



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Slough Borough Council Fostering Services

Slough Borough Council

Town Hall

Bath Road

Slough

Berkshire

SL1 3UQ

10th January 2005

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

Slough Borough Council Fostering Services

Address

Slough Borough Council, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough,
Berkshire, SL1 3UQ

Local Authority Manager

Lesley Fitzgerald

Tel No:

01753 690400

Address

Slough Borough Council, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough,
Berkshire, SL1 3UQ

Fax No:

Email Address

www.slough.gov.uk

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		10 th – 12 th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09.45 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Shelley McDonald	
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 Slough Borough 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 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.

Slough Borough Council Fostering Service provides substitute family care to meet the needs of Slough children and young people who are looked after by the authority on a short term/temporary or longer term/permanent basis. The service also supports children who continue to live within their family of origin by providing regular periods of family based care.

In order to provide this variety of care, the service recruits, trains and supervises a range of foster carers.

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 overall findings of the inspection were that the fostering service is largely regulation and standard compliant.

The fostering service staff group continues to give excellent support to the foster carers who see themselves as working in partnership with social workers to provide a high standard of service to children and young people in their care.

The service has taken active steps to assess the training needs of all its carers via a training audit and there are steps in place to meet such needs as independence training which was absent last year.

Contact arrangements for looked after children in foster care appear to be managed more effectively than previously.

The management of the service is good; since the previous inspection the appointment of two practice managers to assist in the supervision and management of staff has enabled the fostering service manager to give more attention to other aspects of the service.

Increased administrative support has brought the improvement of systems in relation to records and generally meeting regulatory requirements such as annual reviews. However there still remain some out of date reviews.

While recruitment of foster carers particularly from minority ethnic groups has continued to be a challenge for the service there are some very positive developments in working with the local community which should assist this.

The service has been dependent on several different independent fostering agencies to meet its shortfall in carers but is now negotiating a contract with a local preferred provider to provide the majority of these external placements thus enabling a consistent approach and children being placed closer to their family home.

The service has now set up a regulation compliant panel with an independent chairperson and it evident that the panel is very child focussed. There are some outstanding issues which need to be addressed by the panel.

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:

Those statutory requirements that appear on page 11 of this report.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	28(5) (b) Schedule 5	FS22FS2 2	Foster Care Agreement to be brought in line with regulation	1/06/04
2	34(3) Schedule 6	FS8FS8S 8	Foster Placement Agreement to be brought in line with regulation	1/09/04

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Shelley McDonald Signature _____
Second Inspector _____ Signature _____
Regulation Manager _____ Signature _____
Date 02/02/05 _____

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	28(5) (b) Schedule 5	FS22FS22	Outstanding from 1/06/04 - Foster Care Agreement to be brought in line with regulation	1/04/05
2	34(3) Schedule 6	FS8FS8 FS10FS13	Outstanding from 1/06/04 - Foster Placement Agreement to be brought in line with regulation	1/06/05
3	29 (2)	FS21FS21	Annual reviews to take place for all carers	1/06/05
4	20 (6) (a) 20 (7)	FS15FS 15	In accordance with this regulation the service is not to employ its own foster carers	1/04/05
5	22 Schedule 2	FS25FS 25	Accident record to be kept in accordance with regulation	1/04/05

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	FS1FS1	Statement of Purpose to be amended in accordance with the standard
2	FS23FS23	Both adults in two carer households to complete core post approval training
3	FS24FS24	Children's records to meet requirements of FS24.1
4	FS30FS30	Fostering Panel to receive management information about the outcome of foster carer annual reviews

* 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	3
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	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	10/01/05
Time of Inspection	09.45
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	25.00

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?
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The statement of purpose from the previous inspection is still in place as it is less than twelve months since this took place.

The service has now produced a comprehensive Children's Guide which has been distributed to all young people who are living in the authority's foster homes.

The service is also now completing a leaflet for parents of children who are fostered.

Standards still to be addressed:

1.4 Relevant qualifications of staff need to be included in the statement of Purpose. In addition the procedure for reviewing carers needs to be detailed. Numbers of complaints and outcomes need to be stated (if there have been no complaints during the preceding 12 months this also needs to be stated).

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
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The pre-inspection questionnaire, self assessment document, inspection of personnel records, meeting with the staff team, meetings with foster carers and the interview with the service manager indicated that this standard continues to be met.

The manager has now commenced appropriate management training.

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
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The Manager was appointed before these regulations came into force but personnel files inspected indicated that this standard is met.

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

All relevant procedures were made available to the inspector during the inspection. These included:

Supervision policy
 Personnel files
 Allowance Schedule
 Carers files.

The standard is met.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

The pre-inspection questionnaire, self assessment document, inspection of personnel records, job description, meeting with staff, meetings with foster carers and the interview with the service manager indicated that this standard continues to be met.

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
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Health and Safety checks were evident on most files and it was evident that an annual inspection is now expected to be undertaken as part of the carer reviews.

All foster homes visited appeared to be suitable and safe environments for children and foster carers spoken to were aware of health and safety issues stating that they had had training and guidance on these matters.

All carers had received the Foster carer handbook along with specific agency policies which address these and other fostering matters in a comprehensive manner.

Again foster carers were familiar with the inspection process and had been prepared for meeting the inspector by their social workers.

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
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The service still struggles to recruit carers from minority ethnic groups with the result that there continue to be many trans-cultural/ community placements. In order to address this problem the service has become actively involved in a community group representative of the main minority ethnic groups in Slough. This appears to be a very constructive venture which may not only produce more diverse carers but also contribute to the ethnically sensitive care of children in trans cultural/ community placements.

In addition a Multi faith post has been created by the authority; carers and staff will be able to access this for further guidance on meeting the different religious needs of children placed in foster care.

Foster carers interviewed considered that they had generally been given appropriate advice and guidance in caring for children from a different ethnicity/ religion etc, providing examples of this.

The fostering service continues to run the "Home from Home" scheme for the placement on a respite basis of children and young people with a learning and/or physical disability. As before most of the users of the service continue to receive day care only. The inspector was informed that only two children now have overnight placements. However feedback about the way this service meets these children's diverse needs was positive.

The inspector was able to meet parents who clearly valued the service, considering it to very effectively meet the needs of children with disabilities.

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?

2

Staff continue to acknowledge that when making short-term placements they frequently have difficulties identifying appropriate matches for all children and young people they were asked to place. For those children and young people trans-culturally placed the fostering service continues to provide additional support in the form of advice and allowances which is appreciated by carers.

Foster placement agreements were usually evident on the carers file and were always seen on the children's file. These continue to be in the form of LAC placement Plan part 1 and 2 which are not compliant with the Fostering Services Regulations. This was drawn to the attention of the service during the previous inspection but there have been no developments ensuring that the agreement meets all the requirements of Schedule 6 of the Regulations. If LAC forms continue to be used the service is advised to devise a supplementary document which covers the requirements of the schedule.

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 fostering service has an up to date Safe Caring Policy along with policies covering bullying and unauthorised absences.

Carers receive very basic initial child protection training routinely as part of their preparation and have the opportunity to attend further training at the biannual carers' conference. In addition they can access staff training in this area.

The inspector has suggested that child protection training should be followed through via a post approval core training curriculum.

Safe care, anti-bullying policies and unauthorised absence policies are in place and given to all carers.

Within the Foster Care Agreement a section states that corporal punishment is not acceptable. This message is further reinforced in the foster carers' handbook.

The service has now begun collect information re: bullying and foster children.

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

0

%

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
<p>There was evidence from meetings with staff, foster carers and children that contact was promoted by the fostering service. There is clearly a presumption by the agency that contact with family and other significant people is in children's interests and foster carers views reflected this.</p> <p>Generally carers were reporting more consistency with contact than at the previous inspection.</p> <p>There is a risk assessment format in place and there was some evidence that risk assessments are undertaken before contact takes place.</p>		

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
<p>There was clear evidence that children attend LAC Reviews and that, from the interviews and questionnaires, some children and young people felt they were listened to.</p> <p>The authority works closely with the Voice of the Child in Care which provides an advocacy service for children and young people looked after by Slough Borough Council.</p>		

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
<p>The service continues to have access to a general nurse and a mental health nurse for Looked After Children. As before these two people from time to time attend the coffee mornings for foster carers and can be directly contacted by foster carers. These two health professionals have contributed to the local foster carers' newsletter. Furthermore both are members of the Foster Panel.</p> <p>Although the CAMH psychologist is available for consultation the service is now considering employing an additional psychologist to augment her work.</p> <p>LAC documentation seen indicated that foster carers had copies of a child or young person's health record.</p>		

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
<p>The Looked after Children's Education Service (LACES) continues to provide individual support to children and young people in school and also the provision out of mainstream education.</p> <p>It has a data base of the educational placements, needs, and achievements of all the Borough's looked after children.</p> <p>Carers and staff were familiar with the work of the team and had found them a valuable support. However there is some concern from LACES staff that children and young people experience too many changes of school due to being placed at a distance from their family home.</p> <p>The inspector noted the good practice of supplying all foster carers with a PC for the use of any child in placement to assist them with their education.</p>		

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
<p>The service has now made some progress in this area. Carers are fully involved in pathway planning and reviews. The service is using the skills and knowledge of the 16+ team to advise and train carers. A written guide adapted from one in use in the residential sector is being produced for carers.</p>		

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The meeting with the staff team, research of a sample of personnel files, pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting with the fostering service manager indicated that this standard was met.

Telephone follow up of references was now clearly documented

The inspector noted the good practice of retaining photocopies of qualifications on personnel files although there were two instances where this practice had not been followed

The service is advised that it must adhere to Regulation 20 (6) (a) & (7) and not employ in the Family Placement Service any foster carer approved by the authority.

Total number of staff of the agency:

13

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

3

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

This standard was met to a high level. The staff team are well managed – supervised regularly and appraised annually (supervision files seen and staff views). With the appointment of two practice supervisors supervision no longer falls to just two people. This has clearly given the manager time to address other issues.

There are weekly team meetings which provide for group supervision, training, information exchange on developments in the service and carers.

Since the previous inspection administrative posts have increased and been filled which has led to a constructive review of systems in place.

Staff have moved to new offices and appear to be less cramped than previously.

Contracts are in place for use of agencies with the placements officer having responsibility for checking inspection reports.

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

The interview with the fostering service manager and other staff indicated that there are still insufficient foster carers from ethnic minority groups. See Standard 7.

The current staffing establishment is sufficient to meet the demands of the service and overall this standard is met.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The local Out of Hours service for foster carers, operated by the staff team continues to work well according to carers.

All carers seen have regular supervision and receive a copy of their supervision record. However it was noted from the randomly selected files that some carers seem to have had long periods without contact by supervising social worker. The inspector was advised that in some of these carers were inactive and should have resigned but see Standard 21 below.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Training continues to be widely available within the authority and fostering staff also have access to external specialist courses.</p> <p>Opportunities for joint training with carers exist.</p> <p>Staff are kept up to date with professional developments through the use of team meetings.</p> <p>New staff were very satisfied with the induction process.</p> <p>Training profiles/needs are now evident on staff supervision files.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>From the interview with the fostering service manager, the meeting with staff and inspection of supervision records and policies it was evident that the staff team continue to be very well supported and that supervision is a priority.</p> <p>The two newly appointed practice managers have received some management coaching and will be undertaking management training.</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?	2
<p>The foster carers interviewed indicated that they were well supported by the fostering service as did those who returned their questionnaires. Carers had been pleased to receive from the service letters of appreciation at the end of a placement and flowers on gaining an NVQ.</p> <p>The inspector noted that there was generally more satisfaction with the children’s social workers than in previous two years which may be attributable to the more stable staff group.</p> <p>New annual carer review forms have been devised which meet the requirements of the regulations and standards. Reviews are now chaired by a manager/practice supervisor, a practice commended by the inspector. Consideration is also being given to the appointment of an independent reviewing officer.</p> <p>A number of carer reviews were found to be out of date. The inspector was informed that in some cases (which had been selected at random) the carer was “inactive” and it was expected that they would resign or be deregistered. The service is advised that such carers must not be left to “drift” but need to be reviewed and a decision made about future status.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers interviewed indicated that they were very well supported by the fostering service. However some carers continued to raise the difficulty of supporting carers who live some distance from the borough although it was evident that the fostering service tried to link such carers into local support services where possible, buying in as necessary. The foster care agreement has been updated but the inspector found an error which needs correcting (to include all of no. 11 Schedule 5).

The inspector found much more evidence of unannounced visits to foster homes. It was noted that the annual review form has been revised to include a requirement to list the unannounced visits.

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 fostering service continues to provide pre-approval training for all foster carers with the exception of kinship carers.

Post approval there is a wide range of training available to foster carers within the authority. The service has made the annual conference for carers biannual as attendance is high and a variety of training is offered at this event. Carers were very enthusiastic about the training opportunities afforded by this event.

Foster carers are aware of the availability of NVQs and several of those interviewed had embarked on this.

Training records were seen on carers' files.

The service has recently undertaken an audit of training needs of carers and will be addressing these in the coming year with the assistance of a dedicated budget.

The inspector was impressed with the plan to run a day time and repeat evening session on each topic thus making training more accessible to carers.

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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The service has comprehensive policies concerning recording, record retention and storage.

Carers indicated that generally they were receiving sufficient information when children were placed with them and that they were kept informed of developments/

Interviews with foster carers indicated that they had worked with children regarding issues to do with the children's past. Carers were aware of life story books and their role in contributing to these. Carers talked about memory boxes for children and it was evident that they were aware of the need to retain information for children that connects them with their past.

However children's files still did not convey a sense of the child's history unless the file contained a Form E. There were chronologies on the files but these listed events rather told the child's story.

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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The administrative files were in very good order – the service has devised an excellent case record for carer files which is easy to navigate and covers all the legislative requirements. The inspector noted that as advised previously each carer file now contains a section for complaints and allegations.

In addition the authority has a separate record of all complaints and allegations. Again there was clear evidence of files being audited by managers.

The inspector also noted that prospective carer files are now stored in the same area as approved carer files and not at individual work stations. The filing system is user friendly making it easy to locate files.

Personnel files were also of a good standard.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			39
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			43
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			47
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			9
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			5
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	108.49	Maximum £	328.67

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

Overall this standard was met with the team having moved since the previous inspection to a more suitable location.

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?
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	9
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N/A

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?
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	9
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N/A

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

The fostering service provider issued a schedule of allowances, which indicated that the foster carers are paid at the Fostering Network rates and in addition they receive a fee for the work they do as foster carers. Carers were generally satisfied with both the rate and the methods of payment.

The Manager informed the inspector that allowances are to be reviewed to take account of the higher rates paid by fostering agencies in the area.

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

It was not possible to observe the panel during this inspection but the independent chairperson who had joined the Panel in October 2004 was interviewed. The chairperson has experience of chairing a permanency panel and it was evident that she is very familiar the needs of children and with family placement issues.

All the members are now paid for their Panel work in recognition of the importance of this task.

Carers were still not invited to attend panel but the inspector was informed that this will commence by April 2005 when the Panel moves to a more suitable venue.

The panel now receives quarterly management information reports about the work of the service which is enabling it to monitor supply and demand for placements. However the panel does not yet receive management information about the outcome of carers' annual reviews.

It was identified that the first reviews of any carers who were approved before the current Fostering Service Regulations came into force should have been presented to the Panel after April 2002. The service was advised to remedy this by ensuring that the most recent review of these carers is seen by the panel as soon as possible. (regulation 29 (5)).

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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Only two children currently receive an overnight care on the Home from Home scheme – all other children receive day care. In those two instances it is evident that partnership with parents is a key element in the success of the placements.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service supports placements well both financially and in terms of social work intervention.

The fostering service manager stated that, once approved, all kinship carers were invited to all training produced by the service and carers confirmed this.

The kinship care development post holder is to be located in the family placement service which the manager anticipates will improve the service to children and carers.

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 10 January 2005 of Slough Borough Council Fostering 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>

Note:

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

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

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox" value="YES"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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, Lesley Fitzgerald of Slough Borough Council 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, Lesley Fitzgerald of Slough Borough Council 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.

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