



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Trafford Fostering Services

Stretford Public Hall

Chester Road

Stretford

Manchester

M32 0TH

19th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Trafford Fostering Services

Address

Stretford Public Hall, Chester Road, Stretford, Manchester,
M32 0TH

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Stretford Public Hall, Chester Road, Stretford, Manchester,
M32 0TH

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

24/2/03

Date of Inspection Visit		16th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	2	Chris Tucker	074724
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mathew Brazier (Service Manager)	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

Trafford Family Placement Team provides fostering service for the authority. It provides short-term, long-term and permanent placements for children “looked after”. It also provides short-term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being “looked after”.

The Service was responsible for recruiting, assessing and approving foster carers as well as supporting them. However, friend and family carers were at the time of this inspection assessed by social workers based in the area teams.

Since the last inspection the Family Placement Team have moved base to a new building in Sale, which houses a number of other council services. Whereas at the last inspection the short-term break part of the Service was outside the management responsibility of the foster service manager with the move to the new building this part of the service is now under the manager’s responsibly. It should be noted that some of the administrative support available to the Service was still based at the previous site.

The Family Placement Team is made up of the Family Placement Team Manager, 1 Senior Practitioner, the Children with Disabilities Team Manager, 5 Family Placement Workers, and 3 administrative staff.

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

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This inspection is the second to be undertaken with regard this service since the National Care Standards Commission was established. The inspectors were able to meet with a group of Family Placement Workers (FPWS), Psychologist, Administrative staff and the Health Worker. The staff members spoken to demonstrated their knowledge, awareness and understanding of the legislative framework, which underpins their work.

The inspectors were also able to meet with a small group of foster cares as well as meeting foster cares and the children/young people in their homes. The children/young people spoken to by the inspectors appeared to be happy, with some telling the inspectors about their likes and dislikes. The foster carers were complimentary about the support they received from the FPW'S.

This inspection demonstrated that the fostering service provided good support and service to the children/young people and foster carers. Though areas for improvement had been identified. Foster carers were less complimentary about the social work support offered to children/young people and the lack of information provided to them by social workers. This is an area that the authority must address.

Statement of Purpose

This standard was met.

There was a Statement of Purpose, which addressed all the elements specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. The document had been developed further since the last inspection. A suggestion has been made that the information on the services offered should be expanded.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service.

1 of the 2 standards were met

The manager had a number of years experience in family placements and childcare practice and held the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. At the time of the inspection the manager was absent due to sick leave and this appeared to have had some impact on the level of supervision available to the staff. However, although recognising this gap, staff members interviewed and foster carers indicated that the management of the service was generally effective with foster carers noting the improvements that had been made in the Service over the past twelve months.

Management o the Fostering Service

None of the 2 standards were met

Appropriate processes and systems were in place to monitor the activity of the Service. This included the Fostering Panel. However, in the absence of the manager some questions about the quality of some of the assessments of foster carers that had been presented to the panel was raised by the inspector. Further information can be found at standard 30 of this report. The arrangements for deputising in the absence of the manager were unclear and this must be addressed.

Securing and Promoting Welfare**6 of the 9 standards were met**

A full and detailed assessment is carried out to ascertain carer's suitability to foster. The Service was committed to recruiting carers from varied backgrounds. Where the need arose to make a trans-racial placements all efforts would be made to ensure the foster carer received the support that they required to ensure that the children/young people were not disadvantaged. Training in Child Protection was made available to staff and carers. However, this training did not appear to have been updated. A system of collating information about allegations of abuse and neglect was required. The anti-bullying and missing from home policies were in place. Systems with regard to complaints must be improved.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Carers**5 of the 9 standards were met**

There was good system in place for recruiting staff and carers. Improvements in the personnel records were noted. Staffing of the Service was of concern. At the time of the inspection, the Service had a number of vacancies and the Senior Practitioner was due to go off on maternity leave. One worker supported the Home from Home carers.

Records**1 of the 2 standards were met.**

The Service maintained files on carers, children/young people and staff. Not all Looked After Children documentation was on the files examined. A register of foster carers was in place. Records were securely held.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service**This standard was met**

The premises were found to be adequate for the purpose of the service.

Financial Requirements**3 of the 3 standards were met**

The inspectors were able to observe a Fostering Panel. The membership of the panel met the regulations. A new chair of the panel had been appointed but this person had not yet taken up the position.

Short-Term Breaks

Since the last inspection, the Home from home Scheme had been brought under the management of the Family Placement Service.

Friends and Family

A review of the recruitment and assessment of friends and family carers was required as well as the level of training offered to these carers. The friends and family carer met during the inspection expressed dissatisfaction about the level of support offered to them. Others confirmed this in their response to the questionnaires.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Although Trafford Family Placement Service does not meet all the requirements the failure to do so does not have a significantly detrimental effect on the welfare of the children placed. However, the authority needs to improve the level of staffing available to support the service and the Commission will monitor this situation.

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	12(2)(d)	FS9	A system for collating information relating to incidents of and allegations of abuse must be maintained in order that monitoring of these incidents can take place.	30.6.04
2	18(5)	FS11	A separate record of complaints made by children/young people in foster care must be maintained by the CRO.	30.6.04
3	18	FS11	The Service should review the systems in place for dealing with complaints.	30.6.04
4	16(2)	FS13	A system must be introduced for monitoring the educational progress and attainment of children/young people.	30.6.04
5	21(4)	FS15	Staff appraisal system must be introduced.	30.6.04
6	21(4)	FS19	Specialist training must be made available at all times for staff, which relate to the task of the service. A review of the staff-training budget must therefore be carried out to ensure it is sufficient.	30.7.04
7	28(5) (b) Schedule 5	FS23	The Service must provide appropriate training for Kinship Carers.	30.6.04
8	11(1) & 17(3)	FS32&FS 24	The service must review information presented to carers to ensure that they are provided with adequate and necessary information relating to the children/young people placed.	30.4.03

9	27	FS32	The recruitment procedures relating to kinship carers must be revised. The recruitment of kinship cares must be the same as that of other carers.	30.6.04
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Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
NA		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Lolly Warren **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Chris Tucker **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Mike Short **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	8	FS4&FS2	The authority must review the arrangements in place for deputising in the absence of the manager. This is necessary to ensure that the service continues to function effectively in her absence.	30.5.04
2	12(2)(d)	FS9	A system for collating information relating to incidents of and allegations of abuse must be maintained in order that monitoring of these incidents can take place.	30.5.04
3	12	FS9	The authority must ensure that Child Protection training is made available to staff and carers and that this training is kept updated.	30.6.04 and ongoing
4	12	FS9	A review of the policies must take place to show the link between the Whistle Blowing and Child Protection Policies/Procedures.	30.5.04
5	12	FS9	The authority must revise the relevant sections of the Child Protection procedures to address and make clear the process for dealing with historical abuse.	30.6.04
6	12	FS9	A copy of the anti-bullying policy must be submitted to the Commission.	30.5.04
7	18(5)	FS11	A separate record of complaints made by children/young people in foster care must be maintained by the CRO.	30.5.04

8	18	FS11	The Service must put in place clearer systems with regard to complaints in order that the process can be tracked and outcomes examined. This would assist in the monitoring process.	30.6.04
9	16(2)	FS13	A system must be introduced for monitoring the educational progress and attainment of children/young people.	30.6.04
10	21(4)	FS15	Staff appraisal system must be introduced.	30.6.04
11	19	FS17	The size of the staff team must be sufficient for the size of the Service and numbers and needs of the children/young people placed by the Service. The staffing situation must be reviewed.	30.7.04
12	21(4)	FS19	Specialist training must be made available at all times for staff, which relate to the task of the service. A review of the staff-training budget must therefore be carried out to ensure it is sufficient.	30.7.04
13	28(5) (b) Schedule 5	FS23	The Service must provide appropriate training for Kinship Carers.	30.7.04
14	29(3)	FS23&FS30	The system for undertaking the annual review of foster carers must include the opportunity for ascertaining the views of any child placed (subject to their age and understanding)	30.6.04
15		FS24	The Service Manager (Young People) must ensure that LAC documents are made available on the children/young people's case files held within the social work team.	30.6.04
16	11(1) & 17(3)	FS24 & FS32	The Family Placement Service must review information presented to carers to ensure that they are provided with adequate and necessary information relating to the children/young people placed.	30.6.04
17	34(3) Schedule 7	FS24	The documents currently used to make up the Foster Placement Agreement must be revised or a separate document developed to meet all the elements specified in Schedule 7.	30.6.04

18	26	FS30	The Fostering Panel must develop systems for monitoring and overseeing the conduct of assessments.	30.6.04
19	27	FS32	The recruitment procedures relating to kinship carers must be revised. The recruitment of kinship carers must be the same as that of other carers.	30.7.04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The Statement of Purpose should detail more information on the services it provides.
2	FS2	The manager of the Service should have a qualification at NVQ Level 4 in Management or an equivalent by 2005.
3	FS4	As a matter of good practice the matters detailed at NMS 4 should be notified to the Commission.
4	FS24	A policy concerning recording and storage of information should be developed.
5	FS30	The medical reports that form part of the assessments of Friend and Family Carers should be subject to the same process as those submitted for other foster carers.
6	FS30	The report prepared for the annual reviews of foster carers should contain:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full details of all the members of the household • Confirmation that the homes risk assessment is up to date • Confirmation that a Safe Care Policy is in place
7	FS30	Copy of the panel notes, which applies to the individual foster carer should be placed on their file.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent 7

Survey of placing authorities YES

Foster carer survey YES

Foster children survey YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals YES

 • Directors of Social services NO

 • Child protection officer YES

 • Specialist advisor (s) YES

 • Local Foster Care Association YES

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements YES

 • Interview with children YES

 • Interview with foster carers YES

 • Interview with agency staff YES

 • Contact with parents NO

 • Contact with supervising social workers YES

 • Examination of files YES

Individual interview with manager NO

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 NO

Date of Inspection 16/1/04

Time of Inspection 09.00

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 82

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last inspection was carried out, the Statement of Purpose had been up-dated. However, it has been suggested that the document should be expanded to give more information with regards the different elements of the service so that those having access to the Statement of Purpose are able to understand more fully what is meant by the terms 'bridging placement', 'home from home' etc.

The Children's Guide had been developed since the last 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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Since the last inspection took place the person acting as the service manager had applied for the post on a permanent basis and had been successful. The manager, Sue Summers, is a qualified social worker, holds the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work award (CQSW) but as noted from the last inspection does not have a management qualification and the authority will need to ensure that the manager undertakes some form of management training at NVQ Level 4 or equivalent.

At the time of the inspection, the manager was on sick leave and in considering whether the service was being effectively managed the inspectors noted that the information required for the inspection was not arranged in an organised and thorough manner as found on the previous inspection. In addition to this, the Senior Practitioner in charge in the absence of the manager only worked part time and the inspector met with this staff member on only one occasion. However, the inspectors met with a group of staff who indicated that the service was normally effectively managed and acknowledged that with the manager's absence things were not as structured as they would normally be.

The workers were clear about their role as FPWs as well as demonstrating an understanding of the functions of the service overall.

The inspectors met with a small group of foster carers who said that there had been improvements in the service during the past twelve months and further improvements were required to make the service more cohesive. The kinship carer present at the time said that the service provided to kinship carers was in need of the greatest improvement in order for this part of the service to be effective.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager has seventeen years experience in childcare. She previously acted as the team manager and prior to that position was the senior practitioner on the team.

The personnel file in respect of the manager was made available for inspection. At the last inspection, the CRB check was missing from the manager's file, it was encouraging to note that since that time the authority had carried out the necessary checks, this included obtaining a reference from her former line manager with respect to her current position.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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As stated earlier the manager was on sick leave at the time of the inspection although she was available for the inspection feedback. The inspectors were therefore unable to discuss with the manager the systems in place for monitoring the activities of the service. From discussions with members of staff and the Service Manager for Young People, the manager had an overview of the service and in monitoring its function.

The manager was responsible for supervising the Family Placement Workers and used supervision to check out with staff the positions of carers and children/young people, whether tasks were being completed and whether the carers were receiving the desired level of support. The manager received supervision from the Service Manager for Young People.

Since the last inspection, a number of policies and procedures had been revised and implemented. The Fostering and Permanency Panel undertook a monitoring function in relation to the progress and quality of assessments with the acting manager responsible for monitoring the quality of assessments. However, in the absence of the manager a number of questions were raised by the inspectors with regard to the assessments. Further details can be found at NMS 29.

The administrative team members told the inspectors about the processes and systems in place for checking progress of assessments and placements within and outside the authority. They were also clear about the systems in place to ensure that where necessary additional resources could be made available to carers such as additional payments, equipment etc.

The Fostering Service was not required to notify the Commission of the matters listed below, however, the inspectors discussed with the manager and the Service Manager for Young People, whether as a matter of good practice some of the items listed below could be notified to the Commission. This in relation to Child Protection matters, complaint against a foster carer, death of a child in foster care etc.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	X
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	X
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	X
Serious illness or accident of a child.	X
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	X
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	X
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	X
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	X
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	X
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:	X
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>A job description for the manager was available which took account of the National Care Standards Commission and standards required of the person managing the service. Members of staff spoken to were clear about the lines of communication and they were aware of the management structures within Children's Services. However, the staff appeared to be less clear about the arrangement for their supervision in the absence of the manager.</p> <p>Information from the pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that in the absence of the manager the senior practitioner would deputise, This person had 8 years experience of working with children including a period in residential care. However, at the time of the inspection the arrangements for this person to deputise were not as clear as would be expected. The inspector was told that discussions had started to take place about how the deputising role would be effected when the manager became unavailable. The Service Manager, Young People, provided support to the team as and when necessary. A requirement has been made regarding the deputising role in the absence of the manager.</p>		

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
<p>A full assessment of the foster carers would normally be undertaken before foster carers were approved for placements. Family Placement staff said that a health and safety assessment would be undertaken to ensure the home was safe, secure and one that would provide the children/young people with a healthy environment in which to thrive.</p> <p>Information for carers covering health and safety issues was detailed in the Foster Carer's Handbook. This set out the guidance for carers and addressed such matters as storage arrangements for solutions, electrical safety, fires, heaters and radiators. In addition to information relating to safety when transporting children in a car, which included an expectation that cars would be fitted with appropriate car safety seats and seat belts etc.</p> <p>At the last inspection foster carers were unaware that they could be visited at their home by staff from the National Care Standards Commission and a requirement was made that the Foster Care Agreement was revised to include this information. It was encouraging to note that this matter had been addressed.</p>		

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
<p>One of the Family Placement Workers had been recruited to work part-time on recruitment and publicity. The inspectors were able to meet with this worker who discussed the methods in placed for recruiting carers from a variety of backgrounds. The inspectors were told that the service recognised that there was a shortage of carers from ethnic minority backgrounds and the need to improve in this area. They also recognised that in recruiting from minority groups there was a need for the authority to review the way information was presented, which needed to consider and take account of people accessing information in various languages. However, the workers said that they recognised also that this would have cost implications.</p> <p>As noted on the previous inspection, it was noticeable that none of the Family Placement Workers were Black and the inspectors were unaware of the ethnicity of the other workers. There was a Black administrator on the team. At the last inspection, the manager had said that not having a Black worker on the team did not detract from the service offered and considered that Trafford Family Placement Service was well placed to offer good support to all carers irrespective of their ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds. The service did have a percentage of foster carers who were from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p>		

The staff members, who met with the inspectors, said that part of their assessment of carers would take account of the persons understanding of equality and diversity and their ability to meet the needs of children/young people placed with them who may be from a different cultural background.

Discussions with members of staff indicated that training and support around diversity and anti-discriminatory practice was provided to foster carers, however, a couple of foster carers interviewed said that when they had cared for children/young people from a different cultural background the level of support they received was limited. Others confirmed they had received some training but that the training available during the past year had been very limited.

There was an equal opportunities policy available and the Foster Carer's Handbook detailed information on culture, religion and customs etc.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Discussions with the Family Placement workers indicated that the identified needs of the child would be of priority in the matching process. They said they would take account of the carer's experience of working with children/young people from different backgrounds and that where necessary specialist and additional training and support would be made available to them.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Discussions with foster carers and Family Placement Workers (FSW) confirmed that Child Protection training was made available. However, foster cares indicated that they had not had any up-dated training. The FSW's told the inspectors that this training would be up dated on a yearly basis for foster cares but acknowledged that due to the need to prioritise work and shortage of staff the training for foster cares had suffered during the last twelve months.

FSW' stated that the Local Authority had recently re-launched its Child Protection procedures which they attended. However, they confirmed that they had not had any up to date training with regard to Child Protection matters. The service and the authority must address this shortfall.

The Fostering Service Regulations specify that each carer should have a 'safe care' policy

for their home, which should be monitored as part of the annual review. At the last inspection, a requirement was made that a 'safe care policy' must be in place for each carer. It was encouraging to note that guidance on safe caring had been included in the Foster Care Agreement. However, individual 'safe care' policies were not noted on the foster carer's files examined. This matter was discussed with the manager during the inspection feedback and it was clear that there had been a misunderstanding between the inspector and the manager regarding what was required. The matter was clarified and it was envisaged that each foster carer would have an individual 'safe care policy' for their home.

The systems in place with regard the collation of information relating to instances of allegations or suspicions of abuse and the outcome was still unclear. Due to the absence of the manager the inspectors were not able to fully discuss the processes in place for responding to allegations made against the carer. However, some discussions did take place with the Service Manager, Young People, and he made available the records relating to one incident. There was a need for the service to put this system in place in order that the approaches adopted when such allegations were made could be assessed.

Written information and discussions with the carers and FPWs indicated that carers were made aware that corporal punishment was not acceptable. Since the last inspection took place, the Foster Care Agreement had been revised and to include this information.

There was no obvious link between the Child Protection Procedures and the 'Whistle Blowing Policy and the authority must address this. Further to this, examination of one particular file identified historical abuse and the way this information was handled was discussed with the Service Manager. On examination of the Child Protection procedures the inspectors could not find information to detail the process that would be involved in dealing with historical abuse. The authority must address this.

Since the last inspection the authority had updated the missing from care policy/procedures. It was encouraging to note that since the last inspection and in response to a requirement the manager had implemented a 'Significant Incident sheet' on which to detail more fully incidents of children/young people going missing from the foster home.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that the anti-bullying policy must be revised. This policy was not available at the time of this inspection although the inspectors were told that revision had taken place. The inspectors requested that a copy of the document be submitted to the Commission.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

It was evident from the responses of foster carers visited and those met as a group that maintaining contact was very important. From the discussions with carers it was clear that there was different degrees of contact and that some carers were involved in taking the young children/young people to their contact although one carer commented that they did not receive any additional payment for this facility. From the questionnaires completed by carers there was information to suggest that for some children/young people contact takes place at the foster care's home.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

In the questionnaires completed and returned by young people, (14), almost all said that their foster carer asked their opinions on things. This ranged from activities, holidays, foods, cloths etc. One young person said that they were asked about "what they would like to happen to them in the future" and that this was good as they discussed the options open to them. One child commented, " I like my foster carer because they treat me the same as their children. They ask me questions to make sure I am happy and I can tell them what like best. My carer asks me about punishment and how I think I should behave."

Of the questionnaires returned, two children/young people reported that they had never been asked their opinion of their foster carer and three reported that their social worker have never asked their opinion.

Children/young peoples' files examined did not all contained the views of children/young people on the placements as part of the foster carer's or their own reviews. During the inspection feedback the manager was told that this would need to be addressed in line with the Regulations. Further information can be found at standard 29 of this report.

There was information to indicate that the children/young people had the opportunity to give their opinions and ideas via the Children's Rights Officer (CRO), who those children/young people responding to the questionnaires identified by name. The CRO carried out consultation exercise with "looked after" children/young people within the authority.

There was a need for the Family Placement Service to maintain a central record of complaints and their outcome. In addition, although the CRO made available information to the inspectors regarding complaints made by young people as noted at previous inspections, a clear system of collating those complaints made by children/young people in foster placement was required.

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 inspectors were told that health assessments would be carried out on children/young people. Health development workers were also available to support and assist children/young people and carers. The inspector was able to meet with the psychologist who outlined the type and level of support that was made available to foster carers and children/young people. This would include direct work with carers if this were deemed necessary. The psychologist indicated that she had attended foster carers' support group and that the service was considering her input as part of the initial training offered to carers. Specialist health and psychological support would be made available if this was considered appropriate.

The inspectors also met with the health worker who outlined the support that was made available. She indicated that she was in the process of developing an information pack for foster carers.

Foster carers met told the inspectors that they had to obtain consent for the child to receive medical treatment. In the questionnaires returned foster care's detailed the support they had received to assist them to deal with health issues relating to the foster children.

The Foster Care Agreement makes it clear what a foster carer should do in the event of any concerns relating to a child's health needs.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Since the last inspection the Foster Carer Agreement had been revised to include information that required the foster carer to promote education and school attendance. Foster carers visited by the inspector discussed the support offered to them and the children/young people to access education and to ensure that children/young people attend education.

FPWs told inspectors that the National Teachers Advisory Service provided additional support to children/young people. They also said that some schools had their own specialist teachers to deal with more challenging children/young people. They also talked about the 'Return to Learn Scheme' and the 'Outreach Service'.

It was expected that all children/young people had a Personal Education Plan and that the social worker had responsibility to ensure that the plans are produced. However, the education plans were found to be missing from some of the children/young people's files examined during the inspection.

At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that the service must establish a system for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and school attendance of the

children/young people in foster care. This requirement remained outstanding and one that the service must address.

The authority provided children/young people with computers.

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

As noted at the previous inspection, there was no requirement in the Foster Care Agreement that foster carers should help prepare young people to move on to independence. This was discussed with the FPWs, who told the inspectors that they would expect that the foster carer would take an active role during this transitional period for the young person. They said that a Pathway Plan would be developed for the young person, which would detail the level of support that would be required. Each young person would be assigned an After Care Worker who would work with the young person but also communicate wherever possible with the foster carer. The FPWs told the inspector of one foster carer who had made the decision to provide supported lodgings/transitional placements. They considered that this was a positive move as it ensured continuity for the young person.

Foster carers in their response to the questionnaires indicated that they would be involved.

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

Since the last inspection, there had been changes in the authority's personnel section and a new personnel officer was in charge. The inspector was able to meet with the manager who had, since taking up the position, made a number of changes as had been required from the last inspection and this was encouraging.

The personnel manager made staff files available for inspection. Overall the files were found to be in order and well maintained. The only observation made by the inspector was that proof of identity had not been obtained for the files and that copies of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks be retained in a safe place until seen by an inspector at which point they could be destroyed and the reference number retained as per CRB guidance.

The FPWs were qualified staff responsible for recruiting, assessing and carrying out the annual reviews of foster carers. Discussions with the staff team demonstrated that they had good understanding and knowledge of the legislation that underpinned work with children and their families.

At the last inspection a requirement had been made that a staff appraisal system must be introduced. Discussions with the Service Manager, Young People, indicated that a system was due to come on line shortly.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

The Family Placement Team was relatively small. Therefore the staff members were clear about the team and how it worked. They were aware of their responsibilities and of the service that they provided to foster carers. Although there was a recognition that the staff were under a lot of pressure, due in part to staff shortages. The inspectors were impressed with the level of peer support demonstrated throughout the inspection and the cohesion of the team. This was a positive aspect of Trafford Fostering Service.

Staff members confirmed that prior to the manager's period of sickness they received supervision and had regular meetings. They said they received support from the Service Manager, Young People, and the senior practitioner although not supervised by this individual. There was evidence to indicate that support was made available to the acting manager.

Initial enquires were dealt with by a member of the administrative team who were responsible for sending out information. The administrative staff each had an area of responsibility and supported the Family Placement Team. From the discussions with this group of staff it was identified that they were able to take on board the task of their colleagues in their absence. This group of staff also presented as a cohesive group and were supportive of each other.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

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

Since the last inspection took place the staffing levels had improved, however, the situation had in the intervening months changed and the service once again had a shortage of staff. This had affected some of the changes that needed to take place, including the transfer of the Kinship Carer function to the Family Placement Team. At present the responsibility for the kinship carers rested with the social work team.

At the time of the inspection, the Service was carrying 2 full-time and a part-time vacancy (job-share), the latter the inspectors understood had been vacant for sometime. In addition, one staff member had left the team and the part-time-senior practitioner was due to go on maternity leave. The staffing situation was discussed with the Service Manager, Young People, who acknowledged that this was a situation that had to be addressed if the Service was to develop further. Only one worker supported the Home from Home carers and as noted on the previous inspection the authority must also revise the staffing to this part of the service as it remains questionable whether one worker was able to deliver an effective and adequate service and support to foster carers over a sustained period of time especially as the demand for the service increased.

In their response to the questionnaires foster carers expressed their concerns regarding the level of staffing and of the changes in staff personnel over the past two years.

The Service used a number of mediums by which to recruit carers such as leaflets, radio newspapers etc and had been able to recruit carers from different backgrounds. The

inspectors were told that during the past 12 months they had had a total of 170 enquires about fostering.

The assessment of carers was completed using the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F. The manager was responsible for checking and monitoring the quality of the assessments along with the Fostering Panel monitoring function.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last inspection the authority had carried out a review of some of its policies/procedures. Policies and procedures were in place such as Equal Opportunity. The Child Protection and 'Whistle Blowing' policies had been introduced since the last inspection.

Staff members said the manager was fair and very supportive.

Foster carers were complimentary about the support they received from the staff of the Family Placement Service although not so complimentary of the social work team. One person responding to the questionnaire commented " support is vital – we need to feel an important part of the team with information being shared and the need of family life respected". Foster carers also commented that they had access to the Emergency Duty Service.

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?

2

The FPWs told the inspectors that in terms of their own development, they had all except one member of staff completed PQ1 Award within the last two years. They said that they were able to access BAAF training and conferences.

Staff members had participated in training on Assessments, Disability Awareness, and Race Awareness etc. From discussions with members of staff and managers it was identified that there was a need for the authority to review the level of training provided to the staff.

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

FPWs confirmed that they received supervision from their manager. In turn the Service Manager, Young People, supervised the Team manager. The staff also confirmed that they met as a group for regular team meetings.

The administrative team manager supervised the administrative team at present. Since the last inspection there had been a restructure of the administrative team.

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

At the time of the inspection, the Family Finding Team did not support Friend and Family Carers. The Service Manager, Young People told the inspector that when there was sufficient staffing resources in the team then this would take place. Clearly the authority must address this matter and the Commission will monitor the situation.

Foster carers had an understanding of the support available to them from the Team. They also knew the difference between their support worker and the child's social worker. The carers were complimentary about the support they received and as stated previously, some expressed concerns about the level of communication with the social worker and the support offered to the children/young people. One person said that the social workers were always 'very busy'.

The Foster Care Agreement detailed the level of support that would be available to carers, which included the support worker and support group. Out of hours support was also provided as well as carers having access to the emergency duty team

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 inspectors met with a small group of foster carers. They said that the service was not bad but that they were concerned about the constant changes within the staff team over the past two years. They also spoke about the management of the service and were complimentary about the changes that had happen with the Service Manager, Young People, coming on board and the proposals for the development of the service. They considered that this manager would be an asset to the service.

There was evidence on the foster carers' file to detail that regular supervision visits to foster carers was taking place and as stated previously foster carers spoke favourably of the support they received.

The Foster Care Agreement detailed the support to be offered to carers and the expectations of foster carers.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Foster carers and FPWs told the inspectors that some training for foster carers was compulsory. However, foster carers said that over the past year the training had been inconsistent and limited. During the discussions with the FPWs they confirmed that they have had to prioritise their duties and that therefore the training of foster carers had suffered. The staff said that established carers had not received the training they should receive. They did say however, that there was an element of training provided in the support group, including from time to time guest speakers, usually asked for by the carers.

The pre-inspection information supplied by the manager provided a list of the training provided to the carers and in their response to the foster carers questionnaire, some of the carers listed the training that they had participated in. This training included First Aid, Epilepsy, Moving and Handling, Communication, Managing Behaviour, Autism, Makaton and Safe Care.

The Kinship carer met during the inspection spoke of their disappointment regarding the lack of training provided for them. This matter was also highlighted at the last inspection. At that time the manager said that the situation would be addressed when the recruitment and approval processes for these carers moved over to the Family Placement Team. This matter remained outstanding and must be addressed by the Family Placement Service.

The Foster Care Agreement detailed the expectation that carers attended at least three mandatory training sessions in the year following approval and induction training.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A sample of the primary files held on the children/young people was examined. The files seen contained the "Looked After Children" (LAC) documentation. This included the LAC Care Plan, Placement Plans, and Record of Reviews. However, some of the LAC documents were noted to be missing from some of the files examined.

In their response to the questionnaires and information received from the inspectors visits to foster carers and the foster carer's group carers commented that they did not always receive the LAC documents. The Fostering Service Regulations requires there to be a written Foster Placement Agreement between the authority and the foster carer. The authority's agreement was based on the LAC documents that were given to foster carers. However, in the absence of the necessary documents to the foster carer the basis for the placement was questionable and the Family Placement Team Manager and the Service Manager must address this with the social work team.

The Foster Placement Agreement being used by the authority did not fully comply with the requirements of Schedule 7. This must be a separate and dedicated document or the authority must review the information on the LAC document to ensure it meets the requirements of Schedule 7.

Foster carers met and those responding to the questionnaires appeared knowledgeable in their awareness of the reasons why children/young people are looked after and of the reasons why children have been placed with them.

Although the way in which foster carers maintained records appeared from the discussions to be varied, they were keeping a record of events. However, the inspectors had a lively discussions with a group of carers about where information was recorded as well as if a diary was being used was it used to record information with regard all the children/young people placed in the carer's home and the issues around confidentiality. As a result of this discussions the inspectors have suggested that the Family Placement Service consider developing a policy on recording and storage of information. This matter is particularly important for those who were Kinship carers.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Policies and procedures were in place dealing with record keeping, confidentiality and access to records. Information relating to these matters was also noted to be included in the Foster Carers' Handbook. Appropriate systems were in place concerning security and storage of information.

Separate records were being maintained for staff, carers and children/young people. There was evidence to indicate that the appropriate checks were being undertaken in respect of the carers. The policy/procedures relating to approval of foster carers (PGC23) must be revised to detail information with regard CRB checks which took account of the Protection of Children List.

As noted at the last inspection, the manager was monitoring entries made on the files by FPW's by signing and dating entries.

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

9

9

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last inspection took place the Family Placement Team had changed offices to a new building. However, not all the administrative support had moved to this site. The Team including the Home form Home worker and the Disability Manager as well as one of the administrative staff was located in the middle section of a large open plan office. Foster carers' information was stored in locked cabinets and the inspectors were shown the storage arrangements and where archived files were located. The inspectors noted that access to the office could only be gained by use of a key code.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Family Placement Service was funded out of the budget allocated by Trafford Borough Council for the management and operation of its Children and Young People's Service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Service operated to the Local Authorities policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. At the last inspection, the inspectors had been told that the Service was looking to update the computer system and introduced a new financial computer system. From discussions with the administrative staff this system was not yet fully on board. The administrative staff spoken to appeared organised and discussed with the inspectors the current systems in place for tracking placements and payments. Payments were made on the basis of the information received from the Family Placement workers. Payments to Home from Home, Kinship carers etc were made at different intervals.

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 inspectors discussed the issues of payment with a group of foster carers and those visited. Overall the carers confirmed that payments were made at regular intervals and on time. Although a few carers commented that about the length of time it took to get payment. The administrative staff said their records would show that in the main payments were made on time and that the carers could be referring to requests that were made to social workers and that if social workers did not advise administrative staff in time then the payment would be about two weeks late.

Foster carers were aware of the amount of payment that they received.

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

An inspector attended the fostering panel as an observer on 16th January. The Service Manager, Young People, chaired the panel. However, a replacement chair has been identified and they attended the panel as observer. It is planned that the new chairperson would observe one further panel before taking up the position. The Service Manager told the inspector that the replacement chair had received an induction pack including the BAAF Guidance "Effective Panels". The Service Manager told the inspector that Trafford were seeking to increase the independent element of the panel membership and were looking for members from the ethnic minority communities.

A couple of the items on the agenda had to be deferred to a later panel because the reports did not contain all the necessary information, for example, CRB checks. These items would have been removed from the agenda by the Family Placement Team Manager at an earlier stage had she not been on sick leave, as she monitored reports for the panel. In her absence, the Service Manager undertook this task but the reports did not reach him until a few days before the panel. This does raise the question of whether there should be a recognised person to deputise for the Team Manager in her absence.

The reports presented to the panel for the approval of Family and Friend Carers were not all completed to the same format. The reports that were not based on the BAAF Form F, did not contain all the information required by the regulation. For example there were no "Details of their health (supported by a medical report)" and the dates of the receipt of CRB checks were given verbally rather than recorded on the report. In one of these cases the young person was not "looked after" but supported under Section 17 of the Children Act. Consequently the placement was not a foster placement and did not need to be considered by the panel. This again pointed to the need for a monitoring function to be carried out before items were put on the panel agenda. The Service Manager told the inspector that the Panel's Medical Adviser did not see the GP's reports received in respect of the Friend and Family Carers.

Reports for the annual review of foster carers were also presented to the panel. These reports were not explicit about whether the views of the young person had been sought as part of the review. This was not included in the guidance notes on the completion of the report sent to the social worker.

The reports did not give information on all the members of the household, for example the foster carers own children although their names were given in the sleeping arrangements section. This made it difficult to establish whether the sleeping arrangements were

satisfactory.

The report also did not also include information on whether the risk assessment of the home was up to date and whether there was a Safe Care Policy for the foster home.

It was suggested that the minutes of the panel relating to the individual carer was placed on the carer's file.

The Service Manager, Young People, raised at the end of the panel meeting, the question of the need for the panel to feed back in a more formal manner matters of quality assurance that must be addressed by assessing social workers. This would also address the matters referred to above.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The authority operated a Home from Home scheme designed to support children with disabilities. Since the last inspection this scheme was now under the management of the Family Placement Service.

As noted on the last inspection, the caseload of the Family Placement Worker responsible for supporting the carers was high. At the last inspection a requirement had been made that the authority reviewed the staffing of this aspect of the Service. This requirement has been reiterated.

Where necessary appropriate aids and adaptation would be made available and the carers received training covering a range of issues from First Aid, Child Protection, Safe Caring, Management of Difficult Behaviour, Community Infection Control, Health and Safety etc. The inspectors were told that disability awareness training was provided.

Home from Home carers in their response to the questionnaires said that the support they received was of a good quality and standard. They were complementary about the worker.

The authority also provided a range of link/respice carers.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The social work teams undertook the assessment of friends and family carers. Discussions with the Service Manager, Young People, indicated that the number of staff in the Family Placement Team did not allow them to take on the tasks. It was generally understood that these carers should be subjected to the same checks as other foster carers including CRB checks and this had also been recognised by the Service.

As noted at the previous inspection a policy/procedures was in place relating to the recruitment of carers. However, information did not detail the need for Notifications, Foster Care Agreement, Review of Approval and a statement that these carers were subject to the same procedures as adopted in the recruitment and approval of other carers.

The inspectors met with one family and friend carer who expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of support that they received, with poor communication between the social workers. They indicated that they were treated very differently from other carers. This carer told the inspectors that they had made a complaint about the service they received.

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 19th January 2004 to 30th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The department has undergone a restructure just prior to this inspection, the aim of which was to improve services to looked after children (LAC) and to strengthen Community Services. The LAC Strategy continues to monitor, review and develop flexible responsive services which it is envisaged will further build upon improvements in service delivery to children, young people and their families. Children and Young Peoples' Service is multi-agency incorporating Children's Duty and Assessment Team (CDAT) Special Educational Needs, Quality Protects, Initial Referral and Assessment Team (IRAT), Education services, Youth Offending Team, Connexions, Youth Services, Social Care Services, Looked After Children, School Support including out reach teams, Education Welfare and Psychological Services.

This cohesive multi-disciplinary CYPS is well placed to ensure the very best outcomes for LAC with regard to health, education and life opportunities through the promotion of more effective communication and the development of close, robust relationships for working together. The fostering services are benefiting from these corporate and organisational changes and a central part of the LAC strategy is to enhance and expand staffing levels and the service as a whole.

With regard to the Inspection against the National Care Standards for Fostering January 2004, verbal feedback from the Inspectors in March 2004 has led to several changes being made in response to their comments prior to receiving the Inspector's written report.

Several changes have been implemented with regard to the Foster Carer Review Process:

- The Supervisory Social Worker Review Report form now includes details of all household members' relationships to carers.
- Clarification as to whether the Safe Caring Policy is in place and up to date.
- Date of the last unannounced visit and other.
- Social Worker report form for carers' reviews has also been amended and now contains a specific section requesting the child/young person's views.
- A separate report form has been devised canvassing views directly from young people and children placed over eight years of age. To promote independence the Social Worker for children and young people distribute these report forms and support children in completing these.

These changes will assist in more effective monitoring systems for the Family Placement Workers and Manager, the Panel and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

A system for reviewing information provided for carers about children is currently being devised and includes examination of referral procedures, protocols and practice. As part of this process the introduction of LAC documentation monitoring forms for all children placed is proving effective in helping ensure carers receive all relevant information pertaining to children.

The Placement Agreement Meeting Agenda has been amended to include a specific section on training required to enable carers to meet the needs of children and young people placed in their care.

With regard to staffing levels two posts have been advertised and there are plans to expand the team by a further 2 posts in the near future to assist in the continuing expansion and development of the service.

The new independent Chair of the Panel has now taken up their position and copies of the minutes from Panel are now provided and copies placed on carers' files.

Arrangements for deputising in the absence of the manager do exist although it appears these were not made clear to the Inspectors at the time of the Inspection. The job description of the senior practitioner clearly states that it is the role of the senior practitioner to deputise in the absence of the manager specifically in the case of sick leave and annual leave.

The situation is currently exacerbated by the fact that half of the job share of the senior practitioner post is currently unfilled and this was an issue at the time of the inspection. Thus in the absence of the Manager and Senior Practitioner the Head of Service for Looked After Children covers those functions. These arrangements were in place but this information did not go back to the inspectors at the time of the inspection.

There is a system and procedure for dealing with complaints and whilst in its infancy during the January inspection this is now fully implemented. Thus a new complaints system was in place at the time of the inspection and it appears this information was not fully available to the inspectors during this inspection, which is an effective robust procedure and they now have details of this.

The central records of complaints and allegations against foster carers for some reason were not viewed by the inspectors during the course of the inspection. (An e-mail was sent with details during the course of the inspection) and this system has been reviewed and records are now also kept by the Head of Service for LAC in addition to those kept by the Family Placement Manager to ensure accessibility at all times.

Procedures for recruitment and approval are currently being revised and when the team vacancies are filled responsibility for Kinship carers will transfer to the Family Placement Team. It is envisaged that this will effectively lead to improved services to kinship carers and ensure streamlining of services to all carers.

With regard to training all Family Placement workers have received ongoing training on

relevant courses, which has not been affected by the staffing levels as flexibility has allowed for attendance on appropriate courses. All FPWs have received training on child protection prior to this inspection and have had access to updated child protection training at all times.

Also FPW's had previously received training as per requirements of the National Care Standards including training others and Form F assessments. In addition at the time of the inspection plans were in place for all FPW's to receive updated training on attachment in March 04. In addition to traditional training courses all FPW's have been provided with one-to-one learning in supervision and via co-working arrangements to expand knowledge and build upon individual skills. This includes all aspects of the Family Placement Worker role and requirements re child protection and safe caring in particular. Finally specialist training has been available to all FPW's and has been and will continue to be identified in supervision.

Unfortunately this information was not given to the inspectors at the time of the inspection.

Since this inspection all Family Placement Officers have received updated Child Protection and Attachment training in March and April and will benefit from specialised in-depth training on sexual abuse and fostering this Autumn. Training for staff continues to be a priority and Health and Safety Assessment Training is also planned for May/June to enable staff to implement Trafford's new pro forma's for Health and Safety Care Standards and general practice.

Training for foster carers has been addressed prioritising Attachment, Child Development, Child Protection and Safe Caring, Managing Behaviour and Moving Children On and it is planned that this be delivered to carers throughout the year and has already started.

Management Information Systems are currently being developed and purchased across the board by the authority which will greatly assist in ensuring such information is readily available. The authority currently has an IT section which is able to support with such issues currently and is helping develop an information system with regard to National Care Standards for Fostering.

Systems for monitoring education and progress and attainment are being developed and due to be implemented with the LAC Education Co-ordinator and IT Section based around Personal Education Plans (PEPs).. It is felt that the PEP will provide a useful baseline to examine children's general progress more effectively, where all children's talents and achievements, not just academic ones, can be recognised and acknowledged.

In addition there are plans in place for LAC in education which are due for implementation using more support for individual children and carers to enhance their attainment and improve outcomes for LAC.

We accept the Inspector's findings and see their comments as positive and helpful in reviewing and evaluating the services provided within fostering. It should perhaps be noted that the inspection took place in January and preparations coincided with Christmas and New Year (a time during the year when the service is under pressure) and we welcome the plans for the next Inspection due to take place in November 2004.

Action taken by the NCSC 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"/>
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"/>

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"/>
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 NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Julie Newsham of Trafford Fostering 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 Julie Newsham of Trafford Fostering 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.