



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Sefton Council Fostering & Adoption Service

Ellesmere House
Crosby Road North
Waterloo
Liverpool
Merseyside
L22 0LG

11th October 2004- 21st October 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

Sefton Council Fostering & Adoption Service

Address

Ellesmere House, Crosby Road North, Waterloo,
Liverpool, Merseyside, L22 0LG

Local Authority Manager

Ms Linda Woodcock

Tel No:

0151 285 5269

Address

Ellesmere House, Crosby Road North, Waterloo,
Liverpool, Merseyside, L22 0LG

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 ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		11th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mrs Lynn Paterson	073532
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Sefton Council Fostering & Adoption Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Sefton Family Placement team form part of Sefton Children's, Schools and Families Service with the service being founded on the belief that, where children and young people are prevented or unable to live with their immediate or extended families, substitute care should be provided to reflect their individual needs, aspirations and development. The team works from office accommodation within Ellesmere House which is a large detached premises situated on a busy main road setting close to the centre of Waterloo.

The team comprise of a Service Manager, a resource manager, Team Manager and Assistant Manager, 6 social workers, 5 placement support workers and administrative, publicity and marketing officers who all work together with a view to providing a range of foster placements throughout the Sefton Borough and beyond. The team recruit and approve foster carers under 4 registration categories which are short term fostering, concurrent placements, specialist foster carers and permanent foster carers.

At the time of the inspection the service provided for 194 children and young people in foster care, of whom 104 were girls and 90 were boys. The children and young people covered the full age range from 0 – 18 years old.

It was noted that all the young people requiring support of the foster home who were in the care of Sefton Borough Council were accommodated from within Sefton's own resources at the time of the inspection.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

The inspection of the fostering service was carried out over a nine day period and the inspection process involved reading documentation to include policies, procedures, comment cards, interviewing staff, foster carers and young people and utilising general observational practice. The inspector also met with other professionals who were associated with the service and joined in training and communication sessions to gain information for this report, a summary of which is recorded below.:-

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

The statement of purpose was extremely comprehensive and included full details of how the service had worked to comply with the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and The Fostering Service Regulations 2002. Whilst this information was useful, the document itself appeared very lengthy and may be better split or précised in order to ensure greater accessibility for all who are required to receive it. The Children's Guide had been developed and appeared most useful for its purpose.

SERVICE MANAGEMENT.

The manager of the service held appropriate qualifications and exhibited full knowledge and understanding of child -care and foster care. Records indicated that the service had clear procedures in place in respect of the recruitment process. The overall management arrangements of the service appeared effective with clear procedures in place to monitor and control the day- to- day activities.

SECURING AND PROMOTING WELFARE.

The service identified that they had procedures in place for the assessment of prospective foster carers which included screening systems to ensure that prospective foster carers were given full opportunity to reflect upon the nature and purpose of their actions prior to the pre approval procedure taking place. The inspector noted that training was in place to address issues relating to child protection and anti bullying and foster carers advised that they were given opportunity to attend training, which they stated was now much improved. Foster carers advised that they held the family placement workers in high esteem and were well supported by them, however it was noted that several foster carers felt that the communication systems and information sharing between agencies could be improved to ensure that proper arrangements were in place for all young people accommodated.

RECRUITING, CHECKING, MANAGEING, SUPPORTING & TRAINING FOSTER

CARERS.

Records showed that the agency had robust recruitment and checking procedures in place to include CRB checks and health and safety checklists being renewed every 3 years. Staff files held evidence of all staff being well qualified and experienced in working with children and foster carers. Staff interviewed exhibited good knowledge of their roles and full clarity off the organisation and management structure. Staff training appeared relevant and ongoing. Foster carers advised that they were well supported by the fostering team and that training was offered but not always readily taken up. Training records showed that the agency had developed a training program for carers and had set up an independent training forum in which a needs analysis was taking place to identify general training need. Records also identified that a mandatory post approval -training programme had been introduced with the take up being closely monitored to ensure compliance. Documentation in respect of children and foster carers was appropriately stored according to the regulations although it was noted that not all foster carers were maintaining the security of records kept within the home.

FITNESS OF PREMISES.

The fostering team were based with the Child Care team and staff advised that this had greatly improved opportunities for communication. The premises appeared adequate to provide accommodation for the fostering service and provided car parking, conference facility and ramped access.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS.

The agency was financed via Sefton Local Authority and records showed that there was an appropriate budget in place to meet the needs of the service. Feedback from foster carers was generally positive about the promptness and accuracy of the payments.

FOSTERING PANELS.

The inspector was advised that a fostering panel had been established with panel training being in place to ensure that all panel members understood their remit. The panel undertook the review of foster carers and approved and matched both long and short term foster care. It was noted that 2 members of the fostering panel had recently departed and the agency were in the process of recruiting more members to ensure compliance.

SHORT-TERM BREAKS.

Records showed that the agency worked in close liaison with Children with Disabilities Team and that training had been tailored to meet the specific needs of each carer and young person.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS FOSTER CARERS.

The agency had produced a leaflet for prospective family and friend carers and had arranged for payments, preparation and post approval training to be in place as required.

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:

It was evident to the inspector that Sefton Borough Council's Fostering Service was well organised and managed and operated on a professional level. The inspector found no evidence that the service was substantially failing to satisfy the regulatory requirements.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Regulation Inspector	Lynn Paterson	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Lorraine Maguire	Signature	_____
Date	_____		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	17	FS9	The manager must provide clear policy and relevant training in the circumstances in which restraint may be used, how it is to be used and the recording of this action.	24 th January 2005.
2	17	FS9	The manager must ensure that foster carers are given sufficient information to enable them to provide appropriate care for any child	24 th January 2005
3	17	FS24	The manager must ensure that all foster carers are provided with advice and information to maintain and secure records.	24 th January 2005
4	24	FS30	The manager must ensure that panel membership is in accordance with the requirements of this regulation.	24 th January 2005

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	Fs4	The manager should introduce a policy with regard to any possible conflict of interest for foster carers and the declaration of such interests.

* 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	11
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	11/10/04
Time of Inspection	9.30AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	82

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector pursued the statement of purpose which provided clear and relevant information appertaining to the aims and objectives of the fostering service, however the document itself appeared lengthy and may be better split to ensure greater accessibility for all required to receive it. The inspector noted that work was being carried out on The Children's Guide for it to be produced in an age appropriate form, which the inspector felt was innovative in its entirety. At the time of the inspection the inspector was advised that under age 7 and age 7-10 guides had been issued to carers and placing teams with age 11 plus to follow.

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?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

The inspector held discussion with the manager of the fostering service and viewed staff files and managers self assessment forms to gain evidence for this standard. It was noted that the manager had vast appropriate experience and a professional social work qualification and was undertaking NVQ4/Diploma In Management. Staff and foster carers interviewed advised that they were very satisfied with the manager's professionalism and felt that she had strong leadership qualities. It was also stated that she was supportive, approachable and her management style was transparent and inclusive at all times. Staff advised that in their opinion the manager led by example, a comment that the inspector found most commendable.	
---	--

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?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

The inspector met with the management team and viewed documentation to include pre inspection questionnaire, comment cards and policies and procedures to gain evidence for this standard. Staff interviewed exhibited sound knowledge and understanding of the systems involved with monitoring and controlling the activities of the service and of the mechanisms utilised to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people to include relevant police checks and recording of data.	
---	--

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector interviewed staff, viewed documentation to include case files and policies and procedures to gain evidence for this standard. Staff advised that they were aware that the manager was required to undertake a variety of quality controlled tasks which included checks being made during assessments and initial visits. Documentation showed that the agency had protocols and procedures in place to ensure that the service was managed ethically and had recently developed procedures in relation to children missing from care. The manager advised that additional updated protocols required in line with the new DOH guidance were currently in the consultation process. Staff advised that they had good structured supervision, that their work- loads were monitored and reviewed and they had clear lines of accountability within the team.

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

0

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.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The inspector met with the manager who advised that she had a job description for her remit and was now working within the children schools and families division as the department had been restructured in recent months. The manager displayed strong knowledge of her role and that of others, which could only service to enhance the effective and efficient management of the team. Staff advised that they had clear lines of accountability and advised that the manager would utilise appropriate delegation powers if required.

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

The inspector gained information by reading questionnaires completed by 25 children and young people who were in foster care and discussions and home visits to foster carers. The information gained from the questionnaires indicated that all children and young people asked were satisfied with their foster placements and the care provided by their carers. The inspector visited 12 foster placements and found them all to be of good standard of hygiene and they appeared cosy, warm and comfortable and most suitable for the children and young people placed within. All carers with whom the inspector met presented as having a deep understanding of the needs of young people and were enthusiastic and totally committed to the provision of quality care. Foster carers advised that they had received training in child protection issues and had been provided with a handbook, which they felt gave valuable information to include health and safety issues. Placement workers and foster carers advised that wherever possible need to know information was provided either prior to placement or as the placement commenced.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector observed pre approval training, met with young people and their carers viewed training programmes and activity sheets to gain evidence for this standard. Young people advised that they were able to attend churches of their choice and said that they felt that their carers understood their individual needs and as a consequence valued their diversity. Foster carers basic training during the pre approval stage included sessions on culture, race, equality and children's rights. Agency staff interviewed advised that the assessment process carried out looks at attitudes to diversity and documentation viewed held information to confirm this occurred. The inspector noted that the department had a well-established No Limits award, which recognised the achievement of young people.

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 inspector noted from records that Sefton Council had experienced difficulty in recruiting a sufficient range of carers to afford choices to be made in respect of individual placements. However staff advised that they tried wherever possible to match children with families who they felt were appropriate to their needs. Staff advised also that they continued to utilise The British agencies for Adoption and Fostering Documentation as their assessment tool in respect of the needs of children and young people and also for the assessment of foster carers. Most foster carers stated that they had received sufficient need to know information prior to placement, although 2 carers said that they had taken emergency placements and had not been given full details from the young persons social worker until 2 or 3 days after the commencement of the placement. The inspector noted that at the time of the inspection all young people requiring support of the foster home were accommodated from within Sefton's own resources.		

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
<p>The inspector noted from training records that the preparation training for all prospective foster carers is now compulsory and covers areas relating to safe care, abuse and protection. The inspector attended a preparation group session and noted that the course content was clear and most relevant for its stated purpose. The inspector noted that the agency had established a robust training programme and records indicated that there was now a much higher take up rate however it must be noted that more carers should be involved in post approval training appertaining to Child Protection issues. Foster carers advised that they felt that the foster carers manual was useful but they stated that they were not aware of their obligations in respect of the recording of information.</p> <p>The inspector noted that the agency had updated policies with regard to the prevention of bullying and permitted forms of control and restraint, however the restraint policy did not appear to give sufficient information to enable foster carers to have full knowledge and understanding on the guiding principles surrounding restraint. As previously stated foster carers advised that they were not always furnished with sufficient information prior to placement to enable them to care for children and young people in a fully appropriate manner.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector met with foster carers and young people and read comment cards and case files to gain evidence for this standard. Records indicated that contact played a large part in the care planning process and that staff supported and encouraged this to take place. Files held details of foster carers facilitating in transport arrangements, as did family support workers as appropriate. The inspector met with several foster carers who demonstrated their understanding of the need for contact to occur and it was noted that some carers enabled contact to take place within their homes where appropriate. Foster placement agreements also identified that importance was given to family contact.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector met with young people, staff and foster carers, read comment cards, policies and procedures and utilised case tracking methods to gain evidence for this standard. Young people advised that in general they felt that their views were listened to and foster carers interviewed appeared to reinforce this. Young people advised that the information contained in their packs gave them details of how to complain and access independent visiting and support if required. Foster carers advised that they had received training and support to enable them to develop listening skills and as a consequence be responsive to young persons needs. Case files tracked held information to identify that all young people were able to contribute to their review.

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?**

3

The inspector noted that a nurse was in place to specifically oversee the health-needs of looked after children. Foster carers advised that health and hygiene training was provided for all carers and carers were supported to ensure that all young people were registered with the appropriate health service provider. Training records indicated that training was ongoing for foster carers in relation to drug awareness, sexual health and information with regard to HIV and AIDS. Agency staff and foster carers advised that all necessary information appertaining to health care needs were provided although this was initially a verbal process in respect of emergency placements.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector viewed educational policies, met with foster carers and young people and utilised case tracking methods to gain evidence for this standard. It was noted that the agency supported educational initiatives and Sefton Educational charter, a copy of which had been provided to all foster carers. This document detailed the promotion of educational needs. Foster carers interviewed advised that they had knowledge of personal education plans and stated that they had awareness of how to assist young people with basic literacy and numeracy skills. Young people advised that an educational support worker was in place to assist with educational needs however some concerns were expressed about the provision of home computers as it was felt that the system of distribution was unfair. The inspector addressed this issue at the time of the inspection and was advised that this was due to a resource issue which hopefully should be resolved in the future.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector read care files, perused documentation and spoke with young people and foster carers to gain evidence for this standard. It was stated that the Local Authority utilised the services of a very experienced leaving care team and foster carers advised that they were being offered more training to assist them in the transition period when the young person moved into adulthood. Agency staff advised that placement plans were successful and detailed anticipated future developments to include independent living.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector viewed the recruitment and selection documentation, staff files and job specifications and met with management and staff to gain evidence for this standard. It was noted that all the social work staff who worked with foster carers were qualified and experienced in childcare prior to their work within the fostering and adoption team. All staff interviewed exhibited strong professional values and full understanding of the relevant policies and protocols pertinent to looked after children. Staff files showed that appropriate checks had been carried out for all newly appointed staff to ensure compliance with this standard.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

0

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 inspector looked through the pre inspection questionnaire, staff files, supervision records and spoke with staff to gain evidence for this standard. The inspector was advised that the team manager and assistant team manager of the fostering service were responsible for the supervising social workers, the marketing officer and Placement Support Workers. Staff advised that the management structure was clear and consistent and the culture was one of openness and trust. Records showed that workload management was also managed effectively. Staff advised that the clerical support to the team was most valued and the inspector can advise that she was greatly assisted throughout the inspection by competent and efficient administration staff. Clerical staff advised that they were supervised from within their own administration group by the team manager and assistant team manager and all staff interviewed advised that supervision was pre arranged, time limited and uninterrupted. The inspector noted that the post of marketing officer was seen as a most positive development to the team and discussion with the marketing officer showed that she had devised innovative methods by way of her specialist marketing knowledge and as a consequence the agency had seen a greatly increased response from prospective foster carers.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

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

As stated in standard 16, the agency had employed a specialist marketing officer who had a specific remit to promote fostering within the borough and increase the numbers of foster carers. It was noted that the marketing officer had produced a strategy which she and others monitored and reviewed to measure success or failure. Records viewed during the inspection showed that the agency had clear protocols in place to throughput enquiries from prospective foster carers and documentation showed that the preparation process included an intensive 2 day training event with the provision of an information pack which the group participants advised was seen as a useful reference guide for the future. Files viewed showed that the assessment process for prospective carers and the approval process, had been carried out by suitably qualified and experienced people who had maintained the records to a good standard. Foster carers interviewed advised that they felt that the assessment process had been a positive process for them as it enabled them to reflect upon their own thoughts about their future care practices. Staff advised that current staffing levels were adequate to enable them to manager their current workloads.

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**

Staff interviewed advised that they understood the local authority personnel policies and procedures and they exhibited awareness of equal opportunity issues and Whistle Blowing policy. Foster carers advised that information in respect of Whistle Blowing was included in the foster carers handbook. Records showed that each foster carer was supported by a supervising social worker who made regular visits to the home, both announced and unannounced with the frequency of these visits being varied as to need. Foster carers advised that the out of hours support had been increased since the previous inspection with teleconferencing and support groups now being in place. The inspector noted that an out of hours service was also available from qualified social workers via the Local Authority emergency duty team. Documentation seen showed that the service provided a comprehensive insurance policy for carers and carers interviewed advised that they had full awareness of the content.

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**

Training programmes and staff files held information to evidence that staff training was an ongoing process within the team. Staff advised that they had received good induction and were kept up to date with all relevant information appertaining to any new developments with the fostering arena. Foster carers advised that they had been involved in joint training forums with social work staff and the inspector observed this occurring when joining a training session being held in the borough at the time of the inspection.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

Staff interviewed advised that they were well supported by their line manager through both formal and informal supervision. It was noted that all staff files held relevant appraisal and supervision records and staff stated that they had clear role definitions. Minutes of staff meetings evidenced that meetings were held on a regular basis with agenda and minute being available on file.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The inspector met with foster carers and read care records, comment cards, policies and procedures and the foster carers handbook to gain evidence for this standard. Carers advised that they were well supported by their supervising social worker and other colleagues from the fostering service.

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**

Foster carers advised that they had benefited from the support of the teleconferencing system and other foster carers who provided a mentoring system which utilised more experienced carers assisting the less experienced to develop their skills. Foster carers also advised that their handbook gave guidance and advice with issues relating to allegations against carers being dealt with and recorded in the handbook. Agency staff advised that information and policy frameworks appertaining to a foster carer being removed from the foster care register, are currently being revised and it is anticipated that the policy framework will be included in the foster carers handbook and the foster care agreement as a good practice issue.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The inspector met with foster carers and attended pre-approval preparation training and a meeting chaired by an independent body, held to discuss foster carers training needs. Foster carers advised that they felt that the preparation training was of a good quality and helped them to reflect upon their own value base especially in the areas of anti-discriminatory practice. The inspector noted that an independent reviewing officer had completed an overhaul of the foster carers training needs and that this had assisted the agency to collate and assess training priorities for the future. It was noted also that foster carers received recognition of their attendance at training by way of certificates which they commented made them feel valued. Staff advised that it is the intention of the agency to introduce a mandatory training programme with the take up being closely monitored to ensure compliance. Foster carers advised that the views of their own children in respect of training had been requested, however this did not appear to be effective due to lack of cooperation from the young people themselves.

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

The inspector read care files, records and documentation, used case tracking methods and met with staff, foster carers and administration staff to gain evidence for this standard. The inspector noted that the placing social workers were responsible for the maintenance of foster children's case records whilst the supervising social workers held responsibility for the foster carers records. It was noted that children's records were maintained to a high standard with a file sampling system being in place carried out by managers to ensure quality assurance issues. However foster carers interviewed advised that they were unsure about recording mechanisms involved with the recording of events and when asked about safe storage of confidential information the inspector was given various answers, none of which was consistent. Foster carers advised that they had on occasions been left with records appertaining to young people who had moved on. The management team of the fostering service advised that it is the intention of the service to initiate clear recording protocols for carers with appropriate training and to ensure that chronologies are incorporated onto carer's files. The agency provided information for the inspector, which identified that they maintained a register of all foster carers and children in placement.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector noted that all records were kept in accordance with regulations to include locked cabinets and keypad access to the premises. The inspector was advised that panel members had been given instruction/information on the safe storage of confidential information. Records and foster carers files seen at the time of the inspection appeared clear relevant and up to date and all administrative staff interviewed exhibited strong professionalism and good knowledge of the maintenance and storage of information.

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 £

X

Maximum £

X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector noted that the entrance to the premises of the fostering service could only be accessed via a key-code and that reception staff were on hand to allow entry. The premises was protected by a very visible security system. It was noted also that a signing in system was utilised at all times. The building accommodated the fostering and adoption service and some placing social workers and appeared to provide adequate space to allow the staff to work and store documentation. The inspector was advised that staff that the placement of the Permanence Team alongside the fostering and adoption team had improved the opportunities for communication but they felt they would all be assisted by an increase in the number of computers available for their use and a general overhaul of the current IT system.

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 service was part of a Local Authority department and was funded accordingly. The management team advised that an appropriate budget was in place to meet the needs of the service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

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

The service was part of a Local Authority Department and was funded accordingly. The manager advised that she had responsibility for a devolved budget, which was recoded and maintained to a high standard.

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

Documentation showed that foster carer allowances were detailed and recorded and all foster carers interviewed had understanding of the payments, which they said were generally accurate and on time. Staff advised that the service was working towards streamlining the system of additional payments to foster carers to ensure equity and to hold a centralised budget for this purpose.

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

The inspector read documentation and held discussion with the fostering service management team but was unable to observe panel or meet with panel members due to the timing of the inspection. The management team advised that a panel had been established and members were keen and enthusiastic and held regular meetings. They had also been provided with management information and had been in receipt of training. The inspector was also advised that all panel members were child centred and experienced in their respective roles and represented a cross section of both experience and background. Records indicated that panel members had received training to include workshops of form E and form F. It was noted however that it would be necessary to appoint 2 additional panel members due to some recent changes of membership.

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?
---------------------------	---------------

Documentation viewed showed that the fostering service worked in close liaison with Children with disabilities team and had undertaken training, which was tailored to meet the specific need of each carer/child. Policies and guidance pursued indicated that this scheme provided short term breaks for children with disabilities in particular and that foster carers worked in partnership with parents to ensure a consistent approach to care provision wherever possible. The fostering service stated that they had a shortfall in the numbers of short break carers but they hoped to resolve this with the input of the marketing officer.	
--	--

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?	3
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The inspector noted from documentation and discussions that family and friend carers were paid at the same rate and had access to full training and support from the fostering service. It was noted also that the family placement team were involved in the initial visits to potential carers to give guidance and advice. Care records identified that the carer assessments were currently undertaken by child -care teams and therefore could produce inconsistencies. The fostering staff advised that all assessments are reviewed at the fostering panel so that consistent standards could be maintained and that ongoing monitoring of quality and alternative resource/outcomes were identified for example Residence orders with financial support. Family and friend carers advised that they had received advice and support from the fostering service, who in their opinion, were helpful and showed understanding of the family situation.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 11/10/04 to 21/10/04 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

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

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

YES

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Mr Charlie Barker of Sefton Council Fostering & Adoption 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 Mr Charlie Barker
Signature _____
Designation Responsible Individual
Date 21/12/04

Or

D.3.2 I Mr Charlie Barker of Sefton Council Fostering & Adoption 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 Mr Charlie Barker
Signature _____
Designation Responsible Individual
Date 21/12/04

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

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

S0000056238.V147652.R02

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source