



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Surrey County Council Fostering Service

Childrens Services

Beaufort House

Mayford Green

Woking

Surrey

GU22 0PG

10th February 2005 – 28th February 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

Surrey County Council Fostering Service

Address

Childrens Services, Beaufort House, Mayford Green,
Woking, Surrey, GU22 0PG

Local Authority Manager

Ms Annie Maclver

Tel No:

01483 728022

Address

Childrens Services, Beaufort House, Mayford Green,
Woking, Surrey, GU22 0PG

Fax No:

01483 776326

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

02/02/04

Date of Inspection Visit		10th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms R Coler	
Name of Inspector	2	Mr J Chivers	
Name of Inspector	3	Mr J Croft	
Name of Inspector	4	Mrs V Bulbeck	
Name of Inspector	5	Mr G Cheney	
Name of Inspector	6	Mrs S Floyd	
		Please note other inspectors accompanied the named inspectors given here to interviews as a second but all those names are not given here.	
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		Ms A McGiver	

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 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**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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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 Surrey County Council 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.

This report relates to the third inspection of the Surrey Fostering Service by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Local Authority Fostering Service managers do not have to register with CSCI, nor do Local Authority Fostering Services themselves have to register with the CSCI as providers. Regulation 10(2) requires Local Authority Fostering Services managers to meet the same fitness criteria that an Independent Agency manager has to meet.

Surrey County Council Fostering Service is a Local Authority Fostering service operated by the Social Services Department. It manages all the following in house fostering functions from temporary placements (emergency, short term, assessment and bridging placements) through to long-term permanent foster care placements, placements for a named child/young person only and specialist carers.

The Fostering Service has four fostering teams. The West Team is based in Heritage House in Chertsey, the East Team is based in the Omnibus Building in Reigate, and the Family Finding and Recruitment Team in Addlestone and the Adoption and Permanency Services is based in Chertsey.

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.)

Standard 1-Statement of Purpose

The standard was found to have minor shortfalls

The Statement of Purpose contained all relevant information and all parties described in The Foster Care Regulations 2002 Regulation 3 reported that they had or could receive copies of this statement.

The service's policies and procedures were found to reflect the overall statement of purpose. It is suggested that the reasons why placing social workers do not know how to gain copies of the statement of purpose would be beneficial.

Sixty four percent of the 33 responses from children to the Commission's questionnaire responded that they had a copy of the service's Children's Guide. Thirty six percent stated they had not. It is recommended that the manager ask that supervising social workers check that all children and young people are supplied with an up to date Children's Guide. In addition the Children's Guide has not been developed in a range of formats in order to meet the different needs of children and young people placed. For example the format provided would not be easily understood by young children and would need to be simplified and produced in pictorial format for some people with a learning disability.

Standards 2-3 Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

Both of these standards were found to be met. Standard 2 was found to exceed the level required.

The manager was found to provide effective leadership, which assisted the development of the service in a proactive manner that worked towards delivering the best possible childcare. The fostering service manager has extensive child care experience and possesses an MA in Organisational Consultancy in addition to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and a Diploma in Advanced Social Work (Children and Families). The manager has managed the Fostering Service for the last four years and previously was a social work team manager for three years. Surrey County Council Children's Service's has appropriate support teams to ensure that the financial and budgetary management of the service is monitored effectively. There continues to be significant investment in the service, including improvements to fostering allowances via extra funding. There have been further appointments to the management structure including additional assistant team managers in the larger fostering teams and the addition of a Fostering Service Development Manager to assist in the development of the service.

It was therefore concluded that the management of the service was a very positive aspect that had been the driving force in enabling the change that is evident in the service in the past year.

Standards 4-5 Management of the fostering service

One of the two standards inspected was found to be met the other to have minor shortfalls.

There were well-established procedures for communication between staff, managers and foster carers. Carers reported that they felt able to contact anyone within the service should they feel the need to do so and were clear who they could report concerns to should the need arise, including contacting senior management.

There were proper charging policies in place, which had been reviewed in the last year and were considered to be one of the factors that had increased the ability of the service to increase the pool of foster carers. The management had many systems for reviewing the effectiveness of the fostering service and provided the inspection team with several reports, which were being used to monitor the service. These were found to meet the requirements of Regulation 42 of The fostering Services Regulations 2002. It is suggested that this be further developed to formulate an overall quality assurance programme for the fostering service.

The service has developed the notification system so that notifications were being made to CSCI. However, these were not always sent without delay and some had arrived four months after the event.

There is a clear management structure with explicit lines of responsibility, characteristic of an established local authority management arrangement. Interviews with the team managers established that they were clear about their duties and responsibilities, the level of delegation and the lines of accountability. Discussions with staff demonstrated that they understood their manager's role and the lines of accountability within the organisation. Many staff commented positively about the support they received from management and considered that the developments to the service over the past two years were positive.

Standards 6-14 Securing and promoting welfare

Three of the six standards inspected were found to be met. Three had minor shortfalls.

Inspectors visited eight foster care homes around the county during the inspection and found these to be well maintained, homely, nurturing and comfortable. Children and young people interviewed commented that they liked the homes and found that they met their needs.

Foster carers inspectors met during the inspection were fully aware that they might be interviewed or visited as a part of this Commission's inspection process.

The service is advised to review their training in respect of medication administration and are advised to use the Royal Pharmaceutical's Society's publication Care of Medicines in Care Settings as a reference guide.

It would also be helpful in the foster carer agreement to advise foster carers that should any work to their premises be undertaken they should report this in order that consideration be given to whether the premises should be re-assessed.

The management is advised to ensure that their plans to review this information again should a new child/ young person be placed at the home be implemented as soon as possible.

There was good evidence that the fostering service promoted equality and valued diversity when assessing and training foster carers. For example, the second session of Surrey County Council's Skills to foster course concerns equality and diversity providing key messages that *"all children and young people have a history, and are continuously building a sense of identity as they progress to adulthood."*

The Commission acknowledges the difficulties in finding a diverse range of placements that reflect all children's ethnic backgrounds. The management had done some work on how to make further links with communities within the County in order to assist in this matter and this was again to form part of the next year's recruitment strategy.

There was less evidence that staff training regarding equality was kept up to date and the service is advised to consider how this could form part of the overall staff training strategy in the coming year. The service provides a family link service that sets out to provide short breaks to the families of disabled children. Discussions took place with the family link coordinators in both East and West Surrey who expressed the benefits of sharing the same office accommodation as the social workers for disabled children. Again there is a continual recruitment drive to improve the number of link carers in Surrey however the demand continued to outweigh the resource available.

Some young people from ethnic minorities spoke with inspectors about their care during the inspection and they commented positively about the care and support they received in maintaining links with their heritage as well as developing a positive self-image.

The service had a full child protection policy based on Surrey County Council's policy and procedure. Safe caring guidelines were incorporated into the foster care agreement but these were not found to fully meet the detail in Standard 9.3.

The service is asked to review the safe caring guidelines in place to ensure all aspects of this standard are met.

The fostering service had a full programme of fostering training but there remain a number of established foster carers who have not been re-trained in child protection for several years. Policy should be developed stating how often this training must be completed and carers must be trained to this frequency with long standing foster carers who have not had this training for a long period being made a priority.

Foster care staff showed good understanding of child protection matters and commitment to ensuring any child protection concern was looked into appropriately.

The manager had processes in place to review child protection referrals and stated that she attended some child protection meetings in order to gain a view of some issues. When reviewing records in team offices evidence of the results about referrals that had been made to the child protection team were not available.

The consultation process was considered appropriate and supportive. Discussions with young people indicated that they considered they were consulted well and felt involved in decisions that occurred in their every day lives.

Records also indicated that where possible foster children's parents were involved in reviews etc. The service may wish to review for itself why only 65 percent of placing social workers considered that they were fully consulted over the placement agreement.

The service used a variety of means to gain children and young people's views such as View Point; a computerised comment system, foster children's meetings, fun days for young children and advocacy services. Foster carers too had a variety of means to discuss their views.

It was also commendable to note that the service had in place meetings and review information formats for the children of foster carers, thus demonstrating that weight is given to views of this group.

In considering the further development of the quality assurance programme for the service, as mentioned in Standard 4 of this report, consideration should be given as to how the service might use surveys (such as those conducted by the Commission) to benefit the management in gaining feedback concerning the service operation.

Information regarding children and young people's health was found in Looked After Children documentation and records demonstrated that health issues and health promotion was given a high profile when evaluating placements that would meet the needs of foster care children and young people. However, the service must ensure that a written health record as specified in Standard 12.4 is developed and maintained for each foster child.

Foster carers were given training in health matters and health promotion both during their initial training and within on-going courses offered. Again a review of the foster carer's training in respect of individual foster children's health needs should be documented as part

of the review process and how any training needs identified will be met. There were good links with the health service, which were continually reviewed to ensure these were of benefit to foster children/young people.

The foster carers all reported that they were fully involved in the educational plans in place for the children and young people and demonstrated during discussions their commitment to ensuring there were good links with the child/ young person's school. Some young people commented that their educational achievement had vastly improved since being in foster care.

This standard did not form a major part of this inspection. However, the requirement of the last inspection had been met with pathway planning training formed part of the overall training plan for foster carers.

Young people report they felt consulted about their plans in general need to consider in relation to consultation information.

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

The agencies recruitment and vetting procedures for staff were evidenced as sound.

Staff interviewed confirmed that they had undergone the recruitment and selection process including a panel interview.

The manager had completed comprehensive review of staffing and identified carers where greater numbers of staff were needed. She had put bids in and received finances to make changes such as additional ATMs, training officer role and additional staff with in larger teams. She also understood the need to keep this issue under review to ensure staffing levels met the needs of the service.

The recently introduced foster carer induction training fully complied with competency based training programmes.

As previously stated there is a clear management structure within the service.

Recent discussions between local authorities identified the need for agreements to be in place between Authorities similar to those between a local authority and private fostering service as describe in 16.7 of the National Minimum Standards.

The management had a good grasp of how to determine workloads and responsibilities using workload management systems throughout the service to determine how effective the service team could be.

Staff reported they were given or had access to relevant working policies and procedures.

Appropriate supervision for qualified staff was in place and social work staff reported that they found the quality of their supervision both helpful and supportive.

The foster carer recruitment strategy had received several national awards in 2004.

The results were further substantiated by the numbers of children/young people placed with individual foster carers not exceeding foster care limits or exemptions being in place where more than 3 children were placed.

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The assessment records reviewed indicated that the procedures fully assessed potential carers against the list of attributes listed in Standard 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards. Staff spoken with expressed great commitment to the work of the fostering service and confidence in their management. This has been an area of development throughout the service this year, which was acknowledged by all of whom inspectors came in contact with. The inspectors found that the training programme was appropriate and good attention had been paid to detail Staff reported they could access both internal and external training and were encouraged to take part.

The addition of a Fostering Service Development Manager responsible for training will give an even greater focus to whether training is effective. Staff confirmed that supervision was taking place on a monthly basis. Newer staff received more frequent supervision and managers were reported to operate an open door policy to providing advice when needed. Appraisals occurred annually.

Many positive comments were received from staff concerning the support they received from team managers and regular team meetings were noted to take place.

This again has been an area of development for example with more self help groups opening, a buddy scheme being introduced and a drop in service being in place.

Communication between foster carers and placing social workers were reported to be very good by all concerned. There was evidence that communication between foster carers and placing social workers was not always as positive.

Standards 24-25 Records

Both standards inspected were found to have minor shortfalls.

There is a file policy but this was not inspected on this occasions. The sample of files inspected demonstrated that information was kept in standardised sequences. Information kept on file at fostering offices was sufficient but some thought could be given to an essential information sheet being provided which included detail of where other information was kept. Some foster carers records were comprehensive whilst others were minimal. A few carers did not keep regular recordings. There was also some confusion about the retention of records.

It was not clear that significant incident forms on file were used in every instance where an incident of concern occurred. In addition the forms contained no outcome section nor assessment or reassessment of any risk.

Administration recording systems were generally well organised. With the range of separate records identified in Standard 25.2 being available.

Whilst a review of all files had occurred in January 2005 it was not clear that files were reviewed in supervision on a regular basis, for example supervising managers had not signed the files. The file audit undertaken noted some information was missing but there was no plan identified to rectify this.

Standard 26 Premises

The standard inspected was found to have minor shortfalls.

Generally premises used by the service were considered to be adequate for their purpose. However, inspectors were concerned where fostering teams were using two open plan offices. These offices were situated amongst a variety of other services provided by the Council. This could lead to the privacy of information concerning both foster children's and foster carers being compromised. Please see the main report for greater detail.

Standards 27-29 Financial requirements

All three standards were met.

The agency operates according to the financial procedures of Surrey County Council.

The financial processes/systems of the agency are understood to be in keeping with standard local authority practice.

The scheme of allowances paid to foster carers has been substantially increased during the past year and is posted on the Surrey County Council Fostering Services website.

Standard 30 Fostering Panels

The Standard was found to have minor shortfalls.

Fostering panels were found to be robust in their decision-making and met the qualification and expertise criteria set out in The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

There was lively debate held with all members contributing to the overall decisions and their

diverse backgrounds assisting in better decisions being made.

The administration of the panel was completed efficiently and effectively with all members being distributed papers within acceptable time limits.

The change required at the last inspection to have an independent chair was being effected during the inspection when a handover from the manager to an independent person was in motion.

Discussions with the independent chair demonstrated that they had suitable qualifications and experience to undertake this role.

Standard 31 Short-term breaks

This standard was met.

Short-term breaks were offered for children generally these were within link schemes for children with disabilities. The addition of a specialised Assistant Team Manager post to co-ordinate services for the link scheme was considered helpful in focusing the specific needs of this service and managing these effectively.

Co-ordinators demonstrated a knowledgeable and thorough approach to assessment and support and reported highly valuing their links and shared location with the disability teams. The team provided a valuable information pack to family link carers including a carers' manual, set of manual handling guidelines and 'safe and sound' guidelines on providing short term breaks for disabled children with families.

Standard 32 Family and Friends as carers

This standard was met.

A kinship policy was in place within the service and this was used to place several children/ young people. The assessed needs of kinship carers were treated in the same manner as other foster carers.

The agency acknowledged that there were potential conflicts between the expectations of the agency and those of the carer. There was a recognition that that a pragmatic approach needs to be applied in such cases, where it has been assessed that the child's best interests are met in that placement.

The potential for conflict was also borne out by inspectors receiving a few comments from placing social workers that some kinship carers were reluctant to take up the support systems which impeded the social workers ability to support kinship placements effectively.

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	
10	21	FS15	That updated child protection training is provided to staff and foster carers as appropriate. There was evidence that staff had received training but not all foster carers.	Immediate effect. 27.02.04
14	11	FS9	That foster carers are clear regarding records required to be maintained and these records are regularly checked.	Immediate effect 27.02.04
29	12	FS9	The outcomes and decision making in relation to concerns/ allegations are recorded in detail on the files of children placed and foster carers	Immediate effect 27.02.04

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 **Ms R Coler** **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager **Mrs S Floyd** **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	Regulation 3 (4)	FS1	Children's Guides be produced in formats that meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in foster care.	By the 31 October 2005
2	Regulation 43 (1)	FS4	Action must be taken to ensure that notifications are forwarded to CSCI without delay.	As from the 28 February 2005
3	Regulation 17 (1)	FS6	The service is advised to review their training in respect of medication administration and are advised to use the Royal Pharmaceutical's Society's publication Care of Medicines in Care Settings as a reference guide.	By the 31 July 2005
4	Regulation 17 (1)	FS8	Additional work is necessary to ensure that in all cases the issues of additional or increased training are identified and either met or planned to be met within the matching process.	By the 31 October 2005
5	Regulation 12 (1) (a) & Regulation 17 (1)	FS9	Priority must be given to ensuring all long-standing foster carers have attended re-training in child protection within acceptable time gaps.	By the 31 July 2005
6	Regulation 15 (1)	FS12	The service must ensure that a written health record as specified in Standard 12.4 is developed and maintained for each foster child.	By the 31 July 2005

7	Regulation 11 (a)	FS16	Written agreements must be in place between Local Authorities similar to those between a local authority and private fostering service as describe in 16.7 of the National Minimum Standards.	By the 31 July 2005
8	Regulation 11 (a)	FS24	The service must ensure that records are retained as required by The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and that all staff are clear about how this should be accomplished.	By the 30 June 2005
9	Regulation 11 (a) and Regulation 13 (2)	FS24	The management must review that all supervising social workers consistently apply the guidance given to foster carers regarding what records should be made in relation to a placement.	By the 31 April 2005
10	Regulation 11 (a)	FS24	Risk assessment forms are required to contain an outcome section and a section, which assesses or reassesses any risks identified.	By the 31 July 2005
11	Regulation 32 (5) (a) & (b)	FS26	The service must undertake a full review of the security of foster care files and staff location in open plan offices is acceptable. A report of this review must be sent to the Commission by the date provided.	By the 31 July 2005

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	It is suggested that the reasons why placing social workers do not know how to gain copies of the statement of purpose would be beneficial.
2	FS1	It is recommended that the manager ask that supervising social workers check that all children and young people are supplied with an up to date Children's Guide.
3	FS2	The Commission concurs with the service's recommendation that a permanent Assistant Team Manager appointment is made to manage the Family Link Service.

4	FS4	It is suggested that monitoring systems in place be further developed to formulate an overall quality assurance programme for the fostering service.
5	FS6	The management is advised to ensure that their plans to review the foster carer assessment form at the time they are planning an admission of a new child/ young person at the home be implemented as soon as possible.
6	FS6	It would also be helpful in the foster carer agreement to advise foster carers that should any work to their premises be undertaken they should report this in order that consideration be given to whether the premises should be re-assessed.
7	FS8	The plan to review assessment and matching process and documentation is implemented as soon as possible.
8	FS9	Policy should be developed stating how often child protection re-training must be completed.
9	FS11	In considering the further development of the quality assurance programme for the service as mentioned in Standard 4 of this report consideration should be given as to how surveys such as those conducted by the Commission would benefit the management in gaining feedback concerning the service operation.
10	FS21	The reasons why communication between foster carers and placing social workers is not always positive should be reviewed and action taken to develop more positive relations.
11	FS24	Some thought could be given to an essential information sheet being provided at the front of a foster child/ young person's file, which included detail of where other information is kept.
12	FS24	The service is further advised to consider developing a type of internal placement plan that provides foster carers with detailed information about the types of actions they need to complete to support the foster care placement. This plan should also document important information, which at the time of inspection was being kept informally by foster carers such as what is the toy that a child takes to bed with them at night.
13	FS24	The management is advised to check that risk assessment forms are used consistently by all supervising social workers.

* 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	54
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	10/02/05
Time of Inspection	0900
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	202

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?

2

The Statement of Purpose contained all relevant information and all parties described in The Foster Care Regulations 2002 Regulation 3 reported that they had or could receive copies of this statement. The management confirmed that further work was being completed to ensure that the family link service was fully embedded within the Statement of Purpose. A short guide to the Statement of Purpose was also produced for information.

The service's policies and procedures were found to reflect the overall statement of purpose.

The manager was found to provide effective leadership, which assisted the development of the service in a proactive manner that worked towards delivering the best possible childcare.

Foster carers and staff of the foster care service were aware, and had copies, of the statement of purpose. At the time of producing graphs from responses 96 placing officers responded to the question about whether they had received a copy of the statement of purpose of those 62.5% stated that they had not. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 Regulation 3 states this must only be made available to these parties. Therefore this is not required within this report. However, as the service manager had made this widely available through a number of means it is suggested that the reasons why placing social workers do not know how to gain copies of the statement of purpose would be beneficial.

Sixty four percent of the 33 responses from children to the Commission's questionnaire responded that they had a copy of the service's Children's Guide. Thirty six percent stated they had not. It is recommended that the manager ask that supervising social workers check that all children and young people are supplied with an up to date Children's Guide. In addition the Children's Guide has not been developed in a range of formats in order to meet the different needs of children and young people placed. For example the format provided would not be easily understood by young children and would need to be simplified and produced in pictorial format for some people with a learning disability. This may be the reason that some children and young people stated they had not received this.

The management confirmed that some work had taken place to meet this criteria but the work had not been completed. The results of this means that some children and young people who do not have Children's Guides in formats that meet their individual needs. It is agreed that where translation into a particular language is required this should be accomplished at the time this is required.

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?	4
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The Fostering Service Manager has extensive child care experience and possesses an MA in Organisational Consultancy in addition to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and a Diploma in Advanced Social Work (Children and Families). The manager has managed the Fostering Service for the last four years and previously was a social work team manager for three years. Surrey County Council Children's Service's has appropriate support teams to ensure that the financial and budgetary management of the service is monitored effectively.

The post of project worker last year has had significant impact on the recruitment and training of new foster carers which is shown in the following figures:

There continues to be significant investment in the service, including improvements to fostering allowances via extra funding. There have been further appointments to the management structure including additional assistant team managers in the larger fostering teams and the addition of a Fostering Service Development Manager to assist in the development of the service.

Foster care service staff made many positive comments to inspectors about the management of the fostering service. It must be noted that this included the four team managers interviewed and their role within the management systems of the fostering service. The Fostering Service's Manager's self assessment form reported that all four foster care managers were completing NVQ IV in Management. In addition the form reported that management team had been provided with supplementary training on leadership and management through Surrey's Impact 3 Programme (internal coaching for management teams). The Commission supports the service in wishing to permanently appoint an Assistant Team Manager to manage the Family Link Service.

Foster carers interviewed also made positive comments regarding the management of the service.

It was therefore concluded that the management of the service was a very positive aspect that had been the driving force in enabling the change that is evident in the service in the past year.

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

There were appropriate procedures in place for the recruitment of staff who managed the foster care service.

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

The staff and foster carers interviewed were clear about the management structure of the service. There were well-established procedures for communication between staff, managers and foster carers. Carers reported that they felt able to contact anyone within the service should they feel the need to do so and were clear who they could report concerns to should the need arise, including contacting senior management. However they also reported that generally they needed to contact the placing social worker then the team manager and would only go to the senior management with concerns they considered were not being dealt with.

There were proper policies regarding foster carer allowances in place, which had been reviewed in the last year and were considered to be one of the factors that had increased the ability of the service to increase the pool of foster carers. Foster care agreements and staff contracts informed them of the need to declare any conflicts of interest.

The management had many systems for reviewing the effectiveness of the fostering service and provided the inspection team with several reports, which were being used to monitor the service. These were found to meet the requirements of Regulation 42 of The fostering Services Regulations 2002. It is suggested that this be further developed to formulate an overall quality assurance programme for the fostering service. In considering the further development of the quality assurance programme for the service, as mentioned in Standard 4 of this report, consideration should be given as to how the service might use surveys (such as those conducted by the Commission) to benefit the management in gaining feedback concerning the service operation.

In questionnaires 57 foster carers responded to the question about whether the fostering service asked for their opinions about the way the foster service runs. Sixty seven percent stated that they had not. In a similar question of the 34 responses received from children and young people 44 percent stated they had not been asked.

The service had also initiated innovative ways of supporting placement stability through scheme called the (HOPE Service).

There was also a corporate parenting strategy in place whose purpose was to improve life chances for looked after children and care leavers, to raise the educational and health attainment of looked after children and care leavers, to improve Surrey children's Services performance in respect of looked after children and care leavers and to listen and respond to looked after children to ensure that policy and practice are informed by service users. The corporate parenting operational group had an action plan for 2005 with set targets to achieve. A final draft of a Corporate Parenting Handbook was produced in December 2004.

A review of the out of hours service needed to support the fostering service had been

undertaken including requesting the views of foster carers.

The service had developed the notification system so that notifications are made to CSCI. However, these were not always sent without delay and some had arrived four months after the event. The manager confirmed that immediate action would be taken to rectify this matter in accordance with Regulation 43 (1) of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	
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.	3
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.	6
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	0
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	3
Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a clear management structure with explicit lines of responsibility, characteristic of an established local authority management arrangement. Surrey County Council has a policy of providing all employees with well-defined job descriptions. The fostering service is a discrete service within the County Children's Services with a senior officer dedicated to overall management. Further additions to the management of the service were being made for example the post of Fostering Service Development Officer and Assistant Team Managers in larger offices of the service were being advertised shortly following the inspection. Reviews of the necessary formation and allocation of staff formed a regular part of the management's agenda and bids for additional funding to support these posts being in place were submitted for approval as necessary.</p> <p>Interviews with the team managers established that they were clear about their duties and responsibilities, the level of delegation and the lines of accountability. Discussions with staff demonstrated that they understood their manager's role and the lines of accountability within the organisation. There are contractual agreements in place outlining conditions of service. Many staff commented positively about the support they received from management and considered that the developments to the service over the past two years were positive.</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?	2
<p>Inspectors visited eight foster care homes around the county during the inspection and found these to be well maintained, homely, nurturing and comfortable. Children and young people interviewed commented that they liked the homes and found that they met their needs. Within the annual review format for foster carers introduced by the fostering service there is a reassessment of the premises. This is used with all new foster carers and as foster carers, who have already been approved, reach their annual review date this format is being used. The management is advised to ensure that their plans to review this information again should a new child/ young person be placed at the home be implemented as soon as possible. It would also be helpful in the foster carer agreement to advise foster carers that should any work to their premises be undertaken they should report this in order that consideration be given to whether the premises should be re-assessed. The service had also developed guidance on minimum space requirements for foster placements which were <i>'produced to provide assessing social workers and panel members within which to consider issues arising from the space available in a potential foster home...'</i></p> <p>In addition there was guidance for social workers on completing health and safety assessments on foster homes and foster care training contained large elements of health and safety training. This was confirmed in both foster carer training records and in discussion with new foster carers. There was specific information available for particular types of care for example Manual Handling Guidelines for carers of children with physical disabilities and the foster carers were assessed using the Fostering Network's framework for Areas of Competence –<i>Providing a safe and caring environment</i>. The service is advised to review their training in respect of medication administration and are advised to use the Royal Pharmaceutical's Society's publication Care of Medicines in Care Settings as a reference guide. A copy of this document was provided to the management following the inspection. In addition it is suggested that the support of a pharmacist in developing both guidance to foster carers and training programmes to be provided would be of assistance.</p> <p>Records of foster carers car insurance and driving licences were on file and checks were made where younger children required the assistance of car seats that the carers knew how to fit these appropriately. An information leaflet regarding seatbelts and restraints was also provided to foster carers.</p> <p>Foster carers inspectors met during the inspection were fully aware that they might be interviewed or visited as a part of this Commission's inspection process.</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?

2

There was good evidence that the fostering service promoted equality and valued diversity when assessing and training foster carers. For example, the second session of Surrey County Council's Skills to foster course concerns equality and diversity providing key messages that *"all children and young people have a history, and are continuously building a sense of identity as they progress to adulthood."* Session three of the training continues to build on the need to assist in building identity as well as how to work within the legal framework for Looked After Children. An information leaflet about Religions and Faiths was also provided for foster carers.

The Commission acknowledges the difficulties in finding a diverse range of placements that reflect all children's ethnic backgrounds. The management had done some work on how to make further links with communities within the County in order to assist in this matter and this was again to form part of the next year's recruitment strategy. The foster carer agreement reinforced the values contained within the equal opportunities policy.

Some young people from ethnic minorities spoke with inspectors about their care during the inspection and they commented positively about the care and support they received in maintaining links with their heritage as well as developing a positive self-image. Young people reported that their activities were encouraged.

The service had also programmed staff training regarding black and ethnic minority training in the coming year.

The service provides a family link service that sets out to provide short breaks to the families of disabled children. Discussions took place with the family link coordinators in both East and West Surrey who expressed the benefits of sharing the same office accommodation as the social workers for disabled children. Again there is a continual recruitment drive to improve the number of link carers in Surrey however the demand continued to outweigh the resource available. Children with disabilities needs were identified appropriately, suitably matched and monitored. Network supports were also identified as well.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The service had a formal matching policy and the matching process had become a lot simpler with a wider diversity of carers available and greater criteria were being used. The manager confirmed that now this had been accomplished she was intending that the assessment and matching process and documentation was reviewed again. Where problems had been identified during the year with a miss-matched placement action had been taken to rectify this.

Matching papers provided to three panels visited were found to be satisfactory in all but one case. In this one case the information was not provided in a coherent manner, which impeded the reader from understanding the issues and information being presented. In addition in this case the manager of the service took this up with the relevant fostering team to ensure they made changes to ensure this did not occur again.

It was positive to note that the service had managed to significantly reduce the number of foster carers who provided for more than three children at any one time and that where this was the case that a panel had agreed this as an exception for reasons which benefited the children or child placed.

The 'Attachment Project' is a multi agency initiative in partnership with academic institutions aimed at building the stability of long term placements, through developing understanding and knowledge about issues of attachment and their relevance to relationships between carers and foster children. An inspector visited this service and found that this was a positive project that actively supports long term fostering and permanent and adoptive placements for children with complex attachment needs. For example, there were good structures in place to deal with unexpected bereavement for children and young people by ensuring the right services were provided and taking action if these were not.

Foster care placement plans were noted to provide specific reference to the matching criteria. Additional work is necessary to ensure that in all cases the issues of additional or increased training are identified and either met or planned to be met within the matching process. The inspectors found that the newly introduced array of forms and checks would assist this process but as these were not fully functional as an integral part of the overall process at times issues were not identified within the matching process. For example in one case foster carers' child protection training had not been updated for some years yet this was an integral need of the child's placement being proposed and no requirement was placed on the foster carers to update their knowledge when this placement was made when placing the child.

Young people stated that they felt involved in the matching process whilst in the survey of the 32 responses received 39 percent stated that they were asked for their opinions about the foster carers by the foster care service and 41 percent stated they were not. Please also see comments in Standard 11.

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**

The service had a full child protection policy based on Surrey County Council's policy and procedure. Safe caring guidelines were incorporated into the foster care agreement but these were not found to fully meet the detail in Standard 9.3 which ask for example that the guidelines are written in consultation with the carer and everyone in the household and explained clearly and appropriately to the child where possible. The service is asked to review the safe caring guidelines in place to ensure all aspects of this standard are met. The service was re-developing their whistle blowing policy and developing a separate bullying policy, which was in the consultation stage at the time of inspection.

The service was completing a review of their missing child procedures at the time of inspection however, foster carers understood the action that they had to take should a child/young person go missing including the out of hours service they would need to contact.

The fostering service had a full programme of fostering training but there remain a number of established foster carers who have not been re-trained in child protection for several years. Policy should be developed stating how often this training must be completed and carers must be trained to this frequency with long standing foster carers who have not had this training for a long period being made a priority.

An inspector sampled the training provided for foster carers regarding child protection. The Child Protection training course was developed for new foster carers, as one of the four mandatory training courses they must attend. The particular course attended by the Inspector was in two parts, Part 1 was attended by the same group the previous week and Part 2 consisted of building on and expanding the knowledge of Part 1. The training is advertised and any Foster carer can apply. This particular course has proved to be very popular, there were twelve attendees in total made up of newly approved, recommended but not yet approved, and moderate to very experienced Foster Carers. In order to cater for the different needs of Foster Carers the course is also arranged to take place over two consecutive mornings from 10am to 2pm and on a Saturday where parts 1 and 2 are taught as a long one-day course. The venues are also varied in order to attract Foster Carers from all parts of Surrey.

The training is a basic awareness raising/introduction course and the mix of Foster Carers on the 7th was helpful when group work was carried out. The training linked well to other agencies, like the CP referral teams and stressed the importance of language and referring if worried. A number of helpful publications were made available to Foster Carers and a suggested further reading list. The Independent Trainer reported that the course could be made to fit the special needs of Foster Carers. For example, a taped version of the training was available for a Foster Carer with dyslexia. Foster care training also linked to matters relating to bullying and foster carers were able to discuss the issues that looked after children might face in relation to bullying with inspectors; for example that young people themselves may be bullies. It was also positive to note that the service had recently undertaken training with young people in foster care regarding bullying ensuring that young people were aware of their rights.

Foster care staff showed good understanding of child protection matters and commitment to ensuring any child protection concern was looked into appropriately.

The manager had processes in place to review child protection referrals and stated that she attended some child protection meetings in order to gain a view of some issues. When reviewing records in team offices evidence of the results about referrals that had been made

to the child protection team were not available. The management is asked to ensure that any referral made is followed up and records of the results of the referral placed on file.

There was a behaviour management policy in place which outlined which are unacceptable and acceptable punishments/ sanctions and provided guidance about how these matters should be recorded. In the Commission's questionnaire fifty four foster carers responded to whether they had what punishments are acceptable. Of these 89 percent confirmed that they had. When asked if placing social workers had been made clear of the measures of control to be used by foster carers 90 percent stated they had and 94 percent found the foster carers practice acceptable.

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

Contact arrangements were specified and well organised. In discussion foster carers themselves placed emphasis on the importance of contact generally and appropriate training in the Skills backed this up to Foster course (Fostering Competency 1.2).

A few comments were received from placing Social Workers about negative attitudes towards contact but overall the comments received praised the manner in which this was handled by foster 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?

2

The consultation process was considered appropriate and supportive. Discussions with young people indicated that they considered they were consulted well and felt involved in decisions that occurred in their every day lives.

Of the 39 children and young people who responded to the questionnaire about whether their opinions were sought by foster carers 51 percent stated they were often asked for their views, 26 percent stated that they were sometimes asked for their views, 10 percent stated they were not asked very often and 13 percent stated that they were never asked.

Thirty two children and young people responded to the question concerning whether the foster care service ever asked for their opinions 59 percent stated that they were and 41 percent stated that they were not. Forty-nine foster carers responded to the question about whether they were consulted about important decisions' regarding the foster children's lives. In considering the further development of the quality assurance programme for the service, as mentioned in Standard 4 of this report, consideration should be given as to how the service might use surveys (such as those conducted by the Commission) to benefit the management in gaining feedback concerning the service operation.

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?**

2

Information regarding children and young people's health was found in Looked After Children documentation and records demonstrated that health issues and health promotion was given a high profile when evaluating placements that would meet the needs of foster care children and young people. However, the service must ensure that a written health record as specified in Standard 12.4 is developed and maintained for each foster child.

Foster carers were given training in health matters and health promotion both during their initial training and within on-going courses offered. Again a review of the foster carer's training in respect of individual foster children's health needs should be documented as part of the review process and how any training needs identified will be met. Foster carers who spoke with inspectors were knowledgeable and supportive of ensuring that children and young people's health needs were met. For example by assisting in the, developing proactive health regimes, which developed a more positive self-image. In the 55 questionnaires received from foster carers regarding whether they received sufficient information before children/ young people were placed with them regarding the children's needs 86 percent stated that they had.

There were good links with the health service, which were continually reviewed to ensure these were of benefit to foster children/young people. The services of the Looked After Children's Nurse were linked to the service's programmes of support. In addition the corporate strategy was considering how Surrey County Council might promote the physical health of foster children and were pursuing some options at the time of inspection that were found to positively support good health. The service had also been involved in some central government initiatives around staying healthy and organised some local events for children in foster care around this issue.

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

Again the corporate strategy of providing all foster carers with a suitable computer package, including lessons and advice on keeping children safe when using the internet was considered a supportive and positive measure in assisting in meeting educational needs and encouraging foster children to meet their full potential.

Foster care induction and on-going courses again supported foster carers knowledge and understanding of the education system and educational issues that may be faced by foster children.

The foster carers all reported that they were fully involved in the educational plans in place for the children and young people and demonstrated during discussions their commitment to

ensuring there were good links with the child/ young person's school. For example by ensuring that children took active part in Book Day by dressing up as their favourite fictional character, attending parent teacher evenings, assisting with homework and providing an environment conducive to study.

Some young people commented that their educational achievement had vastly improved since being in foster care.

Arrangements were made where children or young people were excluded so that they were organised and occupied if excluded from school.

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

This standard did not form a major part of this inspection. However, the requirement of the last inspection had been met with pathway planning training formed part of the overall training plan for foster carers.

Young people report they felt consulted about their plans in general need to consider in relation to consultation information.

The pre-inspection information provided confirmed that a Leaving Care Personal Advisor is linked to any young person age 16 plus in foster care. Their task is to ensure a Pathway Plan is developed in conjunction with the Foster Carer and the young person in placement.

Therefore the inspectors concluded that evidence indicated this standard was met.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service has a recruitment policy and procedure and an equal opportunities statement. A sample of twenty-three staff files were inspected. This was supported by a recruitment and selection checklist, which provides guidance to ensure managers follow good practice when recruiting.

Staff files held an abundance of information; however in the main they contained: Photographic and certificated evidence of identity, copies of qualifications and certificates, application forms and employment history including explanation of any gaps in employment, medical questionnaires, between two and four written references with verification for more recently appointed staff. There was documented evidence of satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau checks in all of the staff files inspected. Key information for the CSCI inspection was held in the front of the files and therefore was easily accessible. The staff files were held in secure cabinets.

Staff interviewed confirmed that they had undergone the recruitment and selection process including a panel interview.

A sample of foster carer recruitment records was inspected and found to be of the same high quality. Some consideration should be given to the location of CRB records held on foster carers please also refer to information provided in Standard 26 of this report.

In conclusion the agencies recruitment and vetting procedures were evidenced as sound.

Total number of staff of the agency:

65

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

X

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?**

2

As previously stated there is a clear management structure within the service.

Recent discussions between local authorities identified the need for agreements to be in place between Authorities similar to those between a local authority and private fostering service as describe in 16.7 of the National Minimum Standards. The Commission would agree with this assessment and asks that this matter be taken forward as a matter of priority to ensure that there is clarity about the delegated responsibilities from one local authority to another.

The management had a good grasp of how to determine workloads and responsibilities using workload management systems throughout the service to determine how effective the service team could be. For example the manager described the review of administration staff requirements taking place at the time of inspection and understood the need to ensure that the growing numbers of carers was reflected in the administration support provided. The roles of administration staff were being reviewed and were intended to be developed to be more in line with the functional needs of the foster care service.

Staff reported they were given or had access to relevant working policies and procedures.

Appropriate supervision for qualified staff was in place and social work staff reported that they found the quality of their supervision both helpful and supportive.

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?**

4

The manager had completed a comprehensive review of staffing and identified where greater numbers of staff were needed. She had put bids in and received finances to make changes such as additional ATMs, training officer role and additional staff with in larger teams. She also understood the need to keep this issue under review to ensure staffing levels met the needs of the service.

The foster carer recruitment strategy had received several national awards in 2004: The ASCC Community Care Award for Excellence in Communication where the service was awarded third place The Recruitment Business Awards presented the team with three awards in September 2004 and the CIPD Recruitment and Marketing Awards presented the “ Best Writers” award for the fostering recruitment material. The successful recruitment strategy had resulted in the numbers of recruited foster carers being increased in the last year. The results were further substantiated by the numbers of children/young people placed with individual foster carers not exceeding foster care limits or exemptions being in place where more than 3 children were placed.

The assessment records reviewed indicated that the procedures fully assessed potential carers against the list of attributes listed in Standard 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Staff spoken with expressed great commitment to the work of the fostering service and confidence in their management. A whistle blowing policy was present.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This has been an area of development throughout the service this year, which was acknowledged by all of whom inspectors came in contact with. The inspectors found that the training programme was appropriate and good attention had been paid to details such as ensuring that the location, timing and days of the week varied so that that foster carers could make arrangements to attend training. Further thought was being given at the time of inspection as to how to support foster carers with young children in attending courses, for example by providing some type of crèche facility.

Staff reported they could access both internal and external training and were encouraged to take part. The joint training took place and some foster carers noted the increased availability to attend courses run for Social Workers. The coming year's training programme for staff included the following Impact Training, The judicial protocol, group work skills training, the role of the supervising social worker, assessment training, briefings and coaching in the use of the appraisal system, black and ethnic minority training and attachment training.

Staff and foster carers had appropriate appraisal systems in place. In the case of foster carers this is being rolled out over a period of time as their annual review date comes up.

The addition of a Fostering Service Development Manager responsible for training will give an even greater focus to whether training is effective. Each element of the Skills to Foster Course had a feedback sheet for participants to complete regarding the standard of the course which covered issues such as How do you feel the learning outcomes were met and how do you think that the foster course could have been improved.

The Manager and Fostering Service Development Officer confirmed that they saw their roles as providing staff with up to date knowledge and information about changes to legislation and detail of good practice documents.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Staff confirmed that supervision was taking place on a monthly basis. Newer staff received more frequent supervision and managers were reported to operate an open door policy to providing advice when needed. Appraisals occurred annually.</p> <p>Many positive comments were received from staff concerning the support they received from team managers and regular team meetings were noted to take place. Staff also stated that many informal support systems were in place and there was a good team spirit where staff worked in co-operation and support of one another.</p> <p>Fifty-one foster carers responded to the question about whether the fostering service was good at letting them know information concerning the foster children in their care. Eighty-six percent stated that they were.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>This again has been an area of development for example with more self help groups opening, a buddy scheme being introduced and a drop in service being in place.</p> <p>Records of Social Worker visits were found on file and ensured one unannounced visit took place in the year. A formatted form recorded visit. Some of the forms were not fully completed and there was diversity in the quality of information provided.</p> <p>Annual reviews were being implemented and the documentation was evident. Foster carers reported they were being encouraged to attend these meeting. In discussion foster carers also reported that they found the service supportive and attentive to their needs. Fifty-eight foster carers responded to the Commission's questionnaire regarding whether they felt well supported by the Fostering Service. Fifty eight percent stated that they were very satisfied, 10 percent stated the were quite well satisfied, 28 percent stated they were satisfied most of the time and only 3 percent stated they did not get enough support.</p> <p>Reports for foster carer reviews were found on file but not all long standing foster carers had received an annual review when the inspection occurred. However, these were planned to occur in the months preceding the inspection.</p> <p>Communication between foster carers and placing social workers were reported to be very good by all concerned. There was evidence that communication between foster carers and placing social workers was not always as positive and comments were received from both placing social workers and foster carers about the lack of good communication between them. This is an area that the service should review and make arrangements to improve over the next year. The service acknowledged that this area requires further development.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

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

Foster carers who met with inspectors stated that they were supervised by named social workers who carers reported provided them good quality advice and assistance. Foster carer handbooks were found in all homes visited and carers reported they received updates as necessary.

There was a clear and detailed foster carer handbook that was provided to all foster carers the inspectors spoke with. Fifty-six foster carers responded to the question concerning whether they received information setting out their expectations of foster carers. Eighty eight percent stated they were in receipt of such information.

Foster care agreements were found to be in place on all files and foster carers confirmed that they had signed these.

Support provided included the systems outlined in Standard 22.7 and foster carers were aware of the processes and procedures in place to complain about the foster care service including how any allegations concerning themselves as foster carers would be handled.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The redeveloped pre-training and induction programme was found to be excellent with an appropriate emphasis on both carers completing the course before this could be reviewed and panel. Foster carers were being issued with training portfolios to keep record of the training they have undertaken. The programme consisted of both Skills to foster courses as well as a learning and development programme for foster carers.

Experienced foster carers took part in foster care training programmes and the buddy system supported them as well. Foster carers reported that they felt the pre approval courses and induction courses were very helpful and one person stated they particularly appreciated their introduction to the whole team once they had been approved saying this made them feel very welcomed.

It was positive to note that a course had been developed for training foster carers children who received a certificate of attendance at the course. The foster carer's children's group that an inspector attended showed how this course had benefited these children who presented as very knowledgeable and supportive of foster care children. For example their understanding of confidentiality was good.

It was also positive to note that of the 104 placing social workers who responded to the question regarding whether the foster carers looked after the foster child well 77 percent stated they did this very well, 18 percent that they did this quite well, 3 percent that this was ok most of the time and 2 percent stated this was accomplished quite badly. No respondent stated that his was accomplished very badly indeed.

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

There is a file policy but this was not inspected on this occasions. The sample of files inspected demonstrated that information was kept in standardised sequences. Information kept on file at fostering offices was sufficient but some thought could be given to an essential information sheet being provided which included detail of where other information was kept. For example inspectors understand that more detailed records were kept by placing social workers and accessible on the Surrey intranet however they had concerns that should the internet not be accessible some information required in an emergency would be unavailable to the fostering service.

The service is further advised to consider developing a type of internal placement plan that provides foster carers with detailed information about the types of actions they need to complete to support the foster care placement. This plan should also document important information, which at the time of inspection was being kept informally by foster carers such as what is the toy that a child takes to bed with them at night.

Recording books were provided to foster carers. Some foster carers records were comprehensive whilst others were minimal. A few carers did not keep regular recordings. There was also some confusion about the retention of records. It was said that these were destroyed and not given back to supervising social workers should a child leave or should the number of records exceed the storage space available however secure storage was found in place on all foster care homes visited. The service must ensure that records are retained as required by The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and that all staff are clear about how this should be accomplished. The inspectors acknowledge that the service had developed policy and guidance for foster carers recordings. The service had also organised training courses in respect of records and the storage of information and had already planned three courses, which were to be held between April and June 2005. However, supervising social workers must ensure that adequate recording is occurring for every foster child/ young person.

It was not clear that significant incident forms on file were used in every instance where an incident of concern occurred. The management is advised to check that these are used consistently. In addition the forms contained no outcome section nor assessment or reassessment of any risk.

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?**

2

Administration recording systems were generally well organised. With the range of separate records identified in Standard 25.2 being available.

Whilst a review of all files had occurred in January 2005 it was not clear that files were reviewed in supervision on a regular basis, for example supervising managers had not signed the files. The file audit undertaken noted some information was missing but there was no plan identified to rectify this.

The service need to ensure there is an ongoing supervision system which records when files are examined/revisited by management and details any actions that need to be taken on review of these files.

Please also refer to comments about retention of information made in Standard 24 and in addition comments made in Standard 26 about the storage of some confidential information. Within the grid below please note that of the 27 foster carers who left the service six were short-term relative carers, thereby leaving the service a loss of only 21 mainstream fostering households.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

375

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

465

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

347

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

88

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

27

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

141.47

Maximum £

422.44

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?

2

Generally premises used by the service were considered to be adequate for their purpose. However, inspectors were concerned where two open plan offices were being used for a variety of reasons. These being: the storage of confidential information was not located near the fostering team, in addition access to the files could be made by all those using the office, the fostering team did not have total control that the files were locked away each evening, there was a lack of privacy with the team being located next to a team organising school meals leading to potentially confidential information being shared inappropriately.

There was minimal meeting room space available and this had to be booked along side other Surrey services located on the same floor of the building. This issue was of great concern to the service as well as the Commission and had been noted with the council. The Commission adds their support to changes being made to ensure that information regarding looked after children is appropriately organised.

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 agency operates according to the financial procedures of Surrey County Council. Relevant regulations and guidelines were considered to be conformed with, e.g., those covering tax and national insurance.

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 financial processes/systems of the agency are understood to be in keeping with standard local authority practice.

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 scheme of allowances paid to foster carers has been substantially increased during the past year and is posted on the Surrey County Council Fostering Services website. This initiative was understood to represent a key part of the service's strategy for recruitment and retention of foster carers. Foster carers voiced appreciation for these developments.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Fostering panels were found to be robust in their decision-making and met the qualification and expertise criteria set out in The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Three panels were visited during the inspection. These were found to provide a good environment that was friendly and focused. There was lively debate held with all members contributing to the overall decisions and their diverse backgrounds assisting in better decisions being made. Equal weight was given to each person's point of view. Foster carers were always thanked for their contribution to the service and provided with time to respond to questions asked. The format of only the chair asking questions had been implemented after direct feedback from foster carers that being asked questions by one person only would be beneficial. The administration of the panel was completed efficiently and effectively with all members being distributed papers within acceptable time limits.

Issues about assessments that were not appropriately made were taken back to the team who provided the assessment.

The change required at the last inspection to have an independent chair was being effected during the inspection when a handover from the manager to an independent person was in motion.

Discussions with the independent chair demonstrated that they had suitable qualifications and experience to undertake this role. There were also systems in place for the chair to inform the manager of concerns they may have in relation to information provided to the panel.

An information leaflet was available about foster panels for foster carers which explained both the process involved, who sits on panels and how to appeal panel decisions.

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

Short-term breaks were offered for children generally these were within link schemes for children with disabilities. The addition of a specialised Assistant Team Manager post to co-ordinate services for the link scheme was considered helpful in focusing the specific needs of this service and managing these effectively.

Co-ordinators demonstrated a knowledgeable and thorough approach to assessment and support and reported highly valuing their links and shared location with the disability teams. The team provided a valuable information pack to family link carers including a carers' manual which contained for example a set of manual handling guidelines and 'safe and sound' guidelines on providing short term breaks for disabled children with families.

Some comment was made regarding the inappropriateness of the National Minimum Standards in relation to these placements. The inspectors acknowledge that work is being done about this matter within the Commission. However the records and procedures reviewed were found to meet the standards required.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A kinship policy was in place within the service and this was used to place several children/ young people. A dedicated Kinship Care Scheme had been developed and placed within the Adoption and Permanency Service to promote the notion of permanency for these children.

A kinship policy was in place within the service and this was used to place several children/ young people. The assessed needs of kinship carers were treated in the same manner as other foster carers.

The agency acknowledged that there were potential conflicts between the expectations of the agency and those of the carer. There was a recognition that that a pragmatic approach needs to be applied in such cases, where it has been assessed that the child's best interests are met in that placement.

The potential for conflict was also borne out by inspectors receiving a few comments from placing social workers that some kinship carers were reluctant to take up the support systems which impeded the social workers ability to support kinship placements effectively. Some placing social workers commented that they would not use this type of placement for any other form of foster placement, as it would not be suitable.

Recently two workers had been appointed to specifically support to kinship carers. This will assist the service in identifying the specific needs of the children placed with family and ensuring that these are met.

The inspection team would acknowledge that this did not form a major part of this inspection and no kinship carers were interviewed as a part of the inspection process.

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 10th February 2005 to 28th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

YES

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 20 May 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NA

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NA

Other: <enter details here>

NA

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 _____ 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 _____ 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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