



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Surrey County Council Fostering Service

**Childrens Services
Beaufort House
Mayford Green
Woking
Surrey
GU22 0PG**

Lead Inspector
Ruth Coler

Announced Inspection
06th January 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Surrey County Council Fostering Service
Address	Childrens Services Beaufort House Mayford Green Woking Surrey GU22 0PG
Telephone number	01483 728022
Fax number	01483 776326
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Surrey Childrens Service
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Annie MacIver
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	800
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 10th February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

This report relates to the fourth inspection of the Surrey Fostering Service by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Local Authority Fostering Service managers do not have to register with CSCI, nor do Local Authority Fostering Services themselves have to register with the CSCI as providers. Regulation 10(2) requires Local Authority Fostering Services managers to meet the same fitness criteria that an Independent Agency manager has to meet.

Surrey County Council Fostering Service is a Local Authority Fostering service operated by the Social Services Department. It manages all the following in house fostering functions from temporary placements (emergency, short term, assessment and bridging placements) through to long-term permanent foster care placements, placements for a named child/young person only and specialist carers.

The Fostering Service has four fostering teams. The West Team is based in Heritage House in Chertsey, the East Team is based in the Omnibus Building in Reigate, and the Family Finding and Recruitment Team in Addlestone and the Adoption and Permanency Services is based in Chertsey.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Six regulation inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) carried out the fostering service inspection from the 04 January until the 27 January 2006.

All children and young people over the age of eight, foster carers and placing social workers (children's social workers) were asked to submit their views to the CSCI by completing a questionnaire. Where these were returned within the time frame given on the questionnaire these were used to formulate data, which is quoted within the inspection report.

All three foster care team offices were inspected and a review of the family link service was undertaken. At these inspections records and policies and were inspected, staff were interviewed individually and in groups and assessment of the facilities was undertaken.

The focus of this inspection was on longer serving foster carers, diversity and distance foster carers;(for example foster carers who live in a neighbouring county and further a field). The inspection also undertook a review of the Link service to children with disabilities as well as more general assessment of the foster service.

Twelve foster carer's homes were visited and telephone interviews were conducted with two foster carers who provide care in other local authorities some distance from Surrey. The children and young people in placement at these homes were offered the opportunity to speak with inspectors. Inspectors attended four foster carer support groups, two fostering panels, an open evening for potential new foster carers, a meeting of the fostering executive, two training sessions and undertook meetings with the following key staff the nominated manager, Agency Decision Makers, Placement Stability Team Manager and the Learning and Development Team for foster carers. In addition an inspection of staff, foster carer and children/ young people's files was completed.

The co-ordination of this inspection required forethought, organisation and support from the fostering service. This was accomplished well. The CSCI inspection team therefore wish to sincerely thank all children/young people, foster carers, staff and the service management for their support, consideration and hospitality throughout the inspection.

What the service does well:

The underpinning management systems, policies and procedures are well organised and clear.

There is a well-developed, comprehensive and responsive training and recruitment programme in place for foster carers.

Recruitment practice is robust and well organised.

The organisation of a team of supporting professionals, such as the Looked After Nurse, the Personal Education Plan Co-ordinator and the Placement Stability Team support and develop good practice and assist, in identifying, and meeting need.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The requirements from the last CSCI inspection regarding children's guides, notifying the CSCI appropriately, child protection re-training for long serving foster carers and risk assessment were completed. In addition eleven of the thirteen recommendations had been met.

The family link service has a greater profile within the fostering service thereby creating better services for children and young people with a disability.

The payment scheme for foster carers is more flexible and provides greater detail of how a payment is made up.

Relationships with the child/ young person's placing social worker had improved.

The development of diversity training throughout the service had increased.

What they could do better:

Records regarding children and young people need to be received from other agencies in a timely manner. Records made must be kept appropriately i.e. in accordance with legislation and Surrey County Council guidance.

Training regarding assessments and risk assessment for foster carers and foster care staff is essential.

Safe caring guidelines must be in place at all foster homes.

The effective and consistent implementation of the foster service's policies, procedures and guidance is sporadic and creates gaps which could pose risks to children and young people.

Understanding of the role and responsibilities of supervising social workers is unclear. The element of their role relating to support is well known and understood. Less clear is the role of supervision. At times this imbalance was found to effect decision-making regarding placements and the training needs of foster carers.

The service needs to implement a more stringent approach to assessment of foster carers and their subsequent training needs. Assessment should be based on evidence, which demonstrates competence rather than statements of competence.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12

While the fostering service promotes the health of children further work is necessary to ensure health records are always acquired in a timely fashion and maintained appropriately.

EVIDENCE:

The records inspected showed that information regarding children and young people's health provided at any initial placement was limited and often whilst some attempt was made to gain this information insufficient information remained on file. This is unacceptable and the fostering service must ensure that information regarding children and young people's health needs is received within satisfactory timescales. Some foster carers reported that they had difficulty in receiving sufficient and timely information regarding foster children's health needs.

At the time of inspection action was being undertaken to improve links with placing social workers (children's social workers) in order to improve the level of information provided. Special attention should be paid to how to receive sufficient information to know what any serious health need is where emergency placements are made.

During the inspection it was reported by management that health records were being implemented in the form of red books kept by foster carers. The manager also reported that there continued to be differing levels of use of this book by foster carers. In the service manager's letter of the 15 March 2006 it was clarified that red books were only used for children under five years. Records for older children were contained within the Looked After Children documentation. The service must ensure that the records made by foster carers in health care records is sufficient to ensure that documentation, as detailed in Standard 12.4 of The National Minimum Standards for Fostering, is maintained.

Records of reviews showed that foster carers provided information to meetings regarding how children and young people's health needs have, and need to be, met. Discussions with foster carers indicated they had a strong commitment to ensuring that all children and young people's health needs were identified and met.

Some support within Surrey was available from a Looked After Children's nurse but this service was not available throughout the County. The management confirmed that where this person was available the service could more easily obtain the health records. There was also the possibility that the Looked After Children's nurse could provide immediate training on specific health issues, for example diabetes directly to foster carers when a child/ young person is placed at their home. It would be helpful to keep records of any such training, which occurs and ensure this is logged on the foster carer's personal training record. Please also refer to the management section of this report for generic information on training for foster carers.

It was also evident that there were good links with other health care professionals, such as the Community Mental Health Team. The service had also appointed a Drugs Development Worker for Looked After Children.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

The safeguarding of children is taken seriously but there are elements of practice, which require attention.

EVIDENCE:

The recruitment records of the management team were not inspected on this occasion. Other recruitment files were inspected and these indicated that full, robust and detailed recruitment records were available.

The management of the service continued to proactively develop and monitor the work of the service. The management team provided evidence that there were plans already in place to improve some areas of practice.

Generally the foster homes were found to adequately meet the size, number and individual needs of the foster children and the foster carers' families. Young people and children reported that they were 'ok' or happy with the furniture etc. provided in the home.

Risk assessments regarding the premises were available on some foster carer's files but were generally not available in the foster carer's homes nor were carers aware of their responsibilities regarding risk assessment in general.

The impression gained by inspectors was that foster carers considered the premises risk assessment formed part of the checks made during foster carer's recruitment by the supervising social worker and were not an ongoing 'live' document that foster carers' held any responsibility for. Health and Safety training was covered at induction and some re-training by a few foster carers had occurred. However, as foster carers had been in place for some time it is necessary to determine a set period of time for re-training in Health and Safety. However, in the service manager's letter of the 15 March 2006 it was clarified that these risk assessments were undertaken on an annual basis.

From discussion it was evident that training regarding health and safety for foster care staff, and information within the fostering service offices, requires development. For example, by retaining a copy of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) health and safety manuals. Consideration must be given as to which foster care staff would be best placed to undertake premises risk assessments, as this requires good general knowledge of health and safety. A general knowledge regarding fire safety and other more specialised training regarding swimming pools for example may be necessary.

Detailed risk assessments regarding particular facilities, such as swimming pools, were not available however some risk assessments regarding dogs were. Risk assessments where there were signs of abuse or sexualised behaviours were in place regarding the use of bedrooms and the result was put in writing. All risk assessments found by inspectors were only located in carers files not in foster carers' homes.

The premises risk assessment format used by the service needs to be amended to include detail of what the evacuation procedure from the foster carer's home will be. Guidance must also be given to the foster carer regarding fire evacuation and include information that foster carers must let all children of an appropriate age and young people know what the evacuation procedures are.

Checks on vehicles and foster carers' driving licences were available and demonstrated these were checked regularly.

As part of the matching process the service used its internal 'F1' and 'F2' forms. The forms provide for detailed recording and information giving. The matching reports sampled at the inspection were prepared to a good standard and gave a comprehensive account of the prospective foster parents to the panels.

Matching processes included a risk assessment regarding the child/ young person's admission. This procedure was started in the last year and the service management acknowledged that this is still in development and requires further work to be fully implemented. Further comment is made throughout this report regarding the need for an increased understanding and use of risk assessment throughout every aspect of the service.

Surrey County Council's Fostering Service continues to carry on the attachment project (T.A.P.) implemented in May 2004. This is a multi-disciplinary team whose aim is to increase the stability of permanent placement and adoptive placements for children with complex needs.

Staff and management all confirmed that they had attended child protection training in the past year. There were also an array of courses and means of learning for foster carers to train in child protection. Please also refer to comments made in the management section of this report in respect of Standard 19 Training of foster carers. Some foster carers reported they had enjoyed and found useful child protection courses.

The foster service management team had provided information to the CSCI during the year 2005-06 that there are systems in place to evaluate child protection allegations, which are regularly reviewed and monitored.

The foster care courses regarding child protection include information regarding bullying. An element of the training courses was inspected at the last CSCI inspection where it was found to be satisfactory. The management confirmed that there were no changes to the programme in place apart from increased numbers of courses being made available to ensure that all foster carers requiring re-training were able to access these courses.

In questionnaires 90% of foster carers reported that they had been informed by the fostering service what were acceptable punishments, 7% were undecided or did not respond to this question and 3% stated they had not been given this information. Discussions with foster carers indicated that generally they understood what were acceptable punishments and knew which were unacceptable. When asked whether any punishments given by foster carers should not be allowed 66% of children and young people replied no, 20% were undecided or did not reply and 14% replied no. Of those that replied no there were no examples given which were cause for concern.

Safe caring guidelines were not found in place at many of the foster carer homes inspected. The management confirmed that development of safe caring guidelines formed part of the Skills to foster course that all foster carers complete as part of the approval process. The management reported that all foster carers had been supplied with a copy of a proforma for safe caring guidelines but that these were still in development with the support of

supervising social workers. However, it was concerning that no foster carer made this apparent to inspectors when they were asked about this. The service is therefore required to take action to ensure that all foster carers have these in place and a copy is held both at the foster carer's home and on file at the relevant Surrey County Council office.

In questionnaires from placing social workers 100% found that the child/ young person was safe in their foster care placement, 89% stated they would not have concerns placing another child/ young person with the fostering service and 85% would not have concerns about placing another child with the foster carers.

The service has a recruitment policy and procedure and a comprehensive 'flow chart' explaining the procedure 'step by step'. The personnel files of 12 staff from 'East Team' appointed since the last inspection were examined. It must be noted that whilst the appointments were new to the fostering service some had transferred to the fostering team from other posts within the Surrey County Council Social Services Department and had been employed by the department for many years.

The files of recently appointed staff were comprehensive and in the main contained: Photographic and certificated evidence of identity, training records, two written references (including telephone verification of referees), terms and conditions of employment, copies of certificates and qualifications, social work registration confirmation, induction programme, completed application form, health questionnaire, interview notes and Criminal Record Bureau checks. Whilst the majority of files held the required information, it was noted that the file of the independent chairperson from 'West Team' did not have references evident; however there was confirmation that references had been applied for (this person also stated in interview that references had been taken up.) In another staff file it was noted that an application form from an employment agency was held and not a Surrey County Council application form. During feedback the management confirmed this was an agreed Surrey procedure, which was put in place to cut down on bureaucracy so that the recruitment of staff could proceed quickly. The management is advised to ask the Human Resources Department to check that when this occurs the application form used covers all the detail required on Surrey County Council's form and where there is any shortfall that this is covered in another manner.

Despite the above shortfalls the recruitment and vetting procedures were evidenced as generally sound. A member of staff had been seconded to the team for a six-month period in order to develop a retention package to assist in the attraction and retention of foster carer's. The person managed to obtain on behalf of foster carers discounts and benefits with approximately three hundred national companies.

Foster panels were considered to provide a constructive yet welcoming atmosphere within which to review foster carers roles. The fostering panels visited were considered to operate well. The inspectors attended two panel meetings during the course of the inspection. The meetings included Social Work Professionals, Foster Carer's and a County Councillor. The meetings had clear agenda's and panel members scrutinised and commented on the previous minutes when read out. There was evidence of thorough and open discussion before decisions were made and all members contributed to the discussion.

Foster carer's applying for permanency and variations to their registrations attended the panels and were accompanied by their supervising social workers. Foster carer's were encouraged to join in discussions and put forward their views and opinions. Foster carer's were treated with dignity and respect. Foster Carer's were congratulated by the panel for all their hard work and input into their individual cases and this thoughtful action was clearly appreciated by the foster carer's and supervising social workers. In questionnaires 94% of foster carers confirmed that they attended reviews.

Issues regarding assessments are considered elsewhere.

Decisions to make exemptions to the normal foster care limit of three children in any one placement were made. Initially this decision was taken by the Head of Service and then ratified at Panel. However, it was difficult to find how these decisions were communicated to the foster carer. The manager stated that changes to the written confirmation sent to foster carers regarding panel decisions would in future include specific reference regarding exemptions. Agency Decision Makers demonstrated a good level of knowledge and commitment to ensuring that assessments and re-assessments of carers were completed effectively. They confirmed that some assessments were referred for further information and challenges regarding decisions were made. They also confirmed that they kept an overview of issues that came out from checking panel decisions and fed back any trends and issues that they find to the service management.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7, 13 and 31

The fostering service valued diversity and promoted educational achievement in a satisfactory manner. The short-term break service (the Link Scheme) service is in development. This is necessary to fully meet national minimum standards.

EVIDENCE:

Diversity training was prevalent throughout the service for management, supervising social workers and foster carers.

There were real efforts to identify the range of carers needed to meet children and young people's needs but the management also relayed realistic views about differing cultures attitudes to fostering and therefore how the service would need to adapt its recruitment strategies to meet needs; i.e. in the west of the county there was a realisation that kinship care needed to be promoted. Most foster carers and staff proved knowledgeable regarding issues of diversity and a commitment to providing services that meet individual need. There was evidence that individual foster carers took time to research information regarding ethnicity and culture. Care needs to be taken that the routes foster carers use to access information do not breach confidentiality, for example who they approach for information should be considered.

Supporting educational achievement is a course completed within the first year of foster carer training, as well as in the Skills to Foster course. Facilities to support education were provided in foster carers homes such as computers.

Generally the responses given by foster carers indicated an understanding and commitment to children and young people's educational achievements. Liaison with schools was generally good but in several cases foster carers stated that when difficulties with education arrangements occurred agreed plans as to how this would be dealt with were not always made. This appeared to be hearsay and no current evidence was provided to inspectors. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were not widely available in foster carer's homes or on records held by the service. The management confirmed that there was better co-ordination of liaison with a PEP co-ordinator being in post. A requirement will be made to ensure that PEPs are available for all children and young people. In the service manager's letter of the 15 March 2006 it stated, "*In 2005 14% of eligible LAC achieved five A-C grades at GCSE compared to 4% in 2004.*"

Children and young people confirmed that foster carers attended meetings etc about their education and that they felt they could ask for support with rk etc.

The Family Link Scheme that supports be-friender and respite placements had developed in the last 12 months. High quality recruitment material was being produced and discussions with staff identified that in some cases this had been successful in recruiting new carers. Medical references, written references, professional references and CRB checks were obtained for all prospective Family Link Carers. Dates were also available for when the medical assessment and CRB check were to be reviewed.

Once a potential match was profiled about the carers these could be sent to families whose children may be linked with them. Following this a meeting was arranged between the Link Carers and the child and their family, if this was successful an agreement meeting took place and the fostering agreement was signed by all parties. Family Link carers met during the inspection had copies of these and any revisions.

Family Link carers stated they felt they received sufficient support, and were comfortable and confident about contacting both the family link team and out of hour's duty team for advice and support. It is recognised that some programmes of training were available, but at times had been cancelled because of the lack of uptake. Family link carers stated that they received sufficient training, however it was recognised that it was not always easy to attend training sessions in the evening.

The foster carers kept logs for each time a child attends the foster link placement, and their use was reinforced by the supporting social worker. One Family Link carer had also developed a detailed photographic diary of the activities that the children did whilst with them, and this was shared with the child's parents.

Not all carers had attended the mandatory training, or had received specialist training to meet the needs of the linked children. The Family Link Scheme must make reviewing the training needs of the carers a priority and ensure that any identified needs are met.

Family Link carers files sampled during the inspection contained the relevant information about the carers. An agreement is signed by all parties that details in bullet points the roles and responsibilities of the child's parents, the Family Link carers, the agency and the child's social worker. However this agreement did not fully meet the requirements of regulation 34 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001, and the agency must therefore review this agreement.

Records for the children are easily accessible via the "SWIFT" system on the Local Authority's computer network, and information relating to the Family Link Placement was on the Foster Carers' files. Although the relevant information was available on the files sampled during the inspection, the agency would be advised to confirm that these files conform with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Members of staff from the Family Link team confirmed that supervision took place and that appraisals had been booked for this year. The team has been going through organisational change since joining the Fostering Service from the Children with Disabilities Team. It is recognised that there has been significant changes to the profile of the team and its management in order to develop and improve the service. Further consideration must be made to the development and training needs of this team.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10 and 11

The foster serviced promotes both contact and consultation. Further work is necessary to ensure consistency and continuity.

EVIDENCE:

The premise of working with parents and the importance of contact were embedded within the induction and training programme in place. There were also differing levels of training regarding contact to assist foster carers further development.

Children and young people confirmed that foster carers generally supported contact arrangements. Discussions with foster carers demonstrated their understanding of the difficulties and dilemmas contact has for children and young people and how this might affect their behaviour.

The results of placing social workers questionnaires regarding whether the carers worked with the family were that 54% considered they did this 'very well', 39% found they did this 'quite well' and 7% found this to be 'ok'.

In the daily logs inspected, where contact was occurring, there were only a few recordings regarding the foster carers perceptions of how contact had impacted on the child or young person. This is disappointing as contact was found to be organised and supported well and does not meet the required standard.

In questionnaires 37% of children and young people reported that foster carers 'often' consulted them, 51% stated that they were 'sometimes' consulted, 6% replied that they were 'not often' consulted and 6% were undecided or did not reply to the question. A wider approach to quality assurance and consultation with children and young people was starting to be implemented in conjunction with plans to develop children and young people's self esteem and self worth; thereby their abilities to consult effectively on a wider range of issues; and be involved in events such as the new foster carers open evening. In addition two songs by groups of children and young people were in production regarding topics relating to fostering, which they chose.

It would be beneficial to develop an overall consultation strategy with children and young people so that the service can review data from foster children's views to assist with evaluating the efficacy of the service using a child centred approach. It must be noted that when posed the question as to whether the service had asked the child or young person about their foster carers 74% stated they had, 23% stated they had not and 3% did not answer the question or were undecided. When asked if the fostering service had requested information about how it could improve 66% stated they had not, 31% replied that they had and 3% were undecided.

Consultation processes with foster carers were found to be good. There were formal and informal avenues such as the Fostering Executive, support groups and individual foster carers generally spoke highly of the level of consultation in place. In questionnaires 76% of carers reported that they were consulted about decisions, 12% stated they were not and 12% were undecided or did not respond to this question. In questionnaires only 1% of foster carers considered that they were not 'listened to' by the fostering service.

Concerns and complaints made by children, young people and others were generally found to be taken seriously and complainants provided with a full response. However, there is a need to check whether the issues raised by a complaint mean that a re-assessment of a foster carer's needs, training and situation should be completed. This issue must be considered and forms part of the requirement made regarding assessment. In children and young people's questionnaires 68% stated that they knew how to make a complaint, 29% replied they did not and 3% did not respond or were undecided. The results of foster carers' questionnaires were that 88% stated they knew how to make a complaint, 4% replied they did not know and 8% left the question blank or did not respond. Asked whether they had made a complaint on behalf of their foster child 19% of foster carers reported that they had.

The training programmes for foster carers demonstrated that consultation processes were central to the development and review of this element of the service. For example through a consultation group and formally through participation in the South East foster care training network group; informally through attendance at support groups and events. It was positive to find the increased use of foster carers as trainers in courses for other foster carers. When asked in by the CSCI questionnaire whether foster carers had ever been asked for their opinion regarding how the foster care service is run 35% of foster carers answered they had, 57% stated they had not and 8% did not answer or were undecided. This indicates that whilst some individual foster carers have stated their opinion is listened to there is no overall assessment, such as a survey, undertaken by the service of how the foster carers consider the service is run. This should be linked to the development of the service's quality assurance system.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12-month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

29

The fostering service has a satisfactory scheme for making payments to foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers were generally satisfied with the way payments were executed by the fostering service. They stated that allowances had increased and were now all-inclusive.

In some cases foster carers stated they had successfully claimed for extras and in others they had suffered a loss due to holiday expenses and had not attempted to claim due to the new rules. Some foster carers who take emergency placements stated they had not gained from the new system.

A new payment scheme was introduced in the months preceding the inspection and the management confirmed that this would provide greater detail of how payments are made and much greater flexibility in changing payments quickly i.e. that payment for a new foster child would be made the week following placement.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives. (NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. (NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

1, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21 22, 23, 24, 26 and 32

The underpinning systems, policies and procedures are well organised and clear; the consistency and continuity of the implementation of these was sporadic.

EVIDENCE:

The service continues to update its statement of purpose appropriately and provided this to the CSCI as required. A requirement from the last CSCI inspection was that a range of children's guides be provided for the diverse range of children and young people using the service. The CSCI were provided with one copy of a guide, which is to be provided to children and young people with a learning disability, and there are two guides already available, one for children and one for young people. The CSCI is not clear that this is the only range of children's guides needed and asked that the management review whether this range of guides meets the needs of their looked after population of children and young people.

Results of the placing social worker's questionnaires showed that social workers considered they continued to lack information regarding the service's statement of purpose. The management of the fostering service confirmed that all placing social work teams were provided with a copy of the statement of purpose and this was also made available to any professional requiring such information. The management team also confirmed they attended an area meeting to provide information regarding the service's statement of purpose to placing social workers. Therefore the recommendation made that the management should improve social worker's access to the statement of purpose was found to be met.

The management structure was found to be satisfactory and all staff were able to provide information that indicated that the structure was understood.

Foster care staff reported that the staffing levels mirrored the workload commitment. It should be noted that in one part of the County there had some turn over of staff, which was reported to have resulted in gaps of practice at some points during the year. Recruitment had taken place to resolve these issues. Whilst no staff made comment about this issue there were some responses in the questionnaires received from foster carers about the impact this had on their support. In addition 68% of foster carers reported in questionnaires that there were not enough staff in the fostering service. There was a marked difference in style between fostering team East and fostering Team West that could lead to confusion regarding the role of the supervising social worker this should be explored further. In addition a review of why foster carers' perceived there were too few foster care staff should be explored.

The training programme for foster care staff was the responsibility of the management team. Staff confirmed that they considered that training was adequate to the needs of the service and that post qualifying training was being extended. The management team confirmed that a new training

programme for foster care staff was commencing in February 2006 and in the first instance this would cover issues such as assessment and the role of supervising social workers. In light of evidence gained during this inspection where it is apparent that there are diverse levels of staff skills within the fostering teams when undertaking assessments this is considered not only appropriate but essential to enable consistency and continuity of service provision to a satisfactory level at all times. A few foster carers confirmed that they had attended joint training generally this was where foster carers had been fostering for some time.

Supervision and appraisals were evidenced on staff files and staff confirmed that Surrey Fostering Services had a formal induction plan. Supervision was reported by staff as being excellent and took into account individual foster carers as well as their individual needs. However, there was a variety of levels of content within supervision records some contained good detail and others limited. One example of where an issue was identified regarding a foster carer did not provide written confirmation regarding the action to be taken. Any issues identified must clearly contain detail of how this will be dealt with. In addition several issues were identified from reviewing files that had not been picked up in supervision sessions. Therefore whilst staff consider supervision to be satisfactory records did not always confirm this view.

The service had made use of the placement stability team to undertake an assessment of the service provision. This had highlighted the need for greater out of hours support being necessary for foster carers. The assessment concluded that the main time periods for this need were Wednesday to Sunday each week. A member of staff is being recruited to work out of hours on these days providing a greater support to foster carers and assisting in developing emergency duty team's skills in working effectively with foster carers.

The service had a clear strategy for working with carers that covered all the elements of Standard 21.2. In questionnaires 93% of foster carers found that they were given information regarding 'what is expected of them'. However, The role of the supervising social worker lacked clarity. There was an emphasis placed on support, which skewed the relationship between the supervising social worker and the foster carer. When asked how the dual role of support and assessment were conveyed by the fostering service to foster carers there did not appear to be evidence that this was explained in detail. In responses from foster carers 51% found that they were 'very satisfied with the support they received, 12% were 'quite' satisfied, 26% considered this was 'ok' 4% found this to be 'not enough' and 7% did not respond or were undecided. When asked about whether they were informed of events concerning children 75% of foster carers reported they were, 14% did not and 11% were undecided or did not respond. In addition there was evidence during the inspection that the processes of re-assessment of foster carers was not always undertaken using all available information. Re-assessment at times of stress was not evident, the service's standards for re-training were not always

referenced and information within some assessments lacked specific detail such as the exact number and type of courses individual foster carers had attended in the past year. This has led to a number of issues being missed, which should have formed part of any re-assessment of foster carers competence.

Foster carers who live some distance from Surrey reported differing levels of support. Some considered they were well supported and others that they received less than they would like. The service had in place a development project to increase the support, supervision and training systems available for these foster carers. For example where the foster carers lived in the South East of England there was a reciprocal arrangement for support and access to training with the local authority where the foster family were located. It was also possible to buy packages of support and training for foster carers who lived in different areas that the learning and development team were actively pursuing.

The relationships between the foster care service and the child's/young person's social worker were reported to be generally satisfactory and it was positive to note that the management team had developed further lines of communication to enhance this further. In questionnaires 50% of placing social workers found that the fostering service worked 'very well' with the placing authority, 36% found this to be undertaken 'quite well', 7% were undecided and 7% found this to be 'ok'.

Records showed that supervision sessions of foster carers occurred and at least once annually an unannounced visit was undertaken. During the inspection it could not be confirmed that supervising social workers ensured that all policies and guidance were followed. Please read other comments in this report. Managers reported that they had undertaken training in supervision though for some senior staff this was not always completed with Surrey County Council.

There were concerns during the inspection that the area of assessment in general including risk assessment needed greater training and understanding by foster carers.

Foster carer agreements were found on file, some foster carers were unable to produce these during inspections at their homes. At the feedback session the management team confirmed that they would be putting into place a system of quarterly joint visits by placing social workers and supervising social workers to foster carers homes. The objective of these joint visits is to ensure all documentation, policies and procedures are available, understood and used.

Surrey County Council fostering service had a well organised training programme for foster carers which this year included induction and provided a growing range of training for different levels of foster carer knowledge and needs. For example in Year two carers are expected to attend training regarding attachment theory and there was consistent evidence on file that foster carers attended this course. Positive feedback from a variety of sources was received by the CSCI as part of the inspection.

The Learning and Development team showed that they had a commitment and interest in the continual development and evaluation of the service, which promoted a reflective style of learning that, put children and young people at the centre of foster carer's learning. It was good to note that the team also considered their own professional development needs and ensured that these reflected the needs of the service. For example by attending updated training regarding legislation and a forum on the educational needs of Looked After Children. The plans for the training to be provided for February to July 2006 were already in place and had been made available to foster carers. In addition the team had a service development plan for the year, which included for example Life Story Work and further work in engaging foster carers in the training programmes.

The requirements and recommendations regarding foster carer training had been implemented but further work is needed to ensure that all those carers who administer medication are properly trained. It is suggested that carers who administer medication most frequently and or to the most vulnerable children/young people are targeted first.

The Learning and Development Team for carers confirmed that at the time of inspection thirteen foster carers had achieved an NVQ level 3 in caring for children, three had achieved the Assessor Award and one had qualified as an Internal Verifier for the NVQ awards. In addition by March 2006 fifteen further carers should have achieved an NVQ level 3 award.

Opportunities for training had been reviewed to include differing types of learning for example child protection training could be undertaken by attending multi-disciplinary staff training provided by the Local Authority, by internal courses and by on-line courses. The team confirmed that where one member of the household undertook the on-line child protection course it was an expectation that the other attended an external course. Other on-line courses have begun to be available and since these have been purchased approximately fifty carers have chosen to learn through this medium. The feedback regarding the courses has been extremely positive.

The on-line courses were also considered a positive method of assisting in ensuring that the training of foster carers at a distance from Surrey could be more involved in training programmes. In the South East of England a reciprocal agreement has been made for Surrey foster carers living in another

County to receive training provided in the location where they live. Further work will be accomplished this year to ensure that training programmes in other areas is available in a similar manner.

The training and learning team stated that they were collating data regarding foster carer training which would enable them to identify how training needs were being met in detail for example by differing area teams and by individual carers. This had been used to identify those carers who still needed to attend child protection training and whilst not all carers had re-trained in child protection there was evidence that there were plans in place to ensure this need was met. However, there were concerns regarding information found in the documentation in one foster carer's re-assessment where the competence for safe caring was found to be met with no shortfalls but the carers had not attended child protection in many years. The service therefore must recheck that they are able to ascertain that all foster carers who require re-training in child protection have been identified for this training.

The conclusion is that the training and development programme is a growing element of practice which is well organised. However during the inspection examples of training needs not being identified or met were found. Please see other comments made in this report.

A requirement was made at the last CSCI inspection that similar agreements to those made with a private fostering agency be in place between local authorities when a child/young person is placed by one local authority with another local authority fostering service. A decision has been made by the CSCI that this should be considered recommended practice rather than a requirement. Surrey County Council Fostering Service is continuing to pursue such agreements being place and this will continue to form a recommendation of this report.

Risk assessment forms were mainly available on foster carer's files. These were in two formats a premises assessment and an assessment made at placement of a child or young person to the foster carer's home. There was little evidence of any risk assessments being kept in the foster carer's home. Foster carers did not fully understand the importance of working with risk assessments in regard to meeting the individual needs of children. It was not evident that risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis or as required such as the time of admission of a new child/young person.

The risk assessment written at the time of the child's/young person's placement was on purple paper so it was easily distinguishable in the file.

The management confirmed that risk assessments were a developing area of practice, which had not been fully implemented. The inspection confirmed this view. There were concerns that risk assessment was not an ongoing process that regularly reviews the suitability of a placement and the foster care home.

The risk assessments viewed were also of differing quality. In discussion with supervising social workers it was clear that no overall training had been provided though staff confirmed that they had been given training in the use of the risk assessment form. The recommendation that the management check that all supervising social workers consistently use risk assessments was therefore not found to be met.

The recommendation that the fostering service should develop an internal type of placement plan had not been completed. Plans to develop this are in place and the fostering service confirmed that these would be developed in 2006-07. The recommendation will be brought forward.

Generally the premises were found to be satisfactory providing confidential and secure locations for records to be stored. Last year the CSCI inspection raised concerns regarding the security and confidentiality of the premises in Reigate. No changes as to how files are accessed within the office space had been made and continued to enable access by members of staff not associated with children's services. The foster care service had tried to resolve this matter during the course of the last year by discussion with those Surrey County Council departments involved.

In the feedback session the management of the service asked whether it was acceptable that only children's services access that floor and therefore have access to the files. This matter could then be explored as part of Surrey County Council's plans for the building. The CSCI felt this possibility to be acceptable. The requirement remains that the foster care service ensure that files are accessible only to those necessary.

The fostering Service was sensitive to the needs of the kinship foster carers and promoted this type of foster care where this was considered appropriate. There is a plan in place to review kinship care and whether this is the most satisfactory and available method of placing children and young people with their families. New special guardianship orders will be available in the future and consideration is being given as to whether this is more relevant.

Comments received from kinship carers demonstrated they have a varying level of need and wish to receive training and support from the fostering service. Discussions and comments made in questionnaires revealed that in some cases a greater level of support and training was desired. A review of each individual case is required to be undertaken to ensure that needs are met.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	1

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	2
8	3
9	2
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	2
31	2

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	2
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	2
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	2
17	2
18	X
19	3
20	2
21	3
22	2
23	2
24	1
25	2
26	2
27	X
28	X
32	3

Yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS12	15 (1)	The service must ensure that a written health record as specified in Standard 12.4 is developed and maintained for each foster child/ young person. <u>Brought forward from the CSCI inspection report of the 10 February 2005.</u>	01/04/06
2	FS24	11(a) & 13(2)	The management must review that all supervising social workers consistently apply the guidance given to foster carers regarding what records should be made in relation to a placement. <u>Brought forward from the CSCI inspection report of the 10 February 2005.</u>	01/04/06
3	FS26	32 (5) (a) & (b)	The service must make changes to the security arrangements of foster care files and staff location in open plan offices so that this provides sufficient security and privacy to the fostering service.	01/04/06
4	FS12	15 (2)(d) & 17 3(a)	Information regarding children and young people's health needs must be received within satisfactory timescales.	01/04/06
5	FS17	17 (1) & 21 (4) (a)	Health and safety training for foster carers and foster care	01/04/06

			staff needs to be reviewed and a plan implemented to address any shortfalls.	
6	FS6	29 (3) (a) & 30	The foster care home premises health and safety risk assessment must be reviewed and used in an ongoing manner. Copies of the assessment and any specific risk assessments must be maintained at both the foster care home and on the foster care file at the relevant Surrey County Council office.	01/04/06
7	FS6	29 (3) (a) & 30	Any particular issues identified by a premises risk assessment must have a specific risk assessment in place.	01/04/06
8	FS9	13 (1)	Safe caring guidelines must be in place for each foster care home. Copies of these guidelines must be available at the foster care home and on file at the relevant Surrey County Council office.	01/04/06
9	FS12	17 (1)	Training logs of how all the healthcare needs of children and young people will be met, are logged on a foster carer's personal training record.	01/04/06
10	FS13	16 (2) (c)	Personal Education Plans (PEPs) must be available with copies being kept in foster carer's homes as well as on file at the relevant Surrey County Council office.	01/04/06
11	FS10	14	Recordings regarding the foster carers perceptions of how contact had impacted on the child or young person must be made.	01/04/06
12	FS23	17 (1)	The Family Link Scheme must make reviewing the training needs of the carers a priority and ensure that any identified needs can be planned to be met.	01/04/06
13	FS1	3	A review of whether the range of children/young people's guides meets the needs of their looked	01/04/06

			after population of children and young people be undertaken.	
14	FS21	34	The foster care agreement for the Link Service must fully meet the requirements of Regulation 34 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	01/04/06
15	FS23	17 (1) & 21 (4) (a)	The service's plans to train foster care staff in assessment, risk assessment and what is the role of supervising social workers are completed as a matter of urgency.	01/04/06
16	FS20	17 (1) & 21 (4) (a)	A check that supervision records for both foster care staff and foster carers meet a satisfactory level of recording at all times be undertaken.	01/04/06
17	FS21	29 (3) (a) & 30	Risk assessment regarding children and young people's placements must be an ongoing process that regularly reviews the suitability of a placement and the foster care home.	01/04/06
18	FS30	28 (5) (a)	Written confirmation must be sent to foster carers in respect of any exemptions made following a decision by the panel and Agency Decision Maker.	01/04/06
19	FS31	17 (1)	Further consideration needs to be given to the development and training needs of the Family Link team.	01/04/06
20	FS23	17 (1)	All foster carers who administer medication are properly trained. A plan of how this will be achieved to be developed. Carers who administer medication most frequently and or to the most vulnerable children/young people must be targeted first.	01/04/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS12	<p>The management is advised to ensure that their plans to review the foster carer assessment form at the time they are planning an admission of a new child/ young person be implemented as soon as possible.</p> <p><u>Brought forward from the CSCI inspection report of the 10 February 2005.</u></p>
2	FS12	<p>Special attention should be paid to how to receive sufficient information to know what any serious health need is where emergency placements are made.</p>
3	FS11	<p>It would be beneficial to develop an overall the consultation strategy with children and young people. This is in order to review data from foster children's views about the foster care service, which would assist with evaluating the efficacy of the service using a child centred approach.</p>
4	FS16	<p>Written agreements should be in place between Local Authorities similar to those between a local authority and private fostering service as describe in 16.7 of the National Minimum Standards.</p>
5	FS16	<p>The difference in styles between Fostering team East and Fostering Team West should be explored to confirm this does not lead to any confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of the fostering service.</p>
6	FS17	<p>A review of why foster carers' perceive there are too few foster care staff is completed.</p>
7	FS24	<p>The service is advised to consider developing a type of internal placement plan that provides foster carers with detailed information about the types of actions they need to complete to support the foster care placement. This plans should also document important information, which at the time of inspection was being kept informally by foster carers, such as what is the toy that a child takes to bed with them at night</p> <p><u>Brought forward from the CSCI inspection report of the 10 February 2005.</u></p>

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