



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Manchester Fostering Service

Manchester Social Services

102 Manchester Road

Chorlton

Manchester

M21 1PQ

12th January 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

Manchester Fostering Service

Address

Manchester Social Services, 102 Manchester Road,
Chorlton, Manchester, M21 1PQ

Local Authority Manager

Ciaran Rafferty

Tel No:

0161 881 0911

Address

Manchester Social Services, 102 Manchester Road,
Chorlton, Manchester, M21 1PQ

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

10/3/03

Date of Inspection Visit		12th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jacqui Malcolm	074739
Name of Inspector	2	Haley Chalkley	140754
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not Applicable	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		Not Applicable	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Ciaran Rafferty – Principal Manager	

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 National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of Manchester Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Manchester Fostering Service provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Manchester. The service provides short-term, long-term and medium-term placements for children and young people who are 'Looked After' by Manchester Social Services Department. There is also a Disabled Children's Family Placement Team that provides short-term placements for families where there is a child with a disability or life threatening condition.

Manchester Fostering Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment approval and support of foster carers and operates two fostering panels, namely the fostering and permanence panels.

The fostering service is made up of the Family Placement Team Manager and Service Manager. The fostering service is divided into four teams and there is a team manager responsible for each team, with the exclusion of the Disabled Children's Team, which is managed by the service manager and a team manager heads the team. The teams are the Recruitment Team, Duty and Support Team, Long Term Fostering Team and Disabled Children's Team. There is an Adoption Team, based at the Beswick office. However, plans are underway to relocate this team to the Chorlton office.

There is no requirement under the Care Standards Act 2000, to register the local authority Fostering Service.

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.)

This was the second inspection of Manchester Fostering Service. During the inspection, the inspectors met with the Manager, two Service Managers, workers from the four family placement teams, the team managers in charge of the fostering teams and administrative staff. The members of staff spoken to demonstrated a clear understanding of the service and of their roles and responsibilities and were committed to their work with foster carers to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people.

Foster carers were also consulted during the inspection process and inspectors observed a foster carers group and visited individual foster carers homes. Young people presented as happy and content and some spoke to the inspectors about their experiences. A significant number of foster carers made positive comments about the support they received from the family placement workers and identified areas that the service needed to improve upon and the issue of staff shortages was raised on a number of occasions.

The inspection of the fostering service revealed that good support was being provided to carers, children and young people, however, there were areas that the authority needed to address to ensure they complied with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose and children's guide was due to be finalised. Copies of these documents must be forwarded to the Commission upon their completion.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

1 of the 2 standards were met.

The manager had a number of years experience of working with children and families and held the CQSW and Diploma in Applied Social Studies. At the time of the inspection, the service was being appropriately and effectively managed.

Management of the fostering service

1 of the 2 standards were met.

There were clear and appropriate systems in place to monitor and control the activities of the fostering service, which included the fostering panels. There were also arrangements in place for deputising for the manager. There was an outstanding requirement concerning the development of a quality assurance system that must be implemented to include the views of carers and children.

Securing and promoting welfare

2 of the 9 standards were met.

The service carried out detailed assessments to establish the suitability of potential foster carers and there were a number of strategies used by the fostering service to recruit carers and staff from diverse and varied backgrounds. Carers commented about the training received, however, it was noted that a number of carers had not received up-to-date child protection training. The system for recording allegations and suspicions of abuse was not evident and the bullying policy and behaviour management policy needed to be implemented.

**Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training of staff and foster carers
5 of the 9 standards were met.**

There was a system in place for the recruitment and retention staff and carers, however there was a need for some improvements in the way that staff recruitment processed. At the time of the inspection, there were further problems with respect to staff shortages and the authority was addressing this matter.

Records**None of the 2 standards were met.**

The fostering service maintained secure records with respect to foster caring families, children/young people and staff files. It was noted that some 'Looked After Children' information was missing from some files and there was a need for action to be taken by the authority to address some of the shortfalls in the manner that case records were maintained.

Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service**This standard was met.**

The premises met the requirements of the service.

Financial requirements**3 of the 3 requirements were met.**

Foster carers were paid a regular allowance and there was an opportunity for carers to receive additional payments made to foster carers who completed post approval and NVQ training.

Fostering Panels**This standard was not met.**

The inspectors observed two fostering panels, namely the permanence panel and fostering panel. The CRB checks with respect to panel members were still being processed at the time of the inspection. There was an outstanding issue that was discussed with the manager about his role as the Chair of the fostering panel and the manager of the service. In addition, comment was also made about the inappropriateness of panel members presenting reports to panel and also being present during the decision making process.

Short-term breaks and family and friends as carers

Workers from the Disabled Children's Team spoke positively about the service offered in respite care of children/young people. The service had made progress in obtaining funding to ensure training for family and friends as carers.

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:

YES

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:

Although Manchester Local Authority Fostering Service does not meet all of the regulations, the failure to do so does not have a significantly detrimental effect on the welfare of the children and young people placed. The service continued to be effectively managed, however, the authority needs to improve and increase the staffing levels available to ensure that the needs of the service are being met.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

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	
1	3	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must be finalised and contain information regarding the numbers of foster carers in the service, the number of children placed and the number of complaints and their outcomes. A copy of this document must be forwarded to the Commission.	16.8.04
2	3	FS1	The Children's Guide must be completed and a copy sent to the area office of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	16.8.04
3	42	FS4	A quality assurance system, which includes the views of carers and children, must be introduced.	30.8.04
4	11	FS7	A system must be developed to ensure that children can be more effectively matched according to their own cultural, ethnic and religious needs.	30.8.04
5	15	FS12	The procedures for medical consent must be developed so that there is a clear procedure for carers to follow which does not affect the routine care of the child.	16.7.04
6	16	FS13	Foster carers caring for children must have a copy of the education plan and be part of the review process.	30.7.04
7	19	FS17	Staff vacancies within the fostering teams must be filled.	30.9.04

8	17	FS21	Support of carers must be developed to meet the individual needs of carers.	30.7.04
9	17	FS23	Specific consideration must be given to help and support the children of foster carers.	30.7.04
10	20	FS30	All panel members must have a valid CRB check.	16.8.04
11	24	FS30	The Chair of the fostering panel must not be the principle manager of the fostering service.	30.8.04
12	17	FS32	Training for Family and Friend carers must be developed.	30.8.04

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission 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	
Not Applicable.		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Jacqui Malcolm</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Haley Chalkley</u>	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	<u>Mike Short</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>19.08.04</u>		_____

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 and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must be finalised and contain information regarding the numbers of foster carers in the service, the number of children placed and the number of complaints and their outcomes.	31.8.04
2	3	FS1	The Children's Guide must be completed and a copy sent to the area office of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	16.8.04
3	20	FS3	The manager of the service must have a valid CRB clearance.	30.8.04
4	42	FS4	A quality assurance system, which includes the views of carers and children, must be introduced.	30.1.05
5	11	FS7	A system must be developed to ensure that children can be more effectively matched according to their own cultural, ethnic and religious needs.	30.10.04
6	12	FS9	The authority must ensure that carers are kept up to date with Child Protection training.	31.12.04
7	12	FS9	Each foster caring family must have a written safe care policy.	31.12.04

8	12(2)(d)	FS9	There must be a system in place for collating information relating to any allegations of abuse and neglect and this must be maintained to ensure monitoring of these incidents.	16.7.04
9	11(1) & 17(3)	FS24&FS9	The service must review the information provided to carers to ensure they are provided with the essential information to relating to the young people placed.	16.7.04
10	13(1)	FS9	The Behaviour Management policy must be developed.	30.9.04
11	11	FS9	The bullying policy must be developed.	15.10.04
12	11(a)	FS10	The service must review the training on contact to include information for carers who may observe changes in children/young people's behaviour upon their return from contact visits.	30.11.04
13	11	FS11	There must be clear arrangements in place to enable children/young people to be consulted by their individual social workers.	31.12.04
14	18	FS11	The service must review the systems in place for dealing with complaints.	20.8.04
15	15	FS12	The procedures for medical consent must be developed so that there is a clear procedure for carers to follow which does not affect the routine care of the child.	30.10.04
16	15(d)	FS12	There must be written health records in place with respect to children/young people in foster placements.	30.8.04
17	16	FS13	Foster carers caring for children must have a copy of the education plan and be part of the review process.	30.8.04
18	16(2)	FS13	There must be a system in place for monitoring the educational progress and attainment of children/young people	30.8.04 and ongoing
19	16(5)	FS14	Discussions must take place with the social work teams to ensure young people are consulted in the development of their Pathway Plan.	30.7.04

20	21	FS15	<p>The manager must ensure that personnel documents contain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two written references and evidence that a follow up telephone contact has been made to referees. • Up to date CRB clearance must be undertaken. • Documentary proof of qualifications must be contained on the files. 	30.10.04
21	19	FS17	Staff vacancies within the fostering teams must be filled.	30.9.04 and ongoing
22	17	FS21	Support of carers must be developed to meet the individual needs of carers.	30.12.04 and ongoing
23	17	FS23	Specific consideration must be given to help and support the children of foster carers.	30.12.04 and ongoing
24	11(a)	FS24	Guidance must be provided to carers concerning information that they are required to pass onto the fostering service.	30.11.04
25	30	FS25	The authority must undertake a review of case records as detailed in the report to ensure they comply with the regulations.	30.10.04 and ongoing
26	20	FS30	All panel members must have a valid CRB check.	16.8.04
27	24	FS30	The Chair of the fostering panel must not be the principal manager of the fostering service.	30.8.04
28	24	FS30	The service must review the panel process where panel members present reports to panel.	16.8.04
29	17	FS32	Training for Family and Friend carers must be developed.	30.12.04

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	FS2	The manager of the service should have a qualification at NVQ Level 4 in Management or an equivalent by 2005.
2	FS11	A central record of complaints should be maintained.
3	FS15	It is strongly recommended that guidance on the recording and retention of CRB disclosure is implemented.

* 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	7
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	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	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	12/1/04
Time of Inspection	10.30AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

53

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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?

2

Since the last inspection, the statement of purpose remained under review. There was an outstanding requirement made that the document was updated to contain information regarding the number of foster carers in the service, the number of children placed and the number of complaints and their outcomes.

A copy of the draft children's guide was available for inspection. This document should be finalised and a copy must be forwarded to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. This requirement is reiterated.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last inspection, the manager of the service had left the post and the Service Manager, Family Placements, succeeded the post. The manager holds the CQSW and Diploma in Applied Social Studies. He also holds a management qualification, however he may be required to obtain a management qualification to NVQ level 4 if this is not an equivalent qualification by 2005. The manager has worked for the organisation since 1982 and has practiced in a number of roles until his appointment as the manager of the service in July 2003. During discussions with the manager and service manager respectively about the service both demonstrated a clear awareness of the organisational structure and of their roles and responsibilities within the structure. Staff interviewed expressed their levels of awareness about the lines of accountability.

The foster carers who responded in their questionnaires and spoke to the inspectors indicated that their service was generally well managed, given the demands of the service.

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?

2

The manager had over twenty-two years experience in working with children and families. He has held the post of social Worker Team Manager and Acting Principal Manager in District Social work teams. He was also Service Manager (Family Placement) for five years prior to commencing his current position.

It was noted that the manager's last police check was dated 08/03/02, therefore an updated CRB clearance was required. The manager reported that some improvement had been made and a more systematic approach was planned in respect to obtaining the CRB checks. The manager told the inspectors that a progress report meeting had been convened on 06/01/04 with the Personnel Department where by checks on a three yearly timescale was discussed.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager reported that the roles of the manager and staff were clearly defined and job descriptions with respect to staff and carers were well established. As previously indicated staff spoken to indicated clear lines of accountability. The manager told the inspector that the acting family placement service manager deputised in his absence.

The manager explained to the inspectors how the work undertaken by family placement teams was monitored by managers in the service. This information was supported by the service manager and line managers interviewed. Supervision was undertaken by the line managers of the family placement workers. The quantity of Form F assessments was also monitored by the line managers who read the document and approved it, once it had reached the appropriate standard. The line manager also had the responsibility of approving court reports presented by family placement workers and the panel system monitored the quality of the reports presented by the family placement workers and social workers. The manager reported that any issues that may arise would be fed back via the chair or professional advisor to the worker or manager. The service also carried out monitoring of significant incidents.

The service was not required to notify the Commission about the matters listed below, however, the Commission had been notified by the service about significant incidents, for example, child protection issues and complaints and this practice was encouraged.

At the last inspection, a requirement had been that a quality assurance system was extended to include the views of carers and children. Feedback from foster carers questionnaires indicated that their views were not always included about the service. This requirement is reiterated.

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

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	X
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Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Discussions with the manager provided a clear indication of the roles and responsibilities that pertained to his position and the manager did not hold a similar position within the organisation. There was a number of delegated duties that were undertaken by another senior manager and during interviews both individuals were clear about their roles and responsibilities.

The manager told the inspectors that in his absence, there was an acting family placement service manager who deputised. This person had fifteen years experience as a childcare social worker, family placement social worker and team manager. The inspector interviewed the acting service manager and understood from the manager that they were responsible for the direct management of the fostering service. Duties involved the provision of supervision and appraisal of the Family Placement Team Managers. She also worked with the manager in respect to the strategic management of the service in addition to having lead responsibility for ensuring effective service delivery by the family placement teams. The acting Service Manager also had had responsibility for a number of specific areas of policy and procedure development.

The acting Service Manager reported that she felt supported by the manager.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From a sample of care records examined, the inspectors noted that approved foster carers had all been made subject to the process of assessment and the manager confirmed that health and safety inspections were completed as part of the assessment and subsequent annual reviews. The preparation groups also included health and safety issues and these were also noted in the foster care handbook, for example, fire prevention burns and scalds, electric sockets, etc. The manager also confirmed that the appointment of the Quality Assurance Officer post would serve to monitor compliance in this area. Foster carers who responded to their questionnaires expressed satisfaction with the assessment process, however some commented on the length of time taken for the assessment process to be completed.

Foster carers who were visited by the inspectors were aware of the inspection and knew that inspectors from the Commission for social Care Inspection could visit them.

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?

2

The manager reported that the fostering service promoted equality through the foster care agreement equal opportunity policy in hand book, foster care recruitment policy and same race policy. Other areas included foster care preparation groups, post approval training groups and NVQ training in which the manager reported that such training promoted the children's feelings of self worth through respecting and promoting the child's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background.

There was a recruitment and assessment team that targeted specific groups of potential carers to meet the needs of children. The inspectors had the opportunity to observe a short but informative promotional video produced by the service that included current foster carers. The purpose of the video was intended to recruit more carers from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds. There was also a black carers leaflet that had been produced with the same aims and objectives. The inspector interviewed the line manager of this team and she discussed the plans in place to 'fast track' some applications in relation to the service's recruitment strategy. Staff also demonstrated a clear awareness about the considerations that would need to be taken to enable foster carers to meet the needs of children and young people. The manager reported a diverse team with a number of black workers. About ¼ of applicants were black carers, however, the service did less well in the recruitment of Asian foster carers. It was noted that not all teams were representative of Asian family placement workers and the inspectors were made aware of the initiatives

underway to meet this shortfall. The organisation was in the process of reviewing transracial placements on the duty team, however at the time of the inspection this was an outstanding requirement.

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

The inspectors met with representative family placement workers from each of the teams. Information provided from the workers indicated that the needs of the child would take priority during the matching process. The manager reported that disabled children would be provided with appropriate support, adaptations and equipment and with respect to trans racial placements, the manager reported that where these placements were made, additional support and training would be made available to foster carers.

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?

2

The record of post approval training from January 2003 indicated that child protection training had been undertaken in May 2003 and June 2003. However questionnaires returned by the foster carers indicated that not all had received up dated child protection training. There was written information contained in the foster carer agreement and handbook that made it clear that corporal punishment was not acceptable.

The fostering service regulations 2002 require that individual carers have a 'safe care' policy for their household with the expectation that this will be reviewed on a yearly basis. This information was not evident on the carers files examined and the foster carers spoken to said they did not possess a copy, therefore a requirement has been made in this respect.

At the time of the inspection, there was no clear system for collating and evaluating information with respect to the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect and abuse. This must be regularly reviewed.

It was noted that in some returned questionnaires and during a discussion with one foster carer that the full information about children placed with them was not always provided by the placing social worker, to enable the young people to foster the children they looked after

and if applicable other children that they have responsibility for. The service should address this issue.

The Behaviour Management Policy must be reviewed to reflect the fostering service and be available to staff and carers. Included in this policy should be information about acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline, that no form of corporal punishment should be used, should not be excessive, reasonable measures should be used, guided use of physical restraint and there must be guidance for carers with respect to involving the police.

There was no bullying policy in place and it was suggested to the manager that the bullying policy should be made available to staff and carers.

There was a guide for foster carers about children who went missing. This document provided information about the reasons why young people may go missing and guidance about what they needed to do if young people absconded.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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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?	2
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A number of children and young people who responded to the questionnaires reported that they missed being away from family members. The service continued to promote contact of children with their significant others and foster carers spoke positively about the need for children/young people to have contact with their significant others, and in the majority of cases, foster carers facilitated contact.

The training records indicated that a course 'promoting positive contact' had been held in March and September 2003. There was little evidence that that foster carer training addressed the issue regarding foster carers observing the changes in the young persons behaviour following contact visits and of the action taken to refer this information to the placing social workers.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Of the 79 questionnaires returned by the young people 75 reported that their foster carers asked for their opinions and ideas. For example young people reported that they were asked about activities, having fun, food and clothing. Some young people reported that they were asked about their feelings and about the past. Children and young people reported that 'I get everything I want' and 'I don't get hit'. A number of children and young people commented that as a result of being consulted, aspects of their life had changed. For example changes in the home décor, contact arrangements changed, changes in behaviour and punishments.

Of the questionnaires returned, two children/ young people said that they had not been

consulted by foster carers and a small number reported that they had never been asked their opinion by their placing social worker.

There was some evidence contained in the carer/ young people's files to demonstrate that consultation had taken place with respect to the review process. One young person spoken to told inspectors that she chose not to attend reviews however had no problems in expressing her views.

A number of children reported in the questionnaire that they knew how to complain and there was the Children's Right's Service that was based within the authority to deal with complaints.

Not all foster carers were satisfied with the way in which complaints were dealt with by the service and one foster carer told the inspectors that one of their complaints had not been responded to. Another comment made by a carer stated that they had no confidence in the complaints system. This matter was brought to the manager's attention and further information was provided.

The service maintained a central register of complaints and allegations, detailing the number, name of carer and the date of the complaint/ allegation and nature of complaint/allegation and the outcome. The inspector did not see a separate system in place that demonstrated how complaints were being processed to the outcome. For example, acknowledgement of complaint, the consultation process and the outcome of complaints made.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The manager reported that the current 'Looked After Children Health Protocol' ensured that children/ young people in foster care received routine and specialist healthcare. The foster carers had the role and responsibility to promote the child/young persons health needs, which was specified in the foster carer agreement. Foster carers spoken to had a good insight into the children/young people's medical needs and followed up appointments where required. There was also a 'LAC' nurse available for consultation. There was no written health record for each child in care that was updated during the placement.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that the procedure for medical consent must be developed. This requirement is reiterated.

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?****2**

The foster carer agreement contained information about the promotion of educational attainment, including arrangements for meeting these needs. A number of children and young people responded positively in their questionnaires about their education and the support received by their foster carers was highlighted. During visits to fostering families, the young people and their carers made positive references to education and computers and printers that had been provided by the service for children/young people to use. However in one fostering family, they felt unable to sustain the placement due to difficulties with the education authority and it was unclear what support had been provided by the foster service. This matter was raised with the manager and was addressed and the Commission was subsequently provided with the information that demonstrated how the service had addressed the issues. There was additional educational support available through the Behaviour Support Service.

On the children/young peoples files, copies of personal Education Plans (PEP'S) were in place. However this document was not apparent on all of the files and some foster carers were not aware of PEP's that identify whether they were providing the appropriate support. At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that carers had a copy of the education plan and be part of the review process. The manager reported that progress had been made. This requirement is reiterated.

The inspector found no evidence that the service had established a system for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and school attendance of the children / young people in foster care.

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?****2**

The fostering service continued to use Barnardo's Manchester Leaving Care Service to prepare young people who had reached the age where preparations needed to be made with respect to independent living. The manager reported that there was a 'life' CD that young people could access on the computer. There was no requirement in the foster care agreement that foster carers should assist young people to move into independence, however, there was evidence contained in some of the young people's questionnaires and during foster care visits to indicate that young people who had reached the age of independence were being supported by their carers and were making choices about their future aspirations.

There was no evidence to demonstrate how young people were consulted to be actively involved in the implementation of the Pathway Plan.

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?

2

The manager reported that all staff were recruited with the framework of Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunities Recruitment and Selection Procedures. In addition, the manager reported that managers are required to undertake a half day briefing to be a recruitment panel member and complete a two-day training course to enable them to chair a recruitment panel. There were recruitment and retention procedures in place and a recruitment strategy group was convened on a quarterly basis to analyse data in relation to the needs of the service from a range of aspects.

A small sample of personnel files were examined and the following observations were made:

- Not all of the files contained two written references and not all checks had been followed up by a telephone call.
- Not all of the files contained an up to date CRB clearance.
- Not all of the files contained documentary proof of qualifications.

The service did not have a policy about the recording and retention of CRB disclosures.

The family placement workers and team leaders were qualified and experienced staff and all had experience of working with children and families. There were 12 placement support /family placement workers in the service who worked under the supervision of qualified staff in the teams to which they were assigned, for example, recruitment and assessment, duty and support, long term fostering and the children's health and disability service.

Total number of staff of the agency:

47

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

The fostering service is a large provision that consists of four family placement teams, namely Recruitment and Assessment, Duty and Support, Long-Term Fostering and the Children with Disabilities Team, which is managed separately with the Children's Health and Disability Service. This service was generically operated and multi-disciplinary. There was a large administrative team in place that provided support to all of the fostering service.

At the time of the inspection, a new Principal Manager had taken up the post in the fostering service. The manager was previously the family placement service manager and had worked in this role for 5 years and deputised for the previous manager of the service. There were clear lines of accountability with each of the teams and line managers who possessed the necessary skills and experience to undertake this role supervised staff. Staff were receiving supervision, including the line managers and manager of the service. Since the last inspection, staff appraisals had been introduced. Staff members from the different teams were clear about their roles and responsibilities despite pressures in some of the teams as a result of staff shortages. Staff showed a commitment to their work and spoke positively about how they performed in the service.

There were comments made by family placement workers that placing field social workers did not realise that they were qualified social workers. Previously workers from the service visited the district social work offices to promote the fostering service. The inspectors were told that new work had been undertaken with the Manchester Foster care Association (MFCA) that as part of placing social workers induction, they met with family placement workers and MFCA to obtain an understanding of the fostering service. This view was not completely shared by the family placement workers from the Disabled Children's Family Placement Team who worked closely with the placing social workers who were based in the same building as the fostering service.

At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that training opportunities for staff were developed further. The manager reported that funding had been made available to fund a post in the training department and training opportunities for staff were ongoing. The manager reported that a programme of post qualifying (PQ) training, including access to PQ1 and PQ2 qualifications and in-house training. Training on the Fostering Standards 2002 was also incorporated into the services 2003-2004 training programme. With respect to external courses, the inspectors were told that there was a limited yearly budget to the whole department. There were short external courses that staff could apply for, however, these were only available once per year.

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?	2
<p>At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that staff vacancies were filled. The manager reported that the recruitment of family placement workers had only attracted two candidates and there were still a number of vacancies in the service that needed to be filled. The manager discussed the strategies for the recruitment of staff and this requirement is reiterated until progress has been made in this area.</p> <p>Of the 45 questionnaires returned, 35 foster carers felt that there was not enough staff and 5 foster carers did not comment. Typical comments made about the service included: "I think they do a very good job considering the amount of time and paperwork they have to complete" and "on the whole, they do what they can"... "yes, but they are poorly resourced".</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?	3
<p>All staff working within the fostering service were recruited within the Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunities Recruitment and Selection Procedures.</p> <p>Foster carers were considered as volunteers by the service and they received a weekly allowance for each child/young person accommodated with them. The views from foster carers about the support they received from the service varied and a number of comments made by foster carers indicated that the fostering service was in the main supportive, however it lacked resources. There was out of hours support that was provided by the Emergency Duty Team and as previously noted at the last inspection, foster carers did not find this service particularly helpful to them. Since the last inspection, the manager reported that it was intended that the service established out of hours support using funding from 'Choice Protects'.</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?	3
<p>The training plan for 2003-2004 was in place and made available for inspection. There was a programme of post qualification training for family placement workers that included access to PQ1 and PQ2 qualifications. The inspectors were informed that some workers had attended a BAAF competency based assessment course and there was a team development session that consisted of in-house courses in safe caring, working with black young people, cultural needs, neglect, recognising signs of abuse, fostering standards, relative/friends assessments.</p> <p>The inspectors were informed that as part of the team action plan, appraisals had been implemented and training needs identified for all staff.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

There were job descriptions with respect to all staff who worked in the fostering service. The inspectors were informed that team meetings were held on a fortnightly basis and staff received supervision on a regular basis. Service team meetings that included all staff were occasionally held.

There were systems in place for the supervision and support of the administrative workers in the fostering service.

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?****2**

Discussions with foster carers about particular difficulties indicated that there had been some resolution, however, with respect to one fostering family they had made the decision to end the placement due to issues with the education authority and another with respect to a complaint made that the carer felt had not had not been responded to. These issues were subsequently raised with the manager and feedback had been given.

As previously mentioned in this report the comments made about the fostering service related to the lack of resources with respect to staffing and there is an outstanding requirement in this respect (See Statutory Requirement 21). Notwithstanding this, however, the majority of comments received by foster carers in their questionnaires indicated that they felt supported by the family placement workers. Some of the views from family placement workers indicated that relationships with field placing social workers could be improved.

During the inspection, the inspectors had the opportunity to observe a foster carers support group. This group met regularly and was facilitated by two family placement workers in an venue accessible to the foster carers. At the time of the visit, carers were subjected to a consultation exercise from the LAC nurse, which appeared to be a useful session.

The support that foster carers could expect was detailed in the foster carer handbook.

There was an outstanding requirement that had been made at the last inspection that the service developed the support to meet the individual needs of carers.

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**

The foster carer agreement contained information to enable foster carers to know what was expected of them, however, this document required updating with respect to safe caring and insurance details. There was also a foster care handbook available to foster carers. Foster carers spoken to named their family placement workers and there was evidence that they were supported during the initial stages of placements. This was confirmed with family placement workers. A number of carers reported that they were involved and contributed to the child/young persons reviews. A sample of foster carers records indicated that family support workers provided support on a regular basis and that some visits took place on an unannounced basis. One foster carer commented in the questionnaire that during the monthly contact visits with the family placement worker, there was always the opportunity to ask questions and become involved in some of the activities in the fostering service.

The inspectors spoke with the executive members of the Manchester Foster Carers Association (MFCA), which was a registered charity organisation that supported carers, including new carers who required advice support and representation including support to carers experiencing complaints and allegations. The MFCA continued to meet with the managers of the fostering service to discuss any issues.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

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

Foster carers listed the training they had received and in the questionnaires. The pre-inspection information contained further details of foster carer training. These included NVQ3, moving and handling, Autism, Dysphasia and ADD, valuing diversity, record keeping, safe caring, looking after the needs of black children, managing difficult behaviour, etc. Discussions with family placement workers revealed that foster carers benefited from training offered by the service and some of the responses received from foster carers indicated that they received a lot of support. There were a number of foster carers however, who had not received training and comments made were "none-seems difficult to organise", "none" and one carer stated that they had never attended training courses due to their working hours, however, they said they had learnt from the experience of being a foster carer and said they worked well with the fostering service.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that consideration was given to help and support the children of foster carers. It was noted in one of the comments made in the foster carer questionnaire that carers would like to see more support for children of foster carers. This is an outstanding requirement.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The manager reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they had a comprehensive Recording and File keeping and Access to Files Policy. The review of the record keeping policy was in progress at the time of the inspection.

A number of Foster carers responded to their questionnaires that they were not always provided with enough background information prior to a child/young person being placed with them, however, the majority of foster carers responded to the contrary. The foster carers were provided with the foster care agreement that set out the basis and duration of the placement. However, not all foster carers visited had copies of all of the 'Looked After Children' (LAC) documentation, which created an issue in that the Foster Placement Agreement was based on the LAC documentation. This therefore did not comply with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations 2002 and there must be a separate document or the authority must review the information contained on the LAC documentation to ensure it meets with Schedule 7 of the Regulations.

Foster carers visited had adopted a range of methods to record information and there were secure boxes that foster carers possessed to store this information. It was however noted that not all foster carers knew what information they should maintain or pass onto the fostering agency. This is an issue that the service must address.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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There were separate records maintained for staff, children/young people and carers. There were also separate records in place with respect to complaints and allegations and the manager was advised to separate these documents. Further comments were made about the quality of the records and the following observations were made:

- Not all LAC documents had been signed
- Not all record entries had been signed
- There were some gaps found in sentences
- Monitoring by the line managers was not always undertaken
- Not all records were legible.

The manager discussed with the inspectors the plans that the authority had made to audit Manchester Fostering Service

samples of files at Principle Manager, Director and Assistant Director level to tighten up and improve recording standards.

All of the records were found to be stored securely and confidentially and there was relevant background information contained on the files about the carers and the checks made during the assessment process.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	X
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	9
Maximum £	9

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
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The premises were fit for use as a fostering service. The majority of the team was based at the Chorlton office. The Adoption Family Placement Team and Adoption Administration Team continued to be based at the Beswick Office and the manager reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that plans were in place to move these staff to the Chorlton office in Spring 2004.

I.T equipment had been made more accessible to staff since the last inspection and progress was being made with the electronic systems of communication to enable workers to obtain information about children/young people and carers. The inspector was also informed that a Systems Administrator post was available to assist in the development of these systems.

The files were stored in lockable filing cabinets in the office area and the inspector was shown where these were located. The inspector was informed that a recent break-in had taken place on the first floor of the building and a number of computers had been stolen. Since this incident, the authority had taken further measures to increase the security of the building to prevent a similar incident from occurring.

The insurance liability certificated was displayed on the wall in the administrative office.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service was funded from the budget allocated by Manchester City Council and operated within the City Council's financial regulations.

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 fostering service operated within the local authorities policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. The manager reported that financial management information was regularly made available to managers in the service. There was a computer system that was used to record and monitor expenditure and the finance department continued to make payments to carers on the basis of information received by the fostering service. These payments included 'payment for skills' increments where applicable.

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

All of the foster carers received an allowance to care for children and young people. As previously mentioned, there was a 'payment for skills' allowance made to foster carers who had completed their Post Approval training and NVQ training. Few comments were made by foster carers visited by the inspectors or from the foster carers questionnaires received to indicate that late payments were an issue. However it was noted that if social workers did not ensure the relevant paperwork was submitted in time this would delay the payments to foster carers.

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?

2

There were clear written policies and procedures in place with respect to the two panels in place, namely the fostering panel and permanence panel. The inspector attended both panels and had the opportunity to observe the processes. At the permanence panel, the Independent Chair of the Permanence Panel was from the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). There were six items on the agenda and these varied from the approval of link carers, relative/carer, approval of short-term carers, and there was a foster carer review. It was noted that consideration was given to all of the reports presented to panel and there was a quality assurance function in place. Some items presented to panel were deferred for further information and clarification was sought by the Chair with respect to CRB clearance. The Chairperson was interviewed during the inspection and there was a discussion about their role including the considerations that pertained to decision-making when the panel was not able to come to a decision.

The fostering panel was also observed and there were five items on the agenda. The Chair of the panel was also the principal manager of the service. At the last inspection a requirement had been made that this arrangement was reviewed to ensure a level of independence. This requirement is outstanding. A number of CRB clearances had been received by the service with respect to the panel members and there were a number being processed at the time of the inspection.

An observation of the panel indicated that the panel was quorum. There was a quality assurance process that enabled the scrutiny of reports and where necessary the deferral of some reports where information was not forthcoming or where further clarification was required. One of the panel members presented a report and was also present when the panel considered its recommendation. It was explained to the manager that in these instances, the individual must excuse themselves from the panel during the decision making process.

There was sufficient administrative support present at both of the panels observed.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The service had policies and procedures in place to support children/young people with disabilities who were given care as short-term breaks within the fostering service. The manager reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that the Disabled Children's Family Placement Team provided link care. The workers from the Disabled Children's Family Team also spoke positively about this arrangement.	
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The manager reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that there were procedures in place in relation to relative and friend carers and that first consideration was given to friends and family placements of 'Looked After Children'.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that training for family and friends must be developed and the policy for family and friends placements must be finalised. Action has been taken by the service to finalise the policy and the manager reported that funding for training had been agreed.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not 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 12th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Provider's comments and an action plan are available at the Local Office, where these have been submitted.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 10th August 2004, 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC 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 Ciaran Rafferty of Manchester Fostering Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I Ciaran Rafferty of Manchester 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.