

# inspection report

## Fostering Services

### **Progress Childrens Services Ltd**

Progress House

Millfields Road

Bilston

Wolverhampton

West Midlands

WV14 0QR

10th January 2005

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

### The role of CSCI is to:

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

## Inspection Methods & Findings

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

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

## FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO

**Name of Authority**

**Address**

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES

**Name of Agency**

Progress Childrens Services Ltd

**Tel No**

01902 561066

**Address**

Progress House, Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton,  
West Midlands, WV14 0QR

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

progresschildrensservices.co.uk

**Registered Number of IFA**

E080000252

**Name of Registered Provider**

Progress Childrens Services Ltd

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

26th August 2003

**Date of latest registration certificate**

26th August 2003

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

YES

**Date of last inspection**

10/02/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		10th January 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Janet Manders	133244
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Sarah Moore	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>			

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

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**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

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**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

**(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**
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- 6. Records**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
- 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 Progress Childrens Services Ltd. 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.**

Progress Fostering is part of Progress Children's Services based in the Wolverhampton area. The Fostering service has been established in 2001. The Agency has recently opened two new offices in Birmingham and Hemel Hempstead to enable them to better support their foster carers and provide placements in a wider geographical area. Progress Fostering currently provides placements for 37 children and young people. Placements are provided by 34 approved foster carers, these foster carers represent a varied cultural, religious and linguistic background.

Progress's main focus is to provide planned long term placements. However, they also provide some short term and same day placements if there is information available to allow appropriate matching with the foster carers.

Training is valued by the organisation and on-going courses are available in addition to the four day initial training course attended by all prospective carers.

Staff and foster carers have regular supervision and 24 hour support is available to carers. Specific arrangements have been made to meet the particular requirements of individual children, including structural alterations, aids, adaptations and personal support. Matching is identified as a crucial part of the service offered by Progress in providing supportive placements to a range of children and young people.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### Inspector's Summary

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

This is the second inspection of this service; the previous inspection took place on 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2003. To the disappointment of the Agency they were not inspected during the year April 2003 - March 2004. Whilst the Agency has made significant improvement since the last inspection, the Director feels that the improvement would have been more significant if they had been inspected in the last year.

This inspection took place between 10<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the Fostering Panel was observed on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2005. In addition to the inspection work undertaken within the fostering service itself, information was sought from young people placed by the fostering service, foster carers, and placing social workers. Sadly only 6% (2) of foster carers returned questionnaires, however, inspectors were able to meet a considerable number of foster carers at meetings during the inspection. Foster carers' views were also sought through visits to four foster carer households. Placing officers views were sought through a questionnaire, of which 10 were returned. A questionnaire was used to gather views from young people, aged 7+. 8 of these were returned.

Whilst inspectors have made a number of requirements, they are confident that the Agency will address them in an efficient and speedy manner. Inspectors are aware that many of the requirements have already been addressed at the time of writing this report.

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

**This Standard was not met due to a minor shortfall.**

The Statement of Purpose is clear and accessible, however, it requires additional details regarding the Agency's services and arrangements for same day placements to ensure that it is fully compliant with The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Children's Guide also requires additional information. The inspectors were informed that it was planned for the Guide to be revised in the near future.

#### **Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)**

**1 of the 2 standards assessed were met, 1 standard was not met due to a minor shortfall.**

The Agency's Manager and Director both have very relevant experience and qualifications, and provide good leadership and management of the service. Appropriate recruitment processes were demonstrated with the required checks generally carried out before commencing work. However, the Agency must ensure that references are followed up by telephone.

#### **Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

**1 of the 2 standards assessed were met, 1 standard was not met due to a minor shortfall.**

The service is well managed, with clear lines of accountability and good communication. The manager has established systems for monitoring all the required indicators, however, she must supply the Commission for Social Care Inspection with a report of her review of the quality of care.

#### **Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)**



**6 of the 9 standards assessed were met, of these 2 standards were exceeded, 3 standards were not met due to minor shortfalls.**

Progress Fostering Service and its foster carers work hard to ensure that young people are kept safe and their welfare is promoted. The service particularly excels in promoting and valuing diversity, and meeting young people's health needs. Further attention needs to be given to ensuring that the Agency and foster carers have all the relevant information and plans in respect of the young people they are caring for, to ensure that carers are able to fully meet the needs of the young people.

**Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15-23)**

**4 of the 9 standards assessed were met, of which 2 standards were exceeded, 5 standards were not met due to minor shortfalls.**

Staff receive a high quality of support and supervision from the manager and have access to a wide range of training opportunities. Whilst the Agency fully supports the need for rigorous recruitment processes for both staff and foster carers, the Agency must make minor changes to strengthen their processes to ensure that they are compliant with The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Foster carers receive a wide range of training but the programme must be increased to include all areas identified in the National Minimum Standards. The Agency follows good practice by using an independent person to undertake Foster Care Reviews. However, reviews have not always been undertaken within the necessary timescales, additionally there is a need to ensure that all information is available in a written form prior to the review taking place. The Agency needs to ensure that its Foster Care Agreement is compliant with Schedule 5 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

**Records (Standards 24-25)**

**1 of the 2 standards assessed was met, 1 standard was not met due to a minor shortfall.**

Records were well organised and contained good quality information in the majority of cases, however, the Agency must ensure that an up-to-date comprehensive case record is maintained for all young people placed. The service's administrative records are kept to a high standard, both in paper form and by electronic records.

**Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)**

**This Standard was met.**

The Fostering Service shares the premises with the Residential Service's administrative staff. The premises, processes and equipment meet the needs of the service. The Agency has two other offices, one in Birmingham and one in Hemel Hempstead, but the main functions of the service are undertaken from this office.

**Financial Requirements (Standard 27-29)**

**3 of the 3 standards assessed were met.**

There are no concerns arising from this inspection in respect of the viability or financial processes of this service.

**Fostering Panels (Standard 30)**

**This standard was exceeded.**

The Fostering Panel operates in an organised and professional way. Panel members were well trained and were able to effectively contribute to the Panel's business. Members demonstrated an ability to challenge information presented where appropriate, whilst making positive comments as to how issues and shortcomings could be dealt with. The Agency is to be commended on the operation of its Fostering Panel.

**Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)**

**This standard was not assessed, as Progress does not provide this service.**

**Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

**This standard was not assessed, as Progress does not provide this service.**

Inspectors would like to thanks all staff, foster carers and young people who assisted during this inspection.

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## 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	

**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	YES
A manager should be appointed within three months subject to determination of 'fitness' by the CSCI		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	YES
Planned long term placements for children		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	YES
Short term placements for children		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Janet Manders	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Sarah Moore	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Brian Lock	Signature	_____
Date	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2005		_____

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The Statement of Purpose is clear about the nature of "same day" placements and incorporates the details identified in NMS 1.4 and must contain the contact details of the Commission.  Timescale of 31/07/03 not met	01.04.05
2	3 (3)	FS1	The Registered Person must ensure that the Children's Guide is updated so that it includes full details of the complaint's procedure and the full contact details for the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	01.04.05
3	3 (4)	FS1	The Registered Person must ensure that the updated Children's Guide is distributed as required by Regulation 3 (4) of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002.	01.04.05
4	20 (1)	FS3	The Registered Person must ensure that all written references for staff employed by the fostering agency are followed up by telephone enquiries	21.03.05
5	42 (2)	FS4	A report of the review of quality of care must be supplied to the Commission when completed.	01.05.05
6	11 (a)	FS6	The Registered Person must ensure that all foster carers are aware of their duty to promote the safety of young people and that they fulfil this duty in all areas of care.	01.04.05
7	34(3)	FS8	There is a system in place, which ensures the provision of foster placement agreements for each placement made.  Timescale "for next placement" not met	14.03.05
8	34	FS14	There are written plans for young people moving towards independence, which are	01.04.05

			part of their Pathway Plan. Timescale of End June 2003 not met	
9	27 (1)	FS15	The Registered Person must ensure that CRB's are undertaken in respect of all adults in the household or who have substantive contact with young people.	01.04.05
10	22 (1)	FS15	The Registered Person must ensure that the record of persons working for the Agency includes all elements required by Schedule 2.	01.05.05
11	27 (2) & (4)	FS17	The Registered Person must ensure that the addresses of foster carers and of referees are available to the Fostering Panel and must be easily available on the carers file.	01.05.04
12	3 (4) & 17 (1)	FS21	The Registered Person must ensure that adequate respite care services are developed to meet the needs of carers and children.	01.06.05
13	29 (1)	FS21	The Registered Person must ensure that all foster carers are reviewed annually.	01.04.05
14	28(5)(b)	FS22	All the foster Care Agreements in place on carers' files must comply with Schedule 5 of the Regulations.  Timescale – Whilst the Agency states this has been completed, not all elements are included in the Foster Care Agreement.	01.04.05
15	27 (1)	FS23	The Registered Person must ensure that all persons approved as a foster carer undertakes appropriate pre and post approval training.	01.04.05
16	17 (1)	FS23	The Registered Person must ensure that the programme of on-going training is extended to include all the training needs identified in the standards.	01.05.05
17	40	FS24	The Provider must ensure that an up-to-date comprehensive case record is maintained for each young person in foster care.	01.04.05

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The Registered Person should include in the Statement of Purpose brief details regarding staff's relevant work experience.
2	FS2	The Registered Manager should consider undertaking a Diploma in Management or similar.
3	FS4	The Registered Person should ensure that a policy for foster carers is developed, informing them of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.
4	FS8	The Registered Person should ensure that the Agency's referral form allows sufficient room to include all essential information to allow the Agency to make an informed decision as to whether foster carers can meet the needs of the young person.
5	FS6& FS9	Safe caring guidelines should be written, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household. A copy should be kept on file and the guidelines should be cleared with the child's social worker and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child.
6	FS9	The Registered Person should ensure that all risk assessments undertaken are fully cognisant of risks that may pertain to a young person placed with foster carers.
7	FS10	The Registered Person should ensure that a risk assessment as required by Standard 10.6 is undertaken prior to contact taking place and that this is recorded in writing and placed on file.
8	FS11	The Registered Person should ensure that the views of young people, sought as part of the Foster Carers' Annual Review, are included on the foster carers file in addition to on the young person's file.
9	FS13	The Registered Person should ensure each young person has a Personal Education Plan.
10	FS15	The Registered Person should ensure that CRB checks are securely stored (not on foster carers' files) and should be destroyed once viewed by an inspector from the Commission for Social Care Inspection.
11	FS15	The Registered Person should ensure that an interview forms part of the selection process, even if there is only one candidate for the post.



12	FS16	The Registered Person should ensure that all staff have accurate and up to date job descriptions.
13	FS20	The Registered Person should ensure that the record of supervision is signed by both supervisor and supervisee in order to demonstrate agreement with the accuracy of the record.
14	FS21	The Registered Person should ensure that the views of all those involved should be obtained in writing prior to the review meeting, and included with the review report.
15	FS22	The Registered Person should ensure that foster carers receive supervision every six weeks in accordance with the Agency's policy.
16	FS22	The Registered Person should ensure that the Foster Carers' Handbook is updated regularly, and copies of amended or new documents are given to all carers.
17	FS23	The Registered Person should ensure that pre-approval training includes opportunities to benefit from the experience and knowledge of experienced carers.
18	FS24	The Registered Person should ensure that all records are adequately completed and signed.
19	FS25	The Registered Person should ensure that regular monitoring of records is undertaken and that remedial action is taken where necessary.
20	FS30	The Registered Person should ensure that the person appointed to the social work vacancy on panel should have experience of fostering.
21	FS30	The Registered Person should ensure that the panel recommend the types of placement carers should be approved for, and consider any training implications of that approval.

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

**PART B****INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent

10

Survey of placing authorities

YES

Foster carer survey

YES

Foster children survey

YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals

YES

- Directors of Social services

YES

- Child protection officer

YES

- Specialist advisor (s)

NO

- Local Foster Care Association

NO

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements

YES

- Interview with children

YES

- Interview with foster carers

YES

- Interview with Agency staff

YES

- Contact with parents

NO

- Contact with supervising social workers

YES

- Examination of files

YES

Individual interview with manager

YES

Information from provider

YES

Individual interviews with key staff

YES

Group discussion with staff

NO

Interview with panel chair

YES

Observation of foster carer training

NO

Observation of foster panel

YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

YES

Date of Inspection

10/1/05

Time of Inspection

10:00

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

73.5

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

Inspectors were provided with Progress Children's Services Statement of Purpose for the fostering service. It had been approved by the Directors of Progress on 11/11/04 and is scheduled to be reviewed in March 2005.

Whilst the Statement of Purpose is well presented in a clear, accessible format, which is designed to be easily up-dated, it does not include information regarding specific services. Within the Statement of Purpose there is a reference to undertaking Life Story Work at a fee to be negotiated. After discussion with inspectors the Director felt that this area of work is no longer undertaken by the Agency and will therefore be removed from the Statement of Purpose.

The statement contains a list of staff with their job title, start date and qualifications, but this list does not detail staff experience prior to commencement with Progress, which should be included. The statement contains details of the procedures for recruiting, approving, training and supporting carers, but does not contain any information about the processes followed when reviewing carers, and this detail should be added. Details of the requirements and arrangements for same day placements should also be included.

The Children's Guide features a cartoon monkey called Cheeky and gives reassuring information to young people fostered, although through frequent references to 'your new family' it appears more suited to long term, rather than short-term placements.

The guide covers broad information on how to make a complaint, but greater detail and the inclusion of a complaint form or card would be more empowering to children. The manager informed the inspectors that it was planned to include a complaints leaflet within a Welcome Pack for children, which was in the process of development at the time of the inspection.

There is no information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate, and the address of the Commission for Social Care Inspection must be included as well as the phone number, along with a brief explanation of the role of the commission in relation to children fostered.

Feedback from carers and children indicated that the distribution of the children's guide had been uneven, resulting in a number of children not having received a guide. The guide needs, therefore to be revised in the areas identified, and a copy provided to each foster carer and child.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

Both the Director and the Manager have wide experience within the childcare field. The Agency has recently appointed a Regional Manager who has a role to ensure the consistency of practice throughout the Agency. The Agency is to make an application to the Commission for Social Care Inspection for the Regional Manager to be considered as the Responsible Individual for the Agency.

The Manager has a professional qualification in social work, and holds a Certificate in Management Studies, which has been agreed as an equivalent to the NVQ 4 in management. Nonetheless, the inspectors consider that the Manager would achieve positive benefits and increased confidence by undertaking a Diploma or similar management qualification as discussed. The inspectors saw evidence that the manager was able to exercise effective leadership of the fostering Agency.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

2

The evidence required under Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations was in place and demonstrated that those carrying on and managing the Agency were suitable people to undertake that role. However, the Agency has not established the practice of following up written references with telephone enquiries, and this needs to take place in all future appointments.

Both the Manager and the Human Resources Manager were fully aware of the importance of these checks in ensuring the safety of young people placed with the Agency.

## 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 previous inspection undertaken in February 2003 reported that:

*“Progress has some established systems for monitoring and controlling the service it provides. There are records in place of all foster carers, children and young people placed and of any accidents, absences, allegations or restraints. There are records of Panel meetings, staff meetings and it is planned that there will be staff appraisals which are recorded”.*

Inspectors confirmed that progress had been made in this area with regular staff appraisals being undertaken of all staff by the Manager.

The manager monitors the matters detailed in Schedule 7 through a dedicated system, a monthly summary report, and through supervision and appraisals of staff. Regulation 42 requires a report of the review of the quality of care to be supplied to the Commission, but does not specify the frequency with which these reviews should take place. It is suggested that this should be at least six monthly.

There are well established roles and lines of communication between managers, staff and carers, with regular supervision taking place to ensure accountability.

The Finance Director deals with all financial matters. Information regarding the charges for each of the services is quoted to the prospective purchaser on an individual basis.

The service has a Conflicts of Interest policy for staff, and this needs to be further developed for carers.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

1

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

All information gathered during the inspection indicates that the Fostering Service is effectively and efficiently managed.

The Manager has a comprehensive job description, and is accountable to the Regional Fostering Manager, and through her to the Managing Director. The level of delegation to the manager is summarized in the job description and appeared to be clear to all, but was not formally set out in any detail.

Appropriate arrangements were in place to provide management cover during the absence of the Registered Manager.

## 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

All foster homes visited provided a warm, well maintained environment with each foster child having their own bedroom.

Foster carers receive training in respect of Health and Safety and such a session took place during the inspection with the majority of foster carers attending. There is also detailed information in the Foster Carers' Handbook. However it was a concern to inspectors that carers had been unable to fit a child's car seat into their car, even though the child had lived with them since birth. The foster carers had travelled to their holiday with him strapped in an ordinary seat belt. In discussion with the manager, she confirmed to inspectors that this matter was viewed seriously by the Agency and had been addressed with the foster carers. Progress use Fostering Network's Health and Safety checklist as part of the initial assessment of foster carers and repeat the assessment of health and safety issues at a foster carers annual review.

Progress has recently introduced risk assessments for individual young people, however, this needs to be developed further to cover all areas which may pose a risk to a young person.

### 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?

4

The Agency values diversity and the Foster Carers' Handbook clearly covers this issue. The Agency has a wide range of carers from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. There was evidence that such issues have been taken into consideration when making placements with most placements being culturally, racially and religiously appropriate, where this is not the case, carers are given support to meet any gaps identified. Two of the foster carers visited by the inspectors provided placements for unaccompanied minors. The Agency and foster carers had undertaken considerable research to find links for young people in the local community, support systems, appropriate foods and appropriate places of worship.

There was evidence throughout the inspection that foster carers work hard to enhance young people's confidence and feeling of self-worth and take a pro-active stance to enabling young people to develop and pursue a range of interests and hobbies.

One experienced carer household had expressed a particular interest in caring for children with learning disabilities, but had only had one respite placement of such a child. This specialism was not reflected in the foster carers approval category at Panel.



**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**

As previously reported most young people were appropriately matched though due to the limited information on the referral form and the lack of a Foster Placement Agreement on some cases it was difficult for inspectors to evidence the process of matching in these cases. The Agency's referral form is very limited and does not include information about sexualised behaviour or risks, education or health, although a prompt sheet is available to workers taking a new referral for a placement with the Agency.

The Agency's procedures state that an Individual Placement Agreement should be drawn up by the local authority placing the young person, however, this was not evident on all files and the inspectors would therefore suggest that the Agency develops their own Foster Placement Agreement in line with Schedule 6 so that such information can be gathered. Inspectors were informed that if a planning meeting had not been held prior to a placement such a meeting would be held within 72 hours of placement to discuss a young person's needs and how these would be met within the placement.

Foster carers considered that children placed with them had been appropriately matched, but information was often not made available to carers in writing at the referral stage, although invariably the information was made available either at or prior to the young person's first review. Carers said they often receive a Form E and that the child's first review was an important source of information.

The Agency endeavours to arrange for introductions prior to a young person being placed although this is not always possible, however, workers stated that they try to arrange limited introductions even with same day placement. An example given was where a meeting between the carer and young person is held before a final decision is made.

All foster carers are encouraged to make a "Family Book" which provides information, including photographs, about the foster family for those considering placement, this assists young people to have some information prior to meeting foster carers.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

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

The Agency has a strong focus on keeping young people safe and ensuring foster carers are aware of safe care practices. This is covered in detail during pre-approval training as well as in post approval training. There was evidence on file that workers challenged carers appropriately if it was felt that their practice was not of the highest standard.

Inspectors spoke with one foster carer who had a young person placed who was believed to have been sexually abused. The carers had developed safe care guidelines but they had not agreed them with the child's social worker.

Foster carers were clear that they were not allowed to use physical punishment of young people and this is made clear in Progress' procedures and in the Foster Care Agreement.

The manager records all allegation and complaints made in respect of the service.

Inspection of these records showed that there have been no child protection investigations in the last 12 months regarding any of the foster carers or young people.

The Manager has ensured that the Agency has a copy of the ACPC procedures for all the

areas that young people are placed by the Agency.  
Risk assessments were being undertaken by the Fostering Support Workers in respect of young people in placement, however these tended to relate to young people with disabilities and were not a useful document for a number of young people. Inspectors were informed that the format of the risk assessments had been developed in the residential sector of the company. Inspectors would recommend that these are adapted to ensure that they are more appropriate to the young people placed within the fostering service.

**Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied: This information is no longer gathered.**

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 is encouraged by the Agency where this is identified in a young person's Care Plan. Assessments are undertaken in respect of contact with contact initially taking away from the carers home, however these assessments are not always recorded on file.

Inspectors noted that during the assessment of foster carers some foster carers had expressed uncertainty in respect of young people maintaining contact with their family, however the Agency had worked with the carers and supported them in understanding the needs of the young people. Inspectors observed that these carers were now able to work with the placing authority to ensure that the young people had regular contact with the parents 3 times per week.

Some foster carers were uncertain whether they could receive financial support to cover the costs of expenses incurred when undertaking contact, however, this information is now included in the updated handbook, which foster carers have just received.

#### **Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

3

Where placements are planned young people are encouraged to give their views in respect of the placement, prior to placement, although there is no clear strategy for recording this information. Young people are also encouraged to express their views as part of the foster carers' annual review, although at the time of the inspection this was not evident on all files. The inspectors noted that the Agency worked with placing authorities to ensure that interpreters were available for young people where this was required.

Young people are supported and encouraged by their foster carers to partake in their LAC reviews.

Not all young people spoken to or who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were aware of how to make a complaint in respect of the Agency nor were they aware that they could contact the Commission for Social Care Inspection. As previously reported the Children's Guide would benefit from the inclusion of more detailed information on the complaint's process.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

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

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

4

The Foster Carers' Handbook contains clear guidance for foster carers of their role in meeting young people's health needs, information regarding who may have consent for treatment and the requirement for foster carers to inform the Agency immediately if a young person suffers a serious accident or illness.

It was apparent from the observation of files and in discussion with foster carers and young people that foster carers ensure that young people's health needs are met, with all young people being registered with the local primary health care team.

The Agency has recently developed a Children's Personal Health Record to record relevant information to ensure that all available information is recorded.

Progress have also recently employed a Fostering Support Worker, who has a knowledge of health issues and has started to work with foster carers to improve the health of the young people placed. A newsletter has recently been produced, which contains useful health information.

**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

Foster Carers have clear guidance as to the Agency's expectations of them in respect of meeting a young person's educational needs. There is guidance on file that the young person's social worker should be contacted if permission is required for a school trip. If Progress implemented their Foster Placement Agreement in all cases, discussion could take place as to whether this responsibility could be delegated to the foster carers. Foster carers were seen to give young people support and assistance with school work.

One foster carer reported that they had experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining a suitable educational placement for a young person placed with them, even though they had received considerable support from the Fostering Service.

Most files examined by the inspectors did not contain Personal Education Plans (PEP's) although there was evidence that the Agency had requested them. The manager informed inspectors that in some cases the foster carers may have the information as they are involved with the school in drawing up a young person's PEP, but this may not have passed the information to the Agency to be included in their files.

**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?****2**

Again the Foster Carers' Handbook give clear information for foster carers in relation to preparing young people for adulthood. Whilst the Agency's procedures clearly state that The Progress social worker and the foster carer will encourage any young person who has a Pathway Plan to be actively involved in both decision making and implementation of agreed plans, no Pathway Plans were seen on file for any young person. However, there were references to the need for them to be completed and evidence that the Agency has requested this information from placing social workers. Inspectors would encourage Progress to develop their own plans for young people, identifying the roles and responsibility of foster carers in developing a young person's independence skills and seek the agreement of placing social workers where Pathway Plans are not available. Inspectors noted that all foster carers assisted young people placed with them to develop their self care skills.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

2

The Agency has clear written recruitment procedures for staff, which had been revised in January 2005. These reflect the requirements of the standards and regulations as well as employment and anti-discrimination law, and best practice. The procedures include the process of interviewing applicants, obtaining written references, and following up references verbally.

Staff appointments in the past year had not, however, followed all procedures fully in each case, and it is therefore necessary to make requirements and recommendations covering these gaps in practice. The Agency must therefore ensure that two written references are obtained prior to a new member of staff taking on responsibilities, and must be followed up by telephone, and a record made of that conversation. Each file must contain a recent photograph of the staff member and any gaps in employment record must be satisfactorily explained, and a record made of this explanation. The gender of the staff must also be recorded.

Good practice was noted in the summary information sheet at the front of each personnel file and the confidentiality agreement, which forms part of the contract of employment. In addition, each staff member had signed a statement to confirm that they had received and read the staff policies, and Health and Safety Handbook. Quality medical information was obtained by contacting the staff member's general practitioner, and requesting detailed information. Each member of staff had completed a probationary period and a format for the completion interview had been introduced. The Agency had obtained CRB checks on staff and carers. Staff checks were separately and securely stored, while carer's checks were placed on their files. Consideration needs to be given to the security of carer's checks, and to the destruction of checks once viewed by the inspectorate.

Whilst the Agency has requested foster carers to provide information for all adults in the household or who have substantive contact with young people this has not always been forthcoming. The Agency must ensure that this information is obtained and that current CRB's are available on all adults.

Total number of staff of the Agency:

14

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?****3**

The Agency has a clear management structure, and staff are supervised by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. There was just one member of administrative staff at the time of the inspection, but a vacant post was to be advertised shortly. The administrative workload was said to be manageable at present and the worker stated that there was always support and understanding if she was under pressure at any time.

All staff have a job description, but it would be helpful if these were more specific. For example, the job description for Family Support Workers does not clearly state that they may undertake direct work with children, including life story work, although the inspectors understood this to be the case. It was also acknowledged that foster carers are not clear as to the role of Fostering Support Workers.

The senior social workers job description requires updating as it sets out an expectation of the supervision and management of social work staff, however, at the time of the inspection all staff in the West Midlands were supervised by the Manager. The Regional Manager supervises the one member of staff based at the Agency's office in Hemel Hempstead. All staff members have copies of the staff policies and procedures, and the Health and Safety Handbook.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

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

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

The Agency has experienced difficulty in recruiting to a vacant social work post, and this has resulted in caseloads for staff that are larger than the Agency regards as ideal, however, the Manager is hopeful that a recruitment campaign in the next month will enable all vacancies to be filled. There has also been a considerable turnover of staff in recent years. Inspectors believe that the Agency may find it helpful to establish a system of exit interviews conducted by an independent person to try to identify contributory factors in this pattern.

The assessment process for foster carers is clearly set out in the Statement of Purpose.

The BAAF Form F is used as the basis for the assessment, and the assessment of competencies is included. The assessments viewed by the inspectors were carried out to an appropriate standard and included all required information. The Form F did not include addresses of carers or referees, presumably for reasons of confidentiality when these forms are sent to prospective placing authorities. However, these details must be easily available on the carers' files, which was not always the case.

Assessments contain good detailed information and recommendations from the Agency's medical advisor, however inspectors were surprised that in respect of one foster carer who had a recent police caution for criminal damage that this had not been discussed anywhere in the assessment report.

The Agency informed the inspector that as a result of knowledge gained from a recent training event they will be re-designing how they undertake assessments to ensure that they are robust and analytical.

**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**

Personnel files indicated sound employment practices, and included contracts of employment and details of conditions of service. Supervision of staff is given a high priority within the Agency and is undertaken on a monthly basis by the Manager. The Regional Manager supervises the Manager. All staff have an annual appraisal, which informs training plans for the forthcoming year.

The Agency is appropriately insured and all carers are registered with the Fostering Network on approval.

There is a 24 hour helpline for carers, provided on a rota basis by the staff of the Agency and foster carers spoke positively about the support they received from the staff.

There is a whistleblowing policy in the staff handbook, and in the foster carers handbook.

**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?****4**

Staff have the opportunity to attend externally provided training courses and conferences. Both social work members of staff had attended BAAF training on the assessment of carers in November 2004. One member of staff had the opportunity to attend training for trainers for the Skills to Foster carers preparation programme, but had not taken up this provision. Staff attend carer training when there are places available, and the Agency aims to have at least one member of staff on each carer training course. When staff attend training courses, the knowledge gained is cascaded to colleagues at the monthly Team Learning Meetings. An evaluation of staff training and development activities forms part of the annual appraisal, and future training needs are identified in relation to the objectives agreed. Given the size of the Agency, individual evaluation is the most appropriate and effective approach to the review of staff training.

Staff have recently undertaken training in respect of supervision of foster carers, the two social workers have also undertaken training in respect of assessment and the use of competencies.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****4**

The records of staff supervision were of a very high standard. Monthly supervision is provided for Social Work staff by the registered manager, and three weekly for the Fostering Support Workers. The dates are planned in advance for the year and dates for 2005 were seen on files. There was a full, typed record of each supervision session on file, and these appeared to indicate a good quality of supervision. However, the records of supervision were not signed by either party, and it is suggested that this should be introduced in order to demonstrate agreement by both parties regarding the accuracy of the record of supervision. Annual appraisals are also carried out by the manager, and a useful proforma provides a basis for these interviews.

Team meetings take place monthly, and a full, typed record was available for each meeting.

In addition, a monthly Team Learning meeting takes place monthly, but no record is kept of those sessions.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**

**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

The Agency has strategies for working with foster carers across most areas identified in this standard, and these are found in the Foster Carers' Handbook. The inspectors did not, however, see any evidence of encouragement for self-help groups.

Arrangements for respite care were not seen as satisfactory by carers, although the difficulties of providing this service were well recognised. In the light of the expressed need for respite care, and the Agency's assertion in the Statement of Purpose that 'Where necessary long term carers are offered respite breaks supporting them to continue providing a stable and consistent placement for the child' this service must be adequately developed. Foster carer reviews have been carried out with approximately half of the Agency's registered carers, chaired by an independent person. Some carers spoke of dissatisfaction with the reports of these reviews, both with the accuracy of the information contained, and with the way in which some matters had been phrased. The manager also expressed concern that the reviews had not been as full as required. The inspectors considered that the reviews would benefit from obtaining the views of all interested parties, including children placed, foster carers themselves and their children living at home, and the supervising social worker, in writing prior to the review meeting, and included with the review report. Inspectors were informed that the Agency is in the process of recruiting a new independent person to undertake all foster carer reviews.

**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?**

**2**

Progress has a policy and procedure for the supervision of carers every six weeks. The evidence from files read by the inspectors and from discussions with carers suggested that supervisions were actually taking place every 6-8 weeks, so greater frequency needs to be achieved to comply with the policy. A record of the supervision is made, signed, and given to the carer who also signs.

There was evidence of unannounced visits on files read by the inspectors, and a useful format had been developed to provide a focus for these visits.

The Foster Care Agreement included most elements listed in schedule 5, but omitted the requirement to comply with the policy and procedure in relation to children's unauthorized absence from the foster home. It also requires a lengthy notice period in situations where the carer wishes to end the placement. While the inspectors understand the Agency's motivation to secure stability of placements for young people, the legal requirement is for



carers to give one month's notice of their wish to cease fostering, and this must be reflected in the foster care agreement, alongside the Agency's wish for a longer notice period where possible.

Carers have a handbook, which had recently been revised. All carers had received a copy shortly before the inspection, but some carers commented that before that, their handbooks had been as much as four years out of date. Carers would have appreciated a note of which items within the handbook had been added or revised, in order to focus their reading.

Progress employ 3 Fostering Support Workers who are able to offer practical support to foster carers, undertake life story work, support young people in respect of preparation for independence, self advocacy skills, and complete risk assessments in respect of young people with foster carers.

### **Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

#### **Key Findings and Evidence**

#### **Standard met?**

**2**

Pre-approval training was based on the Fostering Network programme Choosing to Foster, and was about to be replaced by the newer programme, Skills to Foster. The training is delivered by the Regional Fostering Manager. At present a three day programme is provided, although the Agency plans to add a fourth day in the near future. At the time of the inspection the programme did not include the participation of experienced carers, which would be beneficial.

Although it is the Agency's policy and a requirement of the standards that both applicants in a partnership attend training, the inspectors identified a situation in which this had not taken place and the omission had not been identified by the fostering panel or others.

The pre-approval training had been evaluated by the participants, and the prospective carers' participation had been evaluated by trainer and scored. However, there was no evidence that low scores for one carer had been taken into consideration in the assessment process.

The provision of on-going training for carers had been recently extended, and a programme of eight courses was in place for 2005. The Agency expects carers to attend four courses a year, and in their first year of fostering this would include Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, and First Aid. This needs further extension to cover all the training needs identified in the standards.

The Agency plans to provide training for the sons and daughters of prospective foster carers during one of the sessions of the Skills to Foster Programme.

## 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

Files seen by the inspectors were generally well organised but inspectors noted that one file contained information regarding another person; the Agency must ensure that records are only kept on the young person's file who they relate to. The Agency has undertaken an audit of young people's files to ensure that all required documentation is available, however, this has not been done on a regular basis and files would benefit from this being undertaken more regularly as Foster Placement Agreements, Personal Education Plans and Pathways Plans were not consistently on file.

Contact sheets are not consistently signed by the worker making the recording, consequently it is not always clear who has made the recording. Additionally there are gaps in some recording and significant events have not been recorded, for example why a placement was breaking down.

As previously reported Life Story work is given a high priority within the Agency and foster carers have received training in respect of undertaking life story work with young people. All information is kept securely and foster carers spoken to realised the importance of confidentiality.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

Separate records are kept for staff, carers, young people, complaints and allegations; these were seen to be well organised and up to date. The Agency maintains both a paper copy and a computer copy of the Foster Carer Register and the Register of Young People placed. As previously recorded the Manager does monitor the quality and adequacy of records, but it is recommended that this be done on a more frequent basis.

Records were stored securely and the Agency has a clear written policy in respect of access to files.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the Agency:</b>			37
<b>Number of placements made by the Agency in the last 12 months:</b>			39
<b>Number of placements made by the Agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			24
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			16
<b>Number of foster carers who left the Agency during the last 12 months:</b>			3
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	328.75	<b>Maximum £</b>	545.42

## **Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service**

**The intended outcome for the following standard is:**

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

**Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The Fostering Service shares premises with Progress Children's Services residential administrative staff. There are offices for staff, the manager, reception/administrative support, the directors and two conference/training rooms. There appear to be appropriate IT and communication systems. The premises are pleasant and are suitable for the service that is provided, although for training events other venues may need to be used if all foster carers attend such events. The Agency has recently opened 2 other offices, one in Birmingham and one in Hemel Hempstead. Inspectors visited the Birmingham office, which is based in a row of shops and has a high profile opposite a local primary school, which the Agency hopes will attract interest from local residents. The office in Hemel Hempstead was not inspected on this occasion. At this time it is not envisaged that either of these offices need to be registered in their own right.

All premises are adequately insured. There is a good level of security within the building, with files being securely stored and appropriate computer security. However, the Agency sought clarification from inspectors regarding the confidentiality of providers of computer services. Inspectors had not received clarification in respect of this matter at the time of writing this report but this will be pursued and the Agency informed.

## 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

All financial matters are dealt with by the Finance Director. Information gained during the inspection indicated that the Agency is financially secure.

### 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 Staff handbook includes information regarding financial issues relating to staff. The Manager confirmed to inspectors that whilst she did not have a delegated budget and that the Directors of the Agency made all financial decisions, all the requests she had made had been met.

The Agency's accounts are independently audited and inspectors were provided with accounts for the year ending 2003. The accounts for the year ending 2004 are still awaited. Information regarding the charges for each of the services is quoted to the prospective purchaser on an individual basis.

**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**

Foster carers informed inspectors that they received payment promptly and although in discussion with some foster carers there was uncertainty in respect of what additional payments they could claim, the Foster Carers' Handbook now includes clear information regarding this issue. The Financial Director confirmed that additional allowances are paid. Foster carers also receive additional allowances for a young person's birthday, holiday and a special festival allowance.

There is a written policy on fostering allowances, which is reviewed annually.

## 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?

4

The panel is appropriately constituted in accordance with the regulations, and has an independent chair with considerable social work experience. Training has been provided for panel members, and the chair has attended training with another fostering panel of which she is a member. The chair is also to attend training in March 2005, provided by BAAF for the chairs of panels. Due to the resignation of one member, there is a vacancy for a social worker member, and the person appointed to this vacancy must have experience in fostering. A review of the membership is scheduled to take place in the next few months, because the Agency feels the membership no longer reflects the Agency's focus and Statement of Purpose. The inspector observed a meeting of the panel on 5 February 2005, and interviewed the chair. The papers for this panel were read, and also the Agency's procedures for the fostering panel. The procedures were appropriate and covered decision making when panel members do not agree, and also the failure of panel member to attend regularly. Some minor inaccuracies were pointed out to the manager for correction. The panel conducted its business in a manner that was focused and professional, yet measured. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, and welcoming to those who attended. It was very clear that all panel members had prepared thoroughly for the panel. The chair was very capable and ensured that everyone had the chance to contribute. The discussion of each item commenced with identification of any gaps or factual matters, then moving onto issues regarding the content of the report. At the close of each discussion the chair checked if any panel member wished to comment further, and confirmed the recommendation. When applicants to foster attended the panel, the chair was careful to draw out the quieter applicant and ensure they also responded to the question. It was also positive to note that panel decided to write to the carers whose reviews were considered at that meeting, expressing their appreciation of the carer's work. The manager acts in an advisory function to the panel and provided some sound guidance. She was also able to provide updating information. A number of reviews presented to the panel had been chaired by an independent social worker, but did not meet the Agency's expectations. Panel members were able to identify shortcomings and suggest improved ways of approaching matters. There was also a proforma for panel member to evaluate each Form F assessment, and the views of panel were sought verbally regarding quality of the assessment presented to them and the competency of the independent assessor. It is recommended that the panel should consider not just the numbers and ages of children to be fostered, in their recommendation, but also the types of placement for which the carers are to be recommended for approval, and any training implications arising from that.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Progress Children's Service's Fostering Service does not offer regular short-term breaks for children.
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## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
Progress Children's Service's Fostering Service do not provide placements for young people with their family and friends.		

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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 21<sup>st</sup> March 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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

**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 PROGRESS CHILDRENS SERVICES LTD 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 PROGRESS CHILDRENS SERVICES**  
**LTD 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.

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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S0000036627.V183378.R01

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