



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Calderdale Fostering Service

Ovenden Hall

Ovenden Road

Halifax

HX3 5QG

24th 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

Calderdale Fostering Service

Address

Ovenden Hall, Ovenden Road, Halifax, HX3 5QG

Local Authority Manager

Lynn Radley

Tel No:

01422 353279

Address

Ovenden Hall, Ovenden Road, Halifax, HX3 5QG

Fax No:

01422 323287

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

19/01/04

Date of Inspection Visit		24th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9.00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Stella Henderson	110610
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		Lynn Radley	

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

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

Calderdale fostering service provides a range of fostering services. These include short term, long term, and “friends and family” placements, along with a number of respite care (short-break), and remand placements. The service also supports a small number of foster carers, approved by Calderdale, who reside outside the Calderdale area. The service also provides ‘support carers’ who offer care for a limited 28 day period. This is designed to prevent admission into long term care.

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 inspector's overall assessment is that there are many positive aspects to Calderdale fostering service. Evidence from records, questionnaires and discussion with foster carers indicates that the life chances of children, on the whole, improved by being looked after by Calderdale fostering, with particular emphasis placed on the health and education. Carers generally feel well supported, and there was a good deal of feedback about individual fostering officers with respect to their helpfulness and professionalism.

The inspector found that good progress has been made in many areas of service delivery since the last inspection; there is a sense of a service in transition, dynamic and moving forward in many respects. However, there is still the need to embed certain practices, particularly around the functioning of panel and basic paperwork and procedures. Some of these tasks will easily be achieved by closer attention to detail and better administrative and quality assurance systems. Others require a more significant, immediate and fundamental step-change, particularly as there are several breaches of regulation that, for the third year of inspection, have still not been met. There was evidence of some very poor child care practice in one placement made, and the work of the fostering service is, on occasion, undermined by the lack of co-operation from other parts of the department.

The primary evidence for how the service is functioning came from returned questionnaires and interviews with foster carers, and the children and young people they care for, as well as from placing officers. Some of their comments are contained within this report. Concerns regarding practice and procedural issues were raised by two placing officers; these were discussed with the manager at the time of inspection and detailed more fully within this report.

Not all the National Minimum Standards for Fostering were inspected on this occasion, in line with guidance from the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The inspector would like to thank foster carers, children and young people and staff for their contributions to this inspection.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

Not assessed at this inspection

Fitness to manage a fostering service (Standard 3)

This standard was partly met

Personnel files inspected were found to comply with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations. However, telephone enquiries should be made to follow up written references.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Not assessed at this inspection

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-13)

5 of these 8 standards were met, 1 was partly met, and 2 were not met

The fostering service achieves good outcomes for children and young people in respect of health and education. Foster placement agreements need to be completed before placement, and the process of matching evidenced more clearly. The safeguarding of children and young people is undermined on occasion by poor decision making and lack of information.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15, 17, 21 and 22)

1 of these 4 standards were met, 1 was partly met, 2 were not met

Staff and carers are well supported, and both of these groups felt that training was good and relevant to the task. As mentioned in Standard 3, telephone enquiries should be made to referees. Foster carer agreements should be congruent with terms of approval made by the decision-maker. Annual reviews of foster carers take place, however these reviews should take into account the outcomes of disruption meetings, and evidence the views of the child in placement.

Records (Standards 24 and 25)

1 of these 2 standards was met, one was not met

Case files inspected were found to contain required information, and were all in good order. These files and their contents complied with Calderdale's policy on file management and recording. The inspector recommends that more emphasis is placed on life story work. Information was missing from both the children's register and the foster parents register.

Fitness of premises (Standard 26)

Not assessed at this inspection

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

Not assessed at this inspection

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was not met

There was evidence that panel can be robust and rigorous in its scrutiny of proposed foster carers. However, this was not always evidenced by the contents of the minutes, which were found to be inaccurate and misleading. Reasons for recommendation of approval were not recorded, and there was no monitoring of cases such as Regulation 38 placements and exemptions.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met

Children and young people receiving short terms breaks have carers who work well in partnership with both parents and the fostering service.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was not met

Work is in progress to ensure that Regulation 38 placements meet timescales for assessment; however at the time of inspection this was not the case.

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:

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?

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	34	FS8	<p>Before making a placement there must be a foster placement agreement with the foster carer, which specifies the information in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.</p> <p>A child may only be placed with a foster parent if the foster parent is approved and the terms of his approval are consistent with the proposed placement</p>	31/07/04
2	28	FS22	If a fostering service provider decides to approve a person as a foster parent it shall enter into a written agreement with him covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (in these Regulations referred to as the 'foster care agreement')	31/07/04
3	22, 31	FS25	<p>The fostering service provider shall maintain and keep up to date the records specified in Schedule 2.</p> <p>The fostering service provider shall enter in a register kept for the purpose the particulars specified in paragraph (2) and in the case of a local authority, it shall also enter the particulars specified in paragraph (3)</p>	30/09/04
4	38	FS32	Regulation 38 must be complied with in respect of placing children with family and friends	30/04/04

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	Stella Henderson	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Niall Roche	Signature	_____
Date	29 March 2005		_____

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	34	FS8	<p>Before making a placement there must be a foster placement agreement with the foster carer, which specifies the information in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.</p> <p>A child may only be placed with a foster parent if the foster parent is approved and the terms of his approval are consistent with the proposed placement</p>	31/03/05
2	12	FS9	<p>The fostering service provider shall prepare and implement a written policy which (a) is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect and (b) sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. In this regulation 'child protection enquiries' means any enquiries carried out by a local authority in the exercise of any of its functions conferred by or under the 1989 Act relating to the protection of children</p>	31/03/05

3	29	FS21	When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider shall (a) make such enquiries and obtain such information as it considers necessary in order to review whether the person continues to be suitable to act as a foster parent and his household continues to be suitable, and (b) seek and take into account the views of (i) the foster parent (ii) any child placed with the foster parent	31/03/05
4	28	FS22	If a fostering service provider decides to approve a person as a foster parent it shall enter into a written agreement with him covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (in these Regulations referred to as the 'foster care agreement')	31/03/05
5	22, 31	FS25	The fostering service provider shall maintain and keep up to date the records specified in Schedule 2. The fostering service provider shall enter in a register kept for the purpose the particulars specified in paragraph (2) and in the case of a local authority, it shall also enter the particulars specified in paragraph (3)	31/03/05
6	25	FS30	A fostering panel shall make a written record of its proceedings and the reasons for its recommendations	31/03/05
7	38	FS32	Regulation 38 must be complied with in respect of placing children with family and friends	31/03/05

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	FS3 FS15	For the references set out in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002, telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references
2	FS6	Each child placed has her/his own bed and accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability

* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	NA
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)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NA
• 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	YES
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	YES
Date of Inspection	24/01/05
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager has substantial experience fostering, and is suitably qualified to manage the fostering service. Those who can be called on to deputise in her absence also have wide experience and expertise in fostering.

Telephone enquiries should be made to referees, as recommended in the last inspection.

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Thorough and comprehensive assessments were found to have been carried out on prospective foster carers, with all the information required by Schedule 3 of these regulations in place. The fostering service uses a competence-based model of assessment, which is good practice, however more use could be used of other tools such as eco-maps. Work is in progress to ensure that assessments and training for remand carers is consistent with mainstream fostering. Every three years full statutory checks are completed on foster carers. This is good practice.

Foster homes visited were found to be safe, healthy environments. The inspector agrees with the comments of some placing officers who felt that foster carers were very committed and 'child focussed'. The majority of children and young people who returned their questionnaires stated that the best thing about fostering was their foster carers, and 'being kept safe'. One young person felt 'loved and cherished by my carers'; another wrote '...X is doing a tremendous job of fostering me'.

Other perceived benefits included 'having set meals', 'more spending money', 'they make you feel good about yourself' and 'you get to have a happy life'. The worst thing about fostering for the majority of these respondents was 'being away from my family', though one or two mentioned 'getting told off'. Only a third of the children and young people who returned their questionnaires said that they had received a copy of the Children's Guide. The inspector advises that the fostering agency redistribute these at some point in the near future to ensure that those in care have full information about the service and other contacts available to them.

Health and safety checks had been carried out in line with the fostering services policy, and foster homes are inspected annually to ensure they continue to meet the needs of children placed there.

This standard is scored as 'partly met' as a child had been placed in an emergency without reference to that child's need for privacy and space, having had to share a room with two other children.

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

From inspection of files, returned questionnaires and conversations with foster carers, it is evident that the fostering service promotes equality and diversity. Several carers indicated that they had received training on anti-discriminatory practice, and were supported in their learning by, for example, visits to local mosques. The service has also introduced training for 'Men in Foster Care'.

The fostering service still provides predominantly white carers, which reflects the ethnic background of children using the fostering service in the Calderdale area. Arrangements have been made with a neighbouring authority for some carers to attend foster care training with others from a similar ethnic background.

One foster carer looking after a young person with a disability had appropriate adaptations installed.

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?

1

There was no evidence of matching on files examined, or on those cases brought to panel in respect of specific children. There is no systematic process by which a carer's skills are matched with a child's needs, and although a form entitled 'placement matching information' was found on one file, this had not been completed. None of the foster carers visited had copies of their foster placement agreements, and although these were found on file, these were incomplete and missing information required by Schedule 6 of the Regulations. **This is an outstanding requirement from last year's inspection, and should have been complied with by 31 July 2004.**

The inspector found several examples where the need for a placement took priority over any matching consideration. Placing social workers raised the issue of children being placed on occasion without consultation with them or with the children already in placement. Consultation is an important element in matching and placing and practice must be improved in this area.

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?**

1

Although the fostering service has a procedure to deal with allegations against foster carers (and this was found to have been followed in respect to allegations), a senior manager of the local authority had instructed a child be placed with carers who the strategy group decided should be suspended pending further investigation. **This is a serious breach of several safeguarding duties, responsibilities and regulations, and places already vulnerable children and young people at significant risk.**

Foster carers were able to provide the inspector with evidence of their 'safe caring' document. The inspector advises that this be brought to panel at approval stage.

The fostering service provides good training around the recognition of and responses to child abuse. Information is collated on the circumstances, number and outcomes of all allegations. Placing officers who returned their questionnaires felt that children were safe in foster placements, and some children and young people had also commented in their responses that one of the best things about being fostered was that they 'were kept safe'.

The fostering service has only just begun to collate statistics on bullying, therefore the information required is not available. However, only one young person mentioned bullying as an issue in their questionnaire, and this had been appropriately responded to by the foster carers, and the bullying had stopped.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There was detailed, clear guidance around contact with families on files examined, and foster carers spoken to were very aware of these arrangements, particularly where this was likely to be contentious or needed to be supervised. Outcomes of contacts with family is recorded by carers. One young person was also clear about his contact arrangements with friends and family. The importance of carers helping children and young people maintain appropriate contact was evident on cases presented to panel, where this had clearly been discussed with prospective carers.

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**

Children and young people indicated, in their questionnaires, that they do get asked their opinions about their foster carers, but not about how the fostering service could be made better. They also feel that they are consulted (and regularly) by their foster carers, on a range of subjects, from day to day decisions such as 'what films I'd like to see', to those with more profound implications, such as 'decisions about my future...' and '...ideas about another placement'.

Did anything change as a result of being consulted? Those that answered this question said 'yes' – 'when I was getting bullied, that changed..' and '...not having to eat potatoes'. Most of these respondents knew how to make a complaint, but very few knew that they could get in touch with the Commission to do so.

The inspector also found evidence on file that demonstrated that children, young people and their parents contribute to the review process.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

The emphasis on healthy eating and taking exercise was apparent in the questionnaires received from children and young people. As well as being advised 'not to have too many sweets' and 'help with my diet', carers also ensured that 'I go to regular dentist appointments and have regular check ups'.

Children and young people in the care of Calderdale fostering service engage in a wide range of physical hobbies and activities, such as cricket, rugby, cycling, running and, more sedately, crown green bowling. They also take part in choir and music groups, but there was evidence that they can do 'nothing at all', if they so wish, or simply 'play out'.

The appointment of designated nurses has clearly had a very beneficial impact on the health status of looked after children, and several foster carers commented on how helpful is the access to child mental health professionals in terms of dealing with emotional and psychological difficulties, and managing the behavioural consequences of attachment disorders and abuse. There is some particularly useful training for foster carers on attachment theory.

Assessments of health needs were found to be clearly recorded on file, and foster carers had copies of these records. Accidents to children and young people in care are now being collated by the fostering service.

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 majority of children and young people who returned their questionnaires indicated that they get help with attending school and school work. 'They encourage me to work well' wrote one young person and 'they spend time with me and help me with homework if I need it (but don't tell me the answers)'. Carers also 'teach me different methods to work out answers'; 'X gives me lots of help and support with my English', and 'I get help with my spelling and X listens to my reading'. Young people also reported that their carers go to parents' evening at school.</p> <p>The Friday and Tuesday clubs run by the LACES team are highly regarded both by carers and young people, and this group clearly gives significant support to children looked after by Calderdale fostering service. Children and young people who attend these groups also contributed their views to the inspection, and the inspector would like to convey her thanks for the members of staff who facilitated this.</p> <p>The fostering service now has systems in place to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care service or the numbers of children excluded from school.</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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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

Personnel files inspected were found to be in order and complied with Schedule 1 of these regulations. As outlined previously in Standard 3, telephone enquiries should be made to those providing references. There is a rolling programme for members of staff to have their Criminal Records Bureau checks renewed after 3 years. Appropriate checks are carried out on agency staff.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

2

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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 team was carrying two vacancies at the time of inspection; the impact of one of the vacancies has been the limited response to the management of Regulation 38 placements (identified at the last inspection and discussed under that Standard); the team has yet to feel the impact of the more recent vacancy. They indicated that the work is manageable; however, if there were to be an increase in the recruitment of foster carers, they would be struggling to carry out assessments within a reasonable timescale.

Responses from foster carers were mixed, with some feeling that the team was 'very stretched' and others that 'it seems adequate'. Whilst the inspector feels that, with a full complement, the team has sufficient staff to meet the Statement of Purpose, this leaves little time for development work on some crucial areas such as placements with family and friends.

Out of office hours fostering support, highlighted as an area needing development last year, also received mixed views, with some feeling that the present arrangement is adequate, others feeling in need of a more specialised response. As recommended last year, the position should be reviewed and should involve consultation with foster carers about their concerns and issues.

The fostering service has a full time publicity and recruitment worker, and a variety of media is used to recruit carers.

As referred to in Standard 6, the assessment process for prospective carers is thorough and complies with National Minimum Standards 17.6 and 17.7.

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
Not assessed at this inspection		

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?**

1

The strategy for working with carers is contained within the foster carers contract and handbook.

Although annual reviews take place, there are several aspects to the process of reviewing foster carers that need attention. The foster service provider is required to 'make such enquiries and obtain such information as it considers necessary in order to review whether the person continues to be suitable to act as a foster parent and his household continues to be suitable'. However, there were examples of carers who had experienced placement breakdowns. These should have been subject to disruption meetings (as per Calderdale's own policy), yet came back to panel for review without these meetings being held, and were subsequently recommended for re-approval without panel knowing the outcome of these meetings.

Panel was also asked to recommend the change in registration for certain carers who were applying to be long term carers for particular children. Panel is, in effect, being asked to make recommendations for permanency based on inadequate information. Additionally, there was no evidence that the fostering service had sought and taken into account 'the views of any child placed with the foster parent'. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the manager has stated that the review process has been identified as an area for improvement for 2005; certainly panel need to be much more assiduous in ensuring the right kind of information is secured before making recommendations. This is discussed further in Standard 30.

In terms of support and management, foster carers are, on the whole, pleased with the service. Many commented on how the new payment scheme had 'made things better. We feel appreciated and valued as professionals now'. Asked what was the best thing about the service, several mentioned the quality of support from fostering workers 'very friendly, professional staff 'on the ball' and 'we were very well supported when things were very difficult'.

One foster carer felt 'proud to be part of a team that helps to give positive outcomes and give structure to young people's lives'. Another, a carer for 10 years, offered the perspective 'The service is definitely improving year by year. I think mainly now because we are allowed to work more 'in partnership' and our views are valued more. During the last ten years I have always found the fostering service to be helpful and supportive'. Where criticism was expressed, this was often around poor communication, but was mainly directed at other parts of the department rather than 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?**

1

Carers receive supervising visits from fostering staff, and these were reported to the inspector to be very helpful.

A foster care agreement on file was found not to be consistent with the terms of approval agreed by the decision-maker.

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?**

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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

Case files examined were found to be in good order, with appropriate LAC paperwork in place. The content and organisation of these were found to be in line with Calderdale's own policy on file management.

Through discussion with foster carers it was apparent to the inspector that they fully understood the reasons for the child's admission into care. There was some evidence of life story work being undertaken, but the inspector advises that a higher profile is given to the recording of significant events and on developing carers' understanding of the importance of life story work.

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?

1

Although the majority of the fostering service's administrative records contain the significant and relevant information referred to in this standard, the inspector found minor omissions in recording relating to both the children's register and the foster carer's register.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

189

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

150

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

168

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

21

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

11

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

72.10

Maximum £

360.50

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

0

Not assessed at this inspection

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?

1

There has been considerable progress to address the areas for development highlighted at the last inspection. At this inspection, panel was found to be fully quorate, and all panel members have had Criminal Records Bureau checks carried out. Plans are also in place for prospective foster carers to attend panel.

Apart from the failure of the fostering panel to consistently make a written record of 'the reasons for its recommendations', the functioning of panel is consistent with the requirements set out in Regulations 25 and 26. However there were several areas of practice that were of concern to the inspector, some of which have already been referred to elsewhere in these standards.

The inspector was initially concerned that panel was not the rigorous safeguarding mechanism it should be, and the way that these meetings are minuted reflect poorly on proceedings. That these minutes go out without being checked for accuracy, and that the panel meeting itself felt rather ad-hoc, unfocussed and with no prior discussion of cases did not create an impression that panel is business-like and efficient in its approach to the assessment of information presented and recommendations made. Although the inspector subsequently found very good evidence of much greater scrutiny of cases than had been evident on the day of inspection, the inspector observed that the most interesting discussion and the most challenging comments and questions about particular cases came after the panel meeting.

The service itself must decide how best to run these meetings, but the inspector advises that very strong chairing skills are required if it is decided to continue panel meetings in this way. Prior discussion would give members a chance to articulate their concerns, allow questions to be focussed and properly formulated, and for gaps in and quality of information to be highlighted, both for new applications and reviews. Mention has already been made of the outcomes of disruption meetings not being taken in to account, and children's views are sadly absent from reviews, and changes of registration presented to panel.

Exemptions should also be closely monitored, and some discussion took place during the inspection with regard to how exemptions should operate. Legislation requires that each child in the foster placement must be named, and clear time scales indicated. General exemptions and open-ended timescales cannot be recommended or approved, and the approval of exemptions should not be a 'hind-sight' operation.

The panel and the decision-maker should refer to Schedule 7 in the 1989 Children Act for further guidance, and those cases where exemptions have been made should come back to panel for further consideration.

Two things would help with the above. First, attention to detail, closer monitoring and the implementation of quality assurance systems would help to address some of these problems and oversights (such as not recording dissent or reasons for recommendations), and on how exemptions, variations and assessments for Regulation 38 placements are progressing. Secondly, better use should be made of the panel adviser, who apart from having a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise, is also manager of the service, and is in an ideal position to offer advice on regulations, policy and practice issues.

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?

3

The service provides short-term breaks for children and young people. One carer was visited during this inspection, and the inspector found that the arrangement worked well for the young person in question and his family. There was a good working relationship between the carer and family that had been established over several years, and the carer reported that has always felt very well supported by the fostering service.. The carer was clearly a good advocate for this young man.

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?	1
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The fostering service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as carers, and for those cases inspected this had clearly led to much improved outcomes for children.

Although there is work in progress on the matter, at the time of inspection there was delay in bringing these placements back to panel after the initial six week period; in one case 11 months had elapsed. This is clearly unacceptable and it is important that this is conveyed to social workers who are responsible for ensuring these cases are brought back to panel within the required timescales.

It is also the case that social workers make emergency placements with friends and family, but fail to inform the fostering service. This is both unhelpful to the functioning of the fostering service and could potentially place children at risk, as the usual monitoring mechanism are being by-passed.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

N/a

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 24 January 2005 of Calderdale Fostering Service and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We are working on the best way to include provider responses in the published report. In the meantime responses received are available on request.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> 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:	<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 _____ of Calderdale 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 _____ of Calderdale 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.

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