



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Rutland County Council Fostering Services**

Catmose

Oakham

Rutland

LE15 6HP

2nd February 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**

Rutland County Council Fostering Services

**Address**

Catmose, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HP

**Local Authority Manager**

Katie Arnold

**Tel No:**

01572 722577

**Address**

Catmose, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HP

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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**

30/01/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		2nd February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Trisha Gibbs	071373
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Ms. Katie Arnold	

**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 Rutland County Council Fostering Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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)

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.**

Rutland County Council foster care service is a small and developing one, reflecting the need and size of Rutland. At the time of Inspection six potential new foster carers were due to attend an introduction to fostering course.

In February 2004 Rutland County Council supported seven foster carers. Two of these are kinship carers, two respite carers and three approved for long and short-term placements, bridging, emergency, respite parent and child, children with disabilities and preparation for independence placements.

A supervising senior social worker works on a part time basis and is the designated Manager, undertaking the overall day-to-day management of the foster care service. This person oversees, develops and supports the service and all of the carers. An additional permanent supervising social worker post was established and filled on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003. Currently this post is vacant and has been advertised. In addition, as a result of the first Inspection a dedicated (18.5 hours) administrative assistant has been appointed to support the foster care team.

Other functions of the service, i.e. assessment of new carers, some training, and the management of the Fostering Panel, are provided by Compass, an independent Children's Service Agency.

## **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 positive report reflects the good and developing foster care service provided by Rutland County Council and recognises the need for an adequate staff team to support this service. Eight good practice recommendations and no requirements have been made.

### **Fitness to Provide and the Management of the Fostering Service. Standards 1-5**

Rutland County Council Fostering Service is managed and provided by appropriately qualified staff. The named Manager of the service is now undertaking National Vocational Qualification level 4 Management. There are very good systems in place for monitoring the performance of the service. Senior managers and elected members are provided with regular progress reports.

### **Securing and Promoting Welfare. Standards 6-14.**

Rutland County Council fostering service provides a good range of training, supervision and information to carers to assist them in the provision of safe placements. Carers are made aware of the need to appropriately safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people placed with them. The fostering service has been recommended to provide more written information within the Carer's Handbook on the management of challenging behaviour to consolidate training already provided. Health and Education duties as identified through the Looked After Children systems, are seen to be taken seriously by the foster care service.

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers. Standards 15-23**

Rutland County Council adheres to clear recruitment procedures for its staff and carers. Managements and support systems are in place and carers confirmed that they received a high level of support and good training opportunities. A recommendation has been made with regard to providing a policies and procedures refresher session for carers. Currently the full complement of staff is one full time senior supervising social worker/Manager, of which one half is currently vacant and being recruited to, plus the 18.5 hours administrative assistant who was appointed in June 2003.

### **Records and fitness of premises. Standards 24-26**

Records are very well organised and maintained, Security and confidentiality are taken seriously. The premises are suitable for purpose.



### **Financial requirements. Standards 27-29**

Rutland County Council fostering service complies with these Standards.

### **Fostering Panels. Standard 30**

The fostering service Fostering Panel is well managed and chaired with appropriate membership. The Panel has reviewed its function and processes this year and fully recognises the quality and assurance responsibilities required of it. A recommendation has been made for the Panel Terms of Reference to be developed and expanded.

### **Short Term Breaks and Family and Friends as carers. Standards 31-32**

The fostering service provides good training for carers to assist with the provision of respite care and actively support two kinship care arrangements.

### **Questionnaires.**

5 placing social workers returned 7 questionnaires in respect of different placements, and 5 carers returned questionnaires. Most social workers said that carers looked after children very well or quite well, and worked well with the child's family. All said that the fostering service worked very well with placing social workers.

Carers said that that they felt very satisfied and one said quite satisfied with support provided by the service. They felt well informed, listened to and consulted.

Only 2 out of Rutland's 14 Looked After Children returned questionnaires and said they were happy with their placement. Few questionnaires were circulated to children because some were too young to respond and 3 are placed with independent 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:

YES

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

**Action is being taken by the 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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      Trisha Gibbs      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Locality Manager**      Sue Shaw      **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 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	
			None	

### 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	FS1	<b>The fostering service is recommended to produce a simple visual leaflet for the benefit of younger children being placed in foster care.</b>
2	FS6	<b>It is recommended that the fostering service include in the Carer's Handbook a statement about Safe Care and the Health and Safety policy.</b>
3	FS9	<b>It is recommended that written guidelines on carer recording be available within the Carer's Handbook.</b>

4	FS9	<p>It is recommended that the fostering service extend the guidelines on Punishments in the Carer's Handbook to provide more advice and strategies, on the management of challenging and difficult behaviour. This could link in with the training already provided.</p> <p>Currently training is not provided on restraint, however the foster care service is recommended to provide training and information with regard to 'safe hold' techniques.</p>
5	FS11	<p>It is recommended that the fostering service include in the Carer's Handbook information about Children's Rights and the need for consultation with children.</p>
6	FS22	<p>The fostering service is recommended to provide a refresher or introduction session to carers on its fostering policies and procedures at e.g. a carer group meeting.</p>
7	FS23	<p>The fostering service is recommended to compile an individual risk assessment in respect a placement identified at the time of Inspection. The fostering service is also recommended to consider precedents for future placement risk assessments.</p>
8	FS30	<p>The fostering service is recommended to develop the Fostering Panel Policies and Procedures/Terms of Reference.</p>

\* 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	4
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	YES
• 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	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	02/02/04
Time of Inspection	09.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	26

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?**

**3**

The Statement of Purpose for the Rutland Foster Care Service is concise and informative and fully complies with the specification of this Standard. The Statement of Purpose has been circulated to elected members, carers and all relevant staff. The document is updated on a monthly basis by the fostering service Manager.

A new Children's Guide has been designed in close consultation with children who have been placed within the fostering service. The leaflet is brief, simple and clear. Children are also given the more detailed British Association of Adoption and Fostering book for Looked After Children, 'Fostering, what it is and what it means'.

The new Children's Guide would be appropriate for children who can read and for young people. **It is recommended that a similar, more visual leaflet be drawn up for the benefit of younger children.**

## 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

The responsible individual, who also manages and oversees the foster care service, has a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, a Certificate in Child Protection, and recently graduated with a B.A. Honours through the Open University. She has approximately 30 years experience in Social Work. Her title is that of Senior Supervising Social Worker, however for the purpose of this report she is referred to as the Manager of Rutland foster care service.

The Manager of the foster care service has now registered to commence her National Vocational Qualification level 4 in Management.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

**Standard met?**

3

The personnel file of the Manager of the foster care service was seen during the last Inspection in February 2003. Copies of relevant qualifications and appropriate references were in place. Criminal Records Bureau clearance was received in June 2003.

The Manager was subject to a Fit Person interview with the National Care Standards Commission on Monday 12 May 2003 and fully satisfied the criteria for this.

## 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

Rutland County Council foster care service is small in scale. The children's services teams who both commission and provide the service operate from the same work base, therefore the communication of information between all key members of staff is excellent.

Documents seen by the Inspection Officer indicated clear systems, policies and procedures in place for managing, reviewing and evaluating the service. Reports about the activity of the fostering service are represented annually for the attention of senior managers and elected members, in addition to other reports provided for the Head of Children's Services and the Fostering Panel.

The fostering service Manager noted that a new database had been installed and that this has improved the quality of regular management reports.

Statements were available detailing the agencies payment policies with regard to various foster care placements, and a breakdown of the service costs was also documented. An estimation of the allocation of carer allowances is contained in the Fostering Service Procedure Manual.

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

1

**Death of a child placed with foster parents.**

0

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

0

**Serious illness or accident of a child.**

0

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

0

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

0

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

0

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

0

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

1

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

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

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

3

There are clearly defined roles, for the small staff team who operate Rutland's foster care service, supported by job descriptions and details of their delegated duties. A supervising social worker for the fostering service recently left, and this has significantly increased the responsibilities of the Manager. The vacancy was initially unsuccessfully advertised, and on the second attempt has resulted in one candidate being interviewed in the near future.

The Manager works 18 ½ hours a week and in her absence the Head of Children's Service deputises, dealing with fostering issues and referrals. Currently during the days of the week when the Manager is not available, the Head of Service must be accessible. While this does not usually impact to the detriment of the service it was acknowledged that the Head of Service also has a range of other responsibilities within the children's service and may not always be readily available to respond immediately to a situation. It is however also noted that the Head of Service is accessible by pager or telephone if out of the office, and only unavailable at times of Annual Leave and sickness when alternative arrangements are made.

An Emergency Duty Team provides an out of hours' service. Carers have the home telephone number of the Head of Service and the mobile telephone number of the supervising social worker.

## 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?
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A comprehensive Health and Safety assessment is undertaken, against a risk assessment checklist, as part of the new foster carer assessment process. All new carers must complete a personal safe care policy. One carer's file contained an uncompleted personal safe care policy, however the Manager confirmed that the previous supervising social worker had undertaken all of the work with the carer for this prior to leaving. A review of Health and Safety in carer's homes is also undertaken at the time of, and as part of, the carers Annual Review, chaired by the Head of Children's Services. Evidence of this process was seen on Carers' files. The Head of Service as part of the review visits Carers' homes, inspects children's bedrooms and discusses Health and safety issues.

All children placed with the fostering service have their own bedroom.

The Manager noted that carers are also provided with the Fostering Network Safe Care book, in addition to them receiving training and supervision in the provision of safe care. All carers are provided with monthly, recorded supervision sessions and Health and Safety files. Placing social workers are also aware of their Health and Safety responsibilities when placing children.

Carers also receive two unannounced visits per year at which time Health and Safety issues are noted and discussed.

While noting the very good systems in place to monitor Health and Safety issues, **it is recommended that the fostering service include in the Carer's Handbook a statement about Safe Care and the Health and Safety policy.**

**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 service has a clear Equal Opportunity Policy statement, and principles that are represented and embodied consistently in key documents, including Statement of Purpose, Foster Carer Practice agreement, and Placement Principles, that form part of the Fostering Service Manual.

Training on Anti Discriminatory Practice, Introduction to Special Needs, Mental Health of Looked After Children and Autism are among some of the courses foster carers attend. The Manager confirmed that diversity and equality issues are integral to all training provided.

Discussions with the Manager and carers, and also the file tracking exercise indicated that all children currently placed are matched as far as possible, and their special needs accommodated.

**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**

Rutland's child-care services, and foster care workers all operate from one base. When a placement referral is necessary, placing social workers are able to efficiently share key information about care plans and needs with the foster care Manager for the consideration of an appropriate placement.

Referral documents and other placement material seen by the Inspection Officer on carer and children's files indicated that the quality of this information continues to be very good, and that this contributes to careful preparation for the placement of a child, whenever possible. There was good evidence of a planned introduction to a new foster home.

Although there are currently no trans-racial or trans-cultural placements within the Rutland County Council foster care service, the carers recruited and approved have received training in awareness of these issues. The service does however provide respite, day and overnight care for children with special needs and carers receive training for this. The service, still relatively new, is currently unable to provide placements for more challenging young people who are placed with independent agencies. As the carers become more experienced it is anticipated that these placements will be more easily accommodated within the service.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The foster care service has a range of good systems and documents in place to ensure that carers have awareness of Child Protection issues and procedures, and their own role and responsibility for protection of the children placed with them. The Manager of the service has considerable experience in Child Protection and a Post Qualification in Child Protection Social Work.

Carers confirmed that they have received training in Area Child Protection Committee Procedures and Recognition of Abuse. They also said that they had received training on Abuse and Trauma. One carer at the carer group meeting told the Inspector that this training had been invaluable in helping her understand and work with children placed. Carers are also trained in the management of difficult behaviour and to be aware of the links between abuse and behaviour.

Carers are expected to maintain a diary/log in respect of the children placed with them and these are seen and discussed at their monthly supervision sessions. It was evident from a general discussion with carers that the quality and of content of these varied. **It is recommended that written guidelines on carer recording be available within the Carers Handbook. These could include examples of what should be recorded in diary/logs and how best to record factual information.**

All Key documents include statements or details about Rutland's policy and procedures on Child Protection. These include the Foster Care Handbook, The Foster Service Procedural Manual, and Safe Care Policy for carers, and Missing from Home Procedures. Carers are also provided with very good guidelines on Acceptable and Unacceptable Punishments.

**It is recommended that the guidelines on Punishments in the Carer's Handbook be extended to provide more advice and strategies on the management of challenging and difficult behaviour. This could link in with the training already provided.**

**Currently training is not provided on restraint, however the foster care service is recommended to provide training and information with regard to 'safe hold' techniques should there be a need for them to restrain a child where there is immediate danger of personal injury to himself or herself or another person.**

Records of Allegations and Complaints are maintained by the service and the Inspection Officer looked these. There was one incident involving a carer recorded for the past twelve months, and this was appropriately discussed at a strategy meeting.

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

100

%

**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 inclusion of parents and maintenance of family and parental contact is detailed within the foster care service's Placement Principles document.

It was evident again at this Inspection from speaking with carers and reading records on case files, including placement agreements, that Rutland County Council gives high priority to ensuring that safe family contact is promoted and maintained between children Looked After and their families and parents. There are very good examples of the service and carers supporting and prioritising contact.

Carers are, according to placement plans, and through written guidance and training, made aware of the need for them to support children's contact with families whenever possible and appropriate. Carers routinely assist in collating photographs and other relevant records for the children's Life Story work process. Evidence of this was seen during the Inspectors visits to carer's homes.

Contact between children and their families is arranged and supported during the week or weekend when deemed appropriate.

**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?**

4

The Manager confirmed that all children placed in foster care are provided with information about their rights and as to how they can access a Children's Rights Officer. The Children's Rights service is commissioned from National Children's Homes and the Children's Rights Officer visits all children over five years old within 4 weeks of them entering care and contacts carers of under 5's. The Children's Rights Officer thereafter sends regular communications to children. Parents and other significant people are consulted about, and/or are invited to children's planning and review meetings. Evidence of this was seen on file.

Although foster carers also demonstrated to the Inspection Officer an awareness of why children are consulted and how they should support this process, **it is recommended that the Carer's Handbook contain confirmation about Children's Rights and the need for consultation.**

An elected member, who also sits on the Fostering Panel, sees all Looked After Children regularly in her Corporate Parenting capacity, and she confirmed this to the Inspector.

It was also noted that placing social workers also routinely consult with the children they place, formally and informally, and provide feedback to the foster care staff easily since they work within the same office.



Rutland Social Services Children and Families Team have devised an excellent Parent/Carer Customer Satisfaction Survey and the Manager of the fostering service is looking at how the information from these can be incorporated into monitoring systems for the fostering service.

All Complaints documents for carers and children contain clear contact details for the National Care Standards Commission.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

4

Evidence on carer files and through Looked After Children documentation demonstrated that Rutland County Council was fulfilling its statutory duties to the children placed in the foster care service. Health and Medical needs were clearly recorded and addressed in key planning meetings. Health care information, written for children/young people is provided to all carers to give to children as and when appropriate.

Paediatric First Aid training is provided for all carers who receive a three-year certificate for this Carers keep records of any medication administered (prescribed or over the counter) on a specially designed form and this is monitored through supervision.

The foster care service, along with other nearby Local Authority foster care services will be piloting a new medical/health care passport for Looked After Children that contains health, education and medical information. Rutland will be piloting the Medication and Treatment form as part of the scheme.

Children remain registered with their own General Practitioner whenever possible and practicable. The service also has available, for advice and consultation, a named nurse.

Foster carers are provided with general guidelines on Healthcare and the foster care Manager confirmed that the foster care service maintained good links with a range of Healthcare professionals.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

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

4

Rutland County Council foster care service provides all Looked After Children with a computer and educational soft wear. Rutland has also produced an excellent comprehensive Personal Education Plan pro forma for the recording and of educational data and targets with regard to Looked After Children, and this pro forma includes a facility for monitoring these and for children to represent their own views. Evidence of Personal Education Plans was seen on children's files. Carers are encouraged to take an active interest and participate in planning for education.

Carers are provided with training on the secondary education SATS (Standardised Assessment Tests) system and are encouraged to attend school meetings and liaise with teachers. Carers spoken to were able to demonstrate that they maintained a real interest in children's educational development. One carer had gone to commendable lengths to transport a young person between school, respite and foster placement.

No children placed within the service are currently suspended or excluded from school.

The Carer's Handbook outlines the authorities expectations of carers in relation to the educational needs of children placed with them.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

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

3

Foster carers receive in their Carer's Handbook information and guidelines for the purpose of preparing children to leave care, whether this is the ending of a placement or progression to semi or fully independent living. There is one half time post dedicated to Leaving Care in the Children and Family services team.

One carer said she was teaching a 15-year-old young person placed with her to do his own ironing, and that she encourages other independence living skills.

There are no children ready to leave the care system into independent living at this time, however the Manager confirmed that the Pathway Plan would be utilised on such an occasion.

## 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

Rutland Social Services Department operates a clear recruitment procedure for the appointment of all childcare staff that meets the requirements of this Standard. The Manager confirmed that following last years Inspection, one reference would always be followed up by a telephone enquiry.

The assessment function of prospective foster carers is commissioned by Rutland Social Services Department from an independent agency. The contract between the Department and Agency was seen on the last Inspection by the Inspection Officer and note was made of confirmation of staff Criminal Records Bureau checks. The Independent agency in question is also the recipient of National Care Standards Commission Inspections.

There have been no new recruits to the fostering service since the last Inspection and one member of the team has recently left. There is now one supervising social worker (Manager) in the team and an administrative worker. The figure of 3 below includes the Head of Children's Services.

Total number of staff of the agency:

3

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

1

### 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 Rutland foster care service at the time of this Inspection was delivered coordinated and supported exclusively by the Manager of the service. (i.e. Senior Supervising Social Worker) She receives regular supervision from the Head of Children' Services. The Head of Service also covers in her absence. This arrangement is clearly outlined in a number of key documents seen by the Inspection Officer and provided to all relevant others.

Last year a part time temporary Social Worker was in post for the purpose of developing a carer recruitment plan and to produce a children's leaflet, up until the end of March 2003.

From April this was confirmed as 18.5 supervising social worker/manager post. She has now left and a replacement is now being recruited. The recruitment drive was unsuccessful on the first attempt and has been repeated. **See Standard 17**

The assessment of foster carers is commissioned from an independent fostering agency. This agency to date has received positive reports following Inspection. The chair of the Fostering Panel confirmed that the Panel would now be more actively monitoring the quality of assessments.

Separate and joint training is provided to Social Workers and carers and records of training were seen at the time of the Inspection.

The service currently has 18.5 hours dedicated administrative support. The administrative worker and the foster service Manager work closely together to ensure that new enquiries from prospective carers are followed up swiftly. There is a good level of communication between the children's services team and fostering service workers, since they share the same accommodation.

The Manager confirmed that all fostering service staff are routinely provided with the required documents, policies and procedures at the time of their appointment.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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Rutland County Council foster care service continues to be a relatively new and developing service. Last years Inspection acknowledged a very good standard of service delivery over a short period of time, but noted that the task of overseeing the service and of meeting the needs of a growing group of carers (pre and post approval) was a challenging one for the Manager that could barely be maintained on a part time basis.

It was confirmed at this Inspection that Rutland County Council are recruiting for a permanent part time social work post for the fostering service and if successful this will give the service one whole supervising social worker/manager, and one 18.5 administrative assistant, in addition to the Head of Service.

The carer recruitment drive led by the previous worker was a positive one and has resulted in six new sets of carers attending the Choosing to Foster training course starting this month. It is possible that, even with the new part time post, the fostering team (i.e. equivalent to one supervising social worker) will be stretched to manage, provide, and support a service with potentially thirteen sets of carers.

The assessment process for the approval of new carers is made clear to them and detailed in writing to them. The foster service team sends out information packs and undertakes home visits. Choosing to Foster sessions are then provided, and an independent assessor subsequently undertakes the assessment function. All checks, references, and F.1 reports are completed 2 weeks before attendance at the Fostering Panel. Evidence of this process

and assessment material was seen on carer files.

**It was again evident during the Inspection that there is an urgent need for the Manager of the foster care service to receive additional social worker support in order for the service to continue to operate and develop. It was also however acknowledged that Rutland County Council have been endeavouring to recruit another part time permanent supervising social work post to rectify this situation.**

**Pending the appointment to the supervising senior social worker vacancy an additional sessional worker has been appointed to assist with training.**

**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?**

**4**

Carers spoken to during the Inspection were unanimous in their confirmation of support provided to them by the Rutland foster care service. The nature of this support is presented in more detail in Standard 21. Carers said that they received prompt responses to requests for advice or assistance from foster care staff. Files also gave evidence to this.

All carers receive a high standard of supervision on a monthly basis from the fostering service Manager. Carers said that they valued this. They also noted that on occasions of crises or emergency they receive increased supervision and support, and were able to cite good examples of this happening. Out of hours support is always available.

The Head of Service routinely chairs all annual reviews, following the first 6-month review that returns to the Fostering Panel. The outcomes of all reviews are presented to the Panel.

The Manager and carers confirmed that carers are aware of whistle blowing principles and procedures, although carers were unfamiliar with the term 'whistle blowing'.

Carers are systematically consulted about placements they have provided and asked to evaluate support received from the service and from social workers.

Carers also meet as a group regularly and all have access to computers. This assists with their active communication with each other and with the service.

A range of Health and Safety policies are available to through the County Council to staff and carers.

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality-training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The Manager has attended a range of courses over the last year. She noted that she has attended the Area Child Protection Committee, Working Together course, in addition to Child Protection training for Managers, Project management and Budget training.</p> <p>Carers are provided with a comprehensive selection of induction training, including Communicating with Children, Children’s Rights, Setting Boundaries, and Allegations of Abuse. Carers said that this really helped them to prepare for the fostering experience.</p> <p>The County Council provides Induction for all new employees.</p> <p>Foster carers confirmed to the Inspection Officer that the training offered to them was very relevant to the task they undertake. Carer training is charted through the year and is evaluated on an annual basis at their annual review, at which time future training is identified. Evidence of this process was seen on carer files.</p> <p>The Manager confirmed that staff training is also considered and evaluated at their annual appraisal.</p> <p>The foster care service Manager noted again this year that training is very much tailored to individual carer’s needs and that it is not always possible to plan for group training.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Rutland County Council holds Investors in People status and employees receive structured supervision and appraisal regularly.</p> <p>Clear job descriptions are available and in place for fostering service staff. Rutland County Council corporate policies and procedures, in addition to the Children’s Services policies and procedures are provided for the staff team.</p>		

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

4

There is a substantial Procedural Manual for the operation of the Rutland County Council foster care service. This includes a section on the Management and Review of Foster Carers, and a section that identifies support systems for Foster Carers, i.e. Rutland's strategy for working with and supporting carers.

Carers are provided with a Carer's Handbook with supporting information. The Handbook is concise and accessible. The service has been commended on the clarity and range of information provided in both of the Manual and Handbook. The service has also, within this report, been recommended to develop the Carer's Handbook with some additional guidelines and clarification on different aspects of the fostering task. There should be scope for this on an ongoing basis.

Clear and well-documented annual review reports are maintained in carer files and were seen by the Inspection Officer. These were comprehensive and evidenced good consultation with all relevant individuals, including children. Ample evidence was also available of appropriate consultation and communication between placing social workers and the foster care service Manager.

Carers meet regularly as a group, and during this Inspection provided very positive feedback to the Inspector about the support received by the fostering service generally and specifically from the fostering Manager and Head of Children's Services. They were confident that help would be provided to them on a 24 hourly basis.

Files indicated a good level of communication between placing social worker and 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 all receive and sign a clearly written Foster Care Agreement that fully complies with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2001. Copies of these were seen on carer's files. The Carer's Handbook and Fostering Procedures Manual are provided to all carers. **Some carers were less familiar than others about some of the fostering policies and procedures and the service is recommended to provide a refresher or introduction to these at e.g. a carer group meeting.**

Foster carer files contained good evidence of regular formal recorded supervision from the fostering Manager, covering all aspects of their role and responsibility, in addition to two unannounced visits a year.

The service provides clear guidance to staff and carers and about how it will respond to complaints, and investigations into allegations and how independent support for carers in these situations can be accessed. Records are maintained on Complaints and Allegations. These were looked at during the Inspection.

**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**

As indicated in evidencing previous Standards, Rutland foster care service provides pre-approval and induction training for all foster carers. This training fully meets the requirements of this Standard, evidenced during this Inspection through documentation, carer files and interviews, and staff records.

The Manager, with a social worker colleague and other contributors, provides the Choosing to Foster Training sessions. The trainers subsequently complete written evaluations reports for assessing social workers. Carers also provide their own feedback about the training.

The fostering service produces a Training Plan for each year. Training is provided internally and externally. Although the Manager has indicated to the Inspection Officer that as more carers join the service, a more structured training programme will be provided, this still has not been possible, partly due to numbers and needs of carers and also to the shortage of fostering staff. Two carers are undertaking National Vocational Qualification level 3, Caring for Children and Young People and hope to complete this year.

Carers indicated to the Inspector that their training needs were responded to on an individual basis, to both develop skills and address weaknesses, and two immediate examples of this happening were available at the time of Inspection. Records are maintained on who attends each training provision.

Training on Safe Care is provided to carers, and all families complete a Family Policy on Safe Care. Carers' children are consulted at the time of annual reviews. It was noted by one carer at the time of the Carers' group meeting that it is possible for Carers' children to feel 'left out' or marginalised, especially in kinship care arrangements, and the fostering service should be mindful of this.

It was noted during the file tracking exercise that a teenage boy was placed for regular weekend respite stays with a family who had younger children. Given the nature and details of the circumstances, although the fostering service referral form considers risk elements, **the fostering service is recommended to compile an individual risk assessment in respect of the placement. The fostering service is also recommended to consider precedents for future placement risk assessments.**



## 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?	3
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Rutland County Councils Child Care Procedural Manual contains good detailed guidelines on record keeping and policy guidelines on case recording. All case records are monitored and audited by the Head of Service. The Fostering Procedural manual also contains details about case records relating to foster carers.

Carers again indicated that they were provided with sufficient and appropriate information about the children placed with them, and are supported to actively participate in life story work activity both in provision of materials and also in training sessions. Guidelines for doing this are provided in the Carer's Handbook. Carers are consulted about and included in the child care planning and reviewing and helped through training and supervision to understand this process.

The Foster Service Procedural Manual includes a Confidentiality policy that outlines the principles of confidentiality and how information should be recorded, stored shared and maintained in respect of both carers and children. Carers confirmed to the Inspector that they are made aware of the need for the secure storage of personal and confidential information on the children placed with them.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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Both placing social worker files and fostering service files inspected for the purpose of this inspection were clear, comprehensive and very well organised. Information was easily accessed and there was evidence of consultation with managers. Decisions and actions agreed at supervision were all recorded.

Children's and carer files are all easily accessible in one large open plan office where cabinets are closed locked and checked at the end of the working day.

Electronic records are also maintained on carers and children and accessible via security systems to essential front line staff only. Colourful notices around the building where employees are working highlight the importance of confidentiality and graphically set out ground rules for the day-to-day management of information.

The service has an Access to Records Policy and Procedure and Carers are provided with details about access to records in their Carers Handbook. Carers are invited to have access to their files if they wish.

The Manager of the foster care service records and monitors any allegation or complaint made in respect of the service. These, if any, are represented in the manager's quarterly report to the Head of Service.

**The Children's and Fostering service are commended on the quality of recording in case files and for the attention given to confidentiality and security when dealing with client information.**

With regard to the following figures;

- 1) 4 children are placed with Rutland carers and 3 with Independent Fostering Agencies.
- 2) Of the 5 placements that ended, one is a respite package.
- 3) Of the placements that ended 5 were placed within the fostering service and 3 (2 of which were 1 child) were Independent Agency placements.
- 4) 1 foster carer left in the last year when a Residence Order was granted to kinship carers.

Please note that minimum payment stated below is e.g. £70 pro rata.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			7
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			8
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			5
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			9
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			1
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	70	<b>Maximum £</b>	150

## 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 foster care service is provided from a large, light open plan office in Rutland County Council accommodation. The office is well equipped for this purpose. All workers have a personal computer and workstation. Extra rooms are available for booking panels and other meetings. A family room is comfortably furnished with toys available.

## 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 foster care service forms part of the Children and Family services provided by Rutland County Council. As a Local Authority function, its financial viability is accepted. The Inspector saw no evidence to suggest that the fostering service was not being adequately resourced.

The Head of Children and Family Services produces a detailed breakdown of the annual foster care service budget, for the purpose of the overall monitoring and management of the delegated budget by the fostering services manager. This budget is regularly monitored and updated. The Inspector saw a copy of this.

### 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 above budget is subject to the statutory accounting and auditing processes of the central finance section, within Rutland County Council. Annual and monthly statements are provided to the fostering service Manager and the Head of Service.

**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

Carer fees are paid promptly on a fortnightly or weekly basis by cheque. Carers verified this and said that they are provided with clear written information about the payment system.

Details about allowances and fees and a breakdown on how these are allocated, are provided within the Foster Service Procedural Manual and these are reviewed on an annual basis.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

There is a clear and concise Terms of Reference sheet that informs the function and processes of the Rutland Foster Care Service. In addition to this there is a booklet that introduces each member of the fostering panel. There is potential for the Panel Terms of Reference to be developed, cross-referencing the status and functions of the Fostering Panel to the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations and for the Panel Membership to be included in this. While acknowledging that the Terms of Reference explains that the Agency decision maker (Head of Service Children and Families Team) is responsible for final decisions, they should also expand on the role of the chair in the management of Panel decision making and recommendations, when all members of the Panel are not in agreement. Standard 30.2

#### **The fostering service is recommended to develop the Fostering Panel Policies and Procedures/Terms of Reference.**

The membership of the Fostering Panel meets all of the regulatory requirements and includes a Panel manager, an independent chair and vice chair, two social worker employed by the fostering service, an elected member, a medical advisor, and an individual who has had both experience of the care system and is a carer. All have been subject to the required Criminal Records Bureau checks.

The overall management of Rutland County Council Fostering Panel is commissioned from an Independent Children's Service Agency (who also provide assessing social workers) The contracts and agreements drawn up between the agencies were available for the purpose of the Inspection.

During the last year the Rutland Fostering Panel held an 'away day' to 'confirm the arrangements for a meeting of the Panel and to review its functioning and effectiveness'. A Panel training day was also provided. Very good notes from these events indicated that the Panel team were working positively in recognition of the status of the Panel, and role and responsibility of Panel members.

Management information was provided on the occasion of the Panel review day and a service activity report was also due to for presentation on the day the Inspector attended the Panel, but this had to be deferred because of bad weather conditions. It was evident from the review and training sessions, and from the interview with the Panel Chair that the Panel was aware of it's quality assurance function under the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations and were beginning to undertake this role.

The Inspector observed two reviews taking place. The Panel and the Chair were searching and systematic in the manner in which they discussed a particularly difficult incident and the Chair enabled a carer to feel at relative ease while being asked open and frank questions. The Panel is reminded that when a member of the Panel (e.g. social worker employed by the service) is presenting a case to Panel, that this Panel member should withdraw at the time when the Panel is making it's decision)

## 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 foster care service offers a flexible day and short stay respite service for children who have disabilities. The Manager confirmed that carers are provided with training and support to appropriately meet the needs of the children placed with them. Evidence of this was also seen in carer files and training records.

Carers spoke positively about this training. One carer attended a day at a school for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and undertook a six -session course on this.



## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Rutland foster care service has formally assessed and approved family carers who have agreements, terms and conditions which totally comply with the National Minimum Standards and who receive the same high level of support, allowances and training as other foster carers.	
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Currently the fostering service supports 2 kinship care arrangements, one carer was visited during the Inspection. This carer was very clear that it was the support received from the fostering service and supervising social worker that enabled them to care for a child of the family in a difficult and complex situation. <b>The service is commended for this.</b>	
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**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

(where applicable)

**Not applicable**

**Lay Assessor**      Not applicable      **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 week beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

NO

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan within 28 days, 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

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 Mr Steve Attwood of Rutland County Council Fostering Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**D.3.2 I Mr Steve Attwood of Rutland County Council 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.