when they commence working with the organisation, followed by access to in-house and specialist courses to further their professional development. Discussions with staff showed them to be highly motivated and well supported by their team managers.</p> <p>The 'Out of Hours' service provided by the Emergency Duty Team for the Avon area and a support line provided by one of the Child Care Teams is currently being reviewed and may involve foster carers providing an 'Out of Hours' service with social worker supervision. At the last inspection the foster carers who contributed to the inspection were positive about the new 'Buddying system' where foster carers support each other but were still unsatisfied with the current "Out of Hours" system. This remains the case. Feedback from the questionnaires completed by foster carers who provide emergency care for young people stated that they often find it difficult to receive payments from other Local Authorities. The EDT (Emergency Duty Team system is jointly run between Bristol, B&NES, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset with South Gloucestershire having the larger bank of foster carers available for emergency admissions. These foster carers stated that the information they receive could be far ranging from full to scant. The foster carers currently liaise directly with the Local Authorities over payments and this can be problematic. The managers told the Inspectors that they have identified this as an area of concern and in future, the service would pay the foster carers and arrange to be reimbursed.</p> <p>Discussions with the foster carer and information from the questionnaires confirmed that they feel supported by the service. Some stated that they would welcome more staff as they feel the current staff are very busy.</p> <p>A whistle blowing policy is in place and training has been given on it.</p>		

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?	4
<p>The managers and staff stated that there is a comprehensive annual training programme for staff provided by the local authority, which has been awarded Beacon status for training for social care staff. Staff told the inspectors that they also receive an annual appraisal that includes discussion of training needs.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>All staff at the service have a written job description that gives a clear description of their duties and responsibilities. A copy of the job description and contract of employment is held on their file.</p> <p>Discussions with the staff and scrutiny of the staff supervision records confirmed that that there are clear lines of accountability and the staff are appropriately supported.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a clear policy for the training and development of foster carers. Information is available in the foster carer handbook, which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of foster carers and the help and support they can expect. There is also a newsletter for foster carers called "Planet Foster Care" which includes articles and training events.</p> <p>Scrutiny of a sample of foster carers files confirmed that they meet the required standard and discussions with carers revealed that they were happy with the level of support that they receive from their support workers.</p> <p>Discussions with family placement staff, children's social workers and carers showed that there is good communication between them and a clear understanding of their respective roles.</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

Each foster carer has an allocated supervising social worker from the area team to provide support and undertake supervision. There was written evidence on files to demonstrate that carers are informed if their social worker is away from the office for a significant period.

Scrutiny of the supervision records and discussions with the staff team and foster carers confirmed that the supervision for foster carers met the required standard.

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

The training officer explained that she visits each carer following approval at panel to identify their training needs. This also informs plans for any developments in training provision. Current new developments are a resource library for carers which was seen during the inspection. This augments the training programme by providing information to carers unable to attend courses.

A copy of the annual training plan was seen at the inspection, this is provided for all carers and details all the available courses and their links to either NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) modules, Core Training requirements or National Minimum standards. The service ensures that foster carers complete the Core Training over two years. Heritage life story work will be included in this year's training and will be linked into other appropriate courses. The inspector and the training officer both agreed that courses tailored to the needs of kinship carers are an area for development.

Safe caring training is provided in the training curriculum. Foster carers are visited to discuss any specific issues arising from training and have given feedback on their preferred venues and times for training to ensure that the service is providing training that they can access, given their child care commitments.

The training officer felt that the recent linking of carer's allowances with their level of training had helped improve attendance on courses and a database is being developed to hold and monitor training attendance records.

Each carer's annual review includes an appraisal of training and development needs, which also facilitates the review of the effectiveness of the training provided.

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?

4

The Operations Manual contains policies about the maintenance of children's records and access to the files. The case records are maintained by the child's social worker. Scrutiny of the files and discussions with social workers confirmed that the format of the records are consistent with those adopted by the Authority. The LAC (Looked After Children) information was seen to meet the required standard.

Foster carers who were seen by the Inspectors or who responded to the questionnaires stated that they were, in the main, provided with information in line with NMS 24.4. The foster carer's files about the children contain dates of the placement and any supervision notes about the children. The Team managers told the Inspectors that carers are going to be given a file for each person placed with them with guidelines on Heritage life story work, these will be seen at the next inspection. Carers spoken to at this inspection were able to explain how they keep a record of the life history of the children placed with them.

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

Separate records are kept for staff, carers, and children; a random selection inspected showed they contained significant information relevant to the running of the fostering service and recording was found to be clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. There was clear consistency of recording and filing information, and evidence that the files were monitored regularly.

There are procedures in place for access to files, secure storage and management of confidential information. The storage for information includes lockable cabinets, password protected computers and security systems protecting the building.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			114
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			66
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			51
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			15
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			7
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	81.90	Maximum £	500.00

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Family Placement Team Offices are part of a large building belonging to the local authority. They share the premises with the Children's Health and Disability Team and the Looked After Children's Social Work Teams. The managers and social workers in each of the teams stated that their proximity assists communication. The atmosphere in the building is relaxed and friendly.

The premises are bright and spacious, except for the meeting room, which is small. Discussions with the staff teams confirmed that they are satisfied with the accommodation. Parking is limited but supplemented by ample off site space for cars.

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 family placement team fostering services are funded as part of the local authority Social Services department. The Service Plan determines how the annual allocated budget is spent. The managers receive a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending patterns. The Finance Department provides advice about budgets.

A financial assistant works as part of the administrative support within the family placement team as a point of contact for foster carers. In the main, foster carers who responded to the questionnaire sent out by the Inspectors were satisfied with the service.

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 Chief Executive, Chief Elected member and the Director of Social Services determine how the overall budget will be allocated. The budget is held centrally, and delegated to the team managers of the individual budgets.

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

As previously stated, the Service has reviewed the allowances for foster carers following a comprehensive consultation process. The scheme has a set of banded payments according to the needs of the child and the experience of the foster carer. The managers stated that the majority of foster carers would benefit financially from the scheme.

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
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An inspector observed the Panel in operation and noted that it adhered to its written terms and reference and met the required standard.

The Inspector met with the Vice Chair of the panel as the Chair was on holiday. The Vice Chair was able to demonstrate sound working practises.

The Panel are continuing to try to recruit a member who has been placed with foster carers or whose child has been placed with foster carers. A Bristol foster carer is part of the panel.

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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The Family Link Service provides short-term breaks for disabled children. The Family Link Carers are subject to the same assessments and checks as mainstream foster carers and receive the same training and support.

Policies and procedures about the service and good practice guidance are available in the Operations Manual.

The regulation 38 for placement are now completed by both the child's social worker and a social worker from the Family Link Service at the start of the process rather than at the end of six weeks. Scrutiny of the young peoples files and discussions with the staff teams confirmed that this system works well and communication between the teams is good. Close links are maintained between the child's family to provide support and facilitate information sharing.

A leaflet has been produced by the Family Link Service, which provides information about the service.

The financial review is not applicable to the Family Link Service.

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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Standard met?

Standard met?

The operations manual contains guidance for Social Workers about exploring a Child's kinship and family and friends when considering a placement. The Child's Social Worker undertakes the assessment with assistance from a member of the Family Placement Team. Family and friends are called "Supportive Carers". At the last inspection the Inspectors noted that their files contained the same amount of information and background checks as for all foster carers. At this inspection the Inspectors noted that this still remains the case.	
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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 27th September 2004 to 1st October 2004 of inspection at South Gloucestershire Fostering Services and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

This report accurately reflects developments and practice within our Fostering Service. The areas raised as 'Good Practice Recommendations' are accepted and will be addressed as set out in the attached action plan.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 15th February 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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 South Gloucestershire 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 Peter Murphy
Signature _____
Designation Director of Social Services
Date 03-02-05

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of South Gloucestershire Fostering Service 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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