Champions for Social Care Improvement



inspection report

Fostering Services

South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

The Health Resource Centre 2a Newton Road Cadbury Heath South Glos BS30 8EZ

15th March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)
- 'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.
- '9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.
- 'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Heath, South Glos, BS30 8EZ	Email Addro
Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)	NO
Name of Agency	Tel No
Address	Fax No
	Email Addre
Registered Number of IFA	
Name of Registered Provider	
Name of Registered Manager (if applicabl	le)
Date of first registration	Date of latest registration
Registration Conditions Apply ?	NO
Date of last inspection	12/12/02
South Gloucestershire Fostering Services	

Local Authority Fostering Service? Name of Authority South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

Address

The Health Resource Centre, 2a Newton Road, Cadbury Heath, South Glos, BS30 8EZ

Local Authority Manager Nicky Godfrey

Tamsin Cowls

Address

The Health Resource Centre, 2a Newton Road, Cadbury Heath South Glos BS30 8E7

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Tel No: 01454 866232

Fax No: 01454 866261 hh∆ lie

ress

ress

ion certificate

YES

Date of Inspection Visit		15th March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit	1	09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sam Chisholm	102696
Name of Inspector	2	Jacqueline Sullivan	072862
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public			
independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some			
inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection proce	ess.		
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representation	ative at	Nicky Godfrey & Tamsin Coles	

Introduction to Report and Inspection Inspection visits Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection Statutory Requirements from this Inspection Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings (National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service
- 3. Management of the fostering service
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers
- 6. Records
- 7. Fitness of premises
- 8. Financial requirements
- 9. Fostering panels
- 10. Short-term breaks
- 11. Family and friend carers
- Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)
- Part D: Provider's Response
 - D.1. Provider's Comments
 - D.2. Action Plan
 - D.3. Provider's Agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

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.

South Gloucestershire Council was established as a Unitary Authority on 1/4/1996 as part of the local Government reorganisation of the former county of Avon. It includes the former districts of Kingswood and Northavon.

The Family Placement Team is part of the Children's Service Division of the Social Services Department.

The services provided include:

- Fostering service
- Family Link/Short break service
- Adoption Service
- Step-parent Service
- General Registry Office Service
- Birth parent Counselling Service
- Post Adoption Service
- Administration of Letter Box Scheme
- Foster Panel
- Adoption Panel

Britton house for young people leaving care is owned and managed by Bromford Housing Association.

The aim of the Service is to provide family placements for children aged 0-18 years who need to be accommodated by the council. At the time of the inspection there were 80 approved foster carers. At the last inspection the Inspectors noted South Gloucestershire had a scheme which differentiated four levels of foster carers which reflected their skills and experience. This had been reviewed by the fundamental service review in Feb 2003 for looked after children in South Gloucestershire. Their findings included five options for the Service. Their recommendation to South Gloucestershire Council was a remodelled in house service with additional fees and additional support for foster carers. The manager told the Inspectors that, by 2004 this would be implemented. Overall the foster carers will be paid with the amounts varying according to the needs of the children. The new system will include:

- Out of hours scheme by experienced foster carers
- Budding scheme for new foster carers
- Additional support workers
- New recruitment officer post
- Review of the processes within the Service.

Foster carers have been invited as part of the consultation process to form working parties to look in detail at the support systems and payments.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Overall, the findings of this inspection indicate a positive and dynamic fostering service which is well organised and well managed.

The majority of the requirements and recommendations of the last inspection dated 12/12/2002 were met. These include a review of the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide, the completion of the whistle blowing policy and the introduction of a monitoring system in relation to the number of children's placement ending and relative outcome.

As stated in the introduction the Out of Hour's system is being reviewed by the service in order to meet the needs of both the foster carers and the children they care for.

Foster carers who were interviewed and /or completed Inspection questionnaires were broadly satisfied with the Service. They welcomed the review of the Out of Hours service and payments. Some foster carers feared that it might lead to reduced payments. They said they were pleased that working parties had been set up by the Service which would give them the opportunity to voice their concerns.

The children/young people who were interviewed and/or completed questionnaires were positive about the care they received. Some stated that although they were happy with the care they received, they would welcome more contact with parents but found it difficult to discuss this with their foster carers.

The staff members spoken with as part of the inspection were very knowledgeable about the needs of both the children and the foster carers. Staff morale was high and communication between the teams was good.

The majority of the standards were met as is indicated by the small number of requirements and recommendations from this report.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

0 of 1 standard assessed were met

At the last inspection the Inspector recommended that the Children's Guide includes details of the commissioned Children's Advocacy Service "Reconstruct" .The Children's Guide to the fostering service now includes a CD and a leaflet called "Reconstruct Advocacy". The Inspectors were told that it is given to children aged over nine years between the first and second statutory review. The Inspectors require that there is a system in place to ensure that all children receive a copy.

Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

1 of 2 standards assessed was met.

The CSCI (Commission For Social Care Inspection) must be informed if the Manager of the Service leaves the Service and another is appointed.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

1of 2 standards assessed were met

There are two temporary managers. One manager has the lead on the Adoption Service and

South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

the other has the lead on the "Family Link" Scheme, which organises carers who provide short breaks placements for disabled children.

The Managers were unaware of the need to inform the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) of any of the significant events listed in regulation 43 Schedule 8. The Inspectors explained the process at the Inspection

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

9 of 9 standards assessed were met

The above standards were seen to be met.

<u>Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers</u> (Standards 15-23)

8 of 9 standards assessed were met

The systems in place from the Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers were seen to meet the required standard.

The 'Out of hours' service provided by the Emergency Duty Team for the Avon area and a support line provided by one of the Child Care Teams was found at the last inspection not to meet the needs of the foster carers. As previously stated, this is currently being reviewed and may involve foster carers providing an 'Out of Hours' service with social worker supervision. It is planned that this new service will start in October 2004. The foster carers who contributed to this inspection were positive about the new 'Buddying system' where foster carers support each other but were still unsatisfied with the current "Out of Hours" system. By the time of the next inspection the new system should be in place. This will be a focus of that inspection.

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 of 2 standards assessed were met

The above standards wee seen to be met.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering services (Standard 26)

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

The premises are bright and spacious, except for the meeting room, which is small. Discussions with the staff teams confirmed that they are satisfied with the accommodation. Parking is limited but supplemented by ample off site space.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 of 3 standards assessed were met

The family placement team fostering services are funded as part of the local authority Social Services department. The Service plan determines how the annual allocated budget is spent. The managers receive a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending patterns. This was seen by the Inspectors to be satisfactory. The Finance Department provides advice about budgets

The Chief Executive, Chief Elected Member and the Director of Social Services determine how the overall budget will be allocated. The budget is held centrally, and delegated to the team managers of the individual budgets.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

0 of 1 standard assessed were met

The standard was mostly met. The Chair of the Panel stated that they have made efforts to recruit a member who has been placed with foster carers or whose child has been placed with foster carers, but have so far been unsuccessful.

South Gloucestershire Fostering Services

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

1of 1 standard assessed were met

The Family Link Service provides short-term breaks for disabled children. The Family Link Carers are subject to the same assessments and checks as mainstream foster carers and receive the same training and support.

Discussions with the staff team and the manger confirmed that close links are maintained between the child's family to provide support and facilitate information sharing. A leaflet has been produced by the Family Link Service, which provides information about the service. **Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

1 of 1 standard assessed were met

The operations manual contains guidance for Social Workers about exploring a child's kinship and family and friends when considering a placement. The child's Social Worker undertakes the assessment with assistance from a member of the Family Placement Team.

There is an updated flowchart in relation to the parties involved in the assessment process. The managers stated that this would become practice once the Panel has ratified it.

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:

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:

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:

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:

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

NO

N	Ο	

NO

NO

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	3	1FS1	The authority provides a copy of the Children's guide to all the children using the service.	6 months

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance
Comments	
Comments	

Condition	Compliance
Comments	

Condition		Compliance	
Comments			
Lead Inspector	Jacqueline Sullivan	Signature	

Lead Inspector	Jacqueline Sullivan	Signature	
Second Inspector	Sam Chisholm	Signature	
Locality Manager	Michael Miles	Signature	
Date	22 nd June 2004		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate noncompliance 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 Reguirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1FS1	The authority provides a copy of the Children's guide to all the children using the service.	15/9/2004
2	43	FS4FS4	The Service to inform the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) of any of the significant events detailed in Regulation 43 Schedule 8.	15/3/2004
3	45 and 46	FS2FS2	The CSCI (Commission For Social Care Inspection) must be informed if the Manager of the Service leaves the Service and another is appointed.	15/3/2004

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	FS30FS30	Ensure that the recruitment campaign for panel members is successful.
2	FS18FS18	The review of the Out of Hours service available to foster carers is completed.

* 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 METH	HODS & FINDINGS
The following insp	ection methods have been used	in the production of this report
Number of Inspect	or days spent	10
Survey of placing a	authorities	YES
Foster carer surve	У	YES
Foster children sur	2	YES
	organisations and Individuals	NO
 Director 	s of Social services	NO
 Child pr 	otection officer	NO
 Special 	ist advisor (s)	NO
 Local Fe 	oster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individua	I welfare arrangements	YES
 Interview 	w with children	YES
 Interview 	w with foster carers	YES
 Interview 	w with agency staff	YES
 Contact 	with parents	NO
 Contact 	with supervising social workers	YES
 Examin 	ation of files	YES
Individual interview	v with manager	YES
Information from p		YES
Individual interview	-	YES
Group discussion		YES
Interview with pane		YES
Observation of fos	0	NO
Observation of fos	•	YES
	y/practice documents	YES
Inspection of recor		YES
Interview with indiv	vidual child	NO
Date of Inspection		15/03/04
Time of Inspection		9:00

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

48.0

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
The Inspectors read the Statement of Durpage and poted	that it mat the requ	ired standard

The Inspectors read the Statement of Purpose and noted that it met the required standard.

At the last inspection the Inspector recommended that the Children's Guide includes details of the commissioned Children's Advocacy Service "Reconstruct" .The Children's Guide to the fostering service now includes a CD and a leaflet called "Reconstruct Advocacy". The Inspectors were told that it is given to children aged over nine years between the first and second statutory review. The Inspectors require that there is a system in place to ensure that all children receive a copy.

The service manager has reviewed the Statement of Purpose in conjunction with the findings of the Fundamental Service Review.

The number of approved foster carers is included in the Statement of Purpose, which is updated monthly after the Fostering Panel meeting.

The family Link Service does not currently have a separate Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide.

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 EvidenceStandard met?3The two managers of the service are Nicky Godfrey and Tamsin Cowls. They both have a
temporary contract with the Service with their substantive posts remaining as Practice
Supervisors. They have been in post since February 2003 when the previous manager left
the Service. Both are professionally qualified (CQSW) and have many years experience in
family placement social work. Jointly they work 7.5 days per week. At the time of the
Inspection the mangers post was being advertised.3

The Inspectors require that the C.S.C.I. (Commission For Social Care Inspection) be informed if the Manager of the Service leaves and/or another is appointed.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

The staff files checked as part of the inspection demonstrated that the necessary information is available as required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

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 EvidenceStandard met?2The Inspectors read the staff job descriptions, which detail their roles and responsibilities a
noted that they met the required standard. All of the staff consulted as part of the inspection
had a clear understanding of their role.2

Staff supervision was seen to meet the required standard.

The majority of the fostering service staff were interviewed. They could identify the lines of accountability in the organisation.

Written procedures are available for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. These include: recruitment and supervision of staff and carers, recording of the child's progress in placement, supervision, referral; matching and placement of children.

The Managers were unaware of the need to inform the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) of any of the significant events listed below so had not done so. The Inspectors explained the process at the Inspection.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:		0
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	0	7
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	0	
Serious illness or accident of a child.	0	
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	0	
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	0	1
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	2	
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	0	1
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	5]
Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 more	nths:	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

There are clear lines of delegation and in discussion staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities and to whom they were accountable.

As previously stated there are two temporary managers. One manager has the lead on the Adoption Service and the other has the lead on the "Family Link" Scheme, which organises carers who provide short breaks placements for disabled children. The Inspectors were told that they divide the Fostering between them. One manager has a developmental role and was able to provide evidence that the Service has a programme of development in place.

Discussions with the staff team, foster carers and scrutiny of the evidence supplied by the service for standards 1-4 confirmed that that the current temporary managers were able to manage the service effectively and efficiently.

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 we Six foster carers were visited at their homes as part of the inspection. The majority were found to provide a child friendly and homely environment for the children and young people lfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9) The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Five foster carers were visited at their homes as part of the	e inspection. They	were all found
to provide a child friendly and homely environment for the	children and young	people. One of
the houses that the inspectors visited was to accommodate both a young woman and a new		
baby. The room appeared quite small and in need of rede	corating as a nurse	ry this was
discussed with the family placement social workers who si	tated that they wou	Id ensure that
the room is appropriately furnished and redecorated short	ly.	

All carers are inspected annually, including a Health and Safety assessment, copies of which were available on the files. The carers receive health and safety training appropriate to the needs of the children in their care.

Since the last Inspection risk assessments in relation to young people sharing a room are available in their files.

Stand	lard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)
The fo	ostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are
provid	ded with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Family placement social workers and foster carers sta	ated that, in the mai	in, the system
for matching children to available placements works well. Initially, the Information about the		
child/children from the placing social worker is discussed w		
appropriate placement is found information is then shared between the carers and the social		
worker for the child. South Gloucestershire Council has a same race placement policy, to		
ensure that the cultural needs of all the children are met by the placement. The Family		
placement team have a strategy for the recruitment of blac	ck and ethnic minor	ity foster
carers. The inspectors were told that this work would be fu	irther developed wi	th the
introduction of the new recruitment officer. The post will be	e advertised shortly	

A database of all foster carers is available to assist matching.

Several of the carers who were spoken to or responded to the questionnaire were able to demonstrate an awareness of the discrimination that the young people in their care may experience.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

Scrutiny of the foster carers files, information about the young people provided by the placing authority and discussions with foster carers and staff confirmed that the matching process mostly works well.

Staff members described the system for referrals for placements to be received and processed. Full information about the young person is sought to assist the matching process. However, in emergency or crisis situations, information about the young person may be limited. Feedback from carers who responded to the questionnaire confirmed that they are not always given full information about the child or young person in advance of the placement. It was not clear from the questionnaire information whether this was an ongoing situation or they were isolated cases. The foster carers with whom the Inspectors spoke stated they received appropriate information. This will be a focus of the next inspection.

When an appropriate match is identified, the Form F (a standard matching/assessment proforma produced by British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering) is forwarded to the placing social worker for agreement. The social workers for any other child in the placement are also contacted and advised of the potential placement and their views sought as to the suitability of the child being placed with the other children there.

The Inspectors saw the new software and referral form for the matching process. The Practice supervisors attend the fortnightly staff team meetings where matching is discussed. One staff member takes responsibily for liaising with teenagers and foster carers, so as to be proactive in reducing the number of placements.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8) The fostering service protects each child or young per neglect, exploitation and deprivation.	rson from all form	ns of abuse,
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All foster carers receive Child Protection training, as part of further training is provided as part of their ongoing develop new 'Skills to Foster' training form the Fostering Network		-
The foster carers sign an agreement that they will not administer physical punishment to the young people. All of the carers spoken to agreed that physical punishment is unacceptable, and some of the carers gave examples of acceptable sanctions they implement when necessary, for example 'time out' with younger children.		
The Inspectors read the new policy on countering bullying standard.	g and noted that it i	met the required

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever 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	
Feedback from foster carers indicated that they were very	positive about the	arrangements	
	for contact. All carers visited said that contact only took place in their home with their		
agreement. As previously stated some of the young people who responded to the			
questionnaires stated that they would like more family con	tact but found it dif	ficult to talk to	
their foster carers about this issue. Some foster carers stated that the children "blame" them			
if there are difficulties regarding contact. The Inspectors recognise that in some cases,			
restrictions on a child's contact with family members is in the best interests of the child. The			
Inspectors recommend that the service have a workshop of		looked after	
children and foster carers where this sensitive issue could			
Samples of children's files were checked, and clear details	s concerning conta	ct arrangements	
were recorded.			

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

The managers told the Inspectors that the Fundamental Service Review in Feb 2003 for looked after children in South Gloucestershire highlighted the need for the Service to develop their practice in relation to consultation with children. As a result there is a children and young persons consultation document in place. There is also an action plan to improve children/young people participation in the service. An example is the "Total Respect" training delivered to staff and carers by the young people. A programme of training has been developed for all social workers and foster carers who are in involved in working with looked after children. All staff members in the Service have been on a two-day training course on "Building Communication" and they have received a presentation from Mencap called "Listen Up" about communicating with children.

The Inspectors observed that the children's files contained a comprehensive section on how to communicate with children.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

The Foster Carers Handbook clearly sets out the responsibilities of foster carers in relation to the health and development of the children and young people.

The managers stated that the Fundamental Service Review looked at 75 children's files as part of the process and concluded that there was evidence of good planning with appropriate placements for the children /young people.

A service level agreement has been set up with CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) to improve the service for children looked after. The agreement provides a consultation service for foster carers, specific work with children in the short-term placements and on going work with children in long-term placements. At the last inspection foster carers stated that the waiting list for referrals to the CAMHS team were lengthy. To address this, a new Child and Health Worker has been appointed into one of their resource teams.

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

All of the foster carers visited by the Inspectors confirmed that the young people were attending school.

A post has been created in the 'looked after children' team to provide a link between Education and Social Services to enable that children's needs are met. A practice supervisor links directly to central teaching service to identify children looked after who are experiencing difficulties in the educational system. A panel has been set up with the brief of addressing the needs of children/young people who have been excluded from school.

Foster carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the help line that is available to them if they have queries/ concerns about the educational needs of the children in their care.

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
Mangers of the 'Looked After Service' stated that the new	Special Guardians	hip Orders are
being introduced as part of the Adoption Act can be used	instead of Residen	ce Orders to
enable children to access After Care Services. Further, Re	esidence Orders ca	in be changed
to the new orders if the child is under 18 years old.		

A programme of training for foster carers has been developed on Pathway Planning to ensure that foster carers are working alongside the Social workers and understand the work involved.

There will be a new "training" flat for young people where they can learn and practice independence skills. They stated that this new information would shortly be included in the foster carers handbook.

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

There are clear written recruitment procedures, which follow good practice guidelines. Inspection of the files of the 12 staff members recruited since April 2002 showed the information required by Schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Each job has written criteria of essential and desirable skills and qualities. Staff recruited are subject to a six-month probation period. There was evidence on the files to demonstrate that staff members receive an appraisal at the end of the six-month probationary period. Scrutiny of the staff files confirmed that the staff files now include a recent photograph, evidence of qualification and a written record of telephone enquiries made to follow up written references.

Social workers and foster carers references and checks met the required standard.

Total number of staff of the	17	Number of staff who have left the	3
agency:	17	agency in the past 12 months:	5

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	
There is a very clear organisational structure, and staff members demonstrated that they were clear about the lines of management and accountability. The managers were able to demonstrate that they are suitably qualified and experienced for their role, with experience of working both in the statutory and voluntary sectors and had prior management responsibilities.		
All members of staff said that they had manageable case promptly to requests for support. All staff receive formal the recommended frequency, and staff members com discussion about practice issues and professional develop	support from their line manager at nmented that it was a forum for	

The service is supported by a strong administrative team, who demonstrated awareness of their roles and responsibilities.

The managers stated that the introduction of a new I.T system would assist the delivery of the service.

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 EvidenceStandard met?3All staff with support and supervisory responsibility for foster carers are qualified social
workers. The resource team workers are all experienced in childcare. As previously stated,
two experienced managers who have a social work qualification manage the team.

The staff all said that their caseloads were sufficient to enable them to support the carers and young people in line with the Statement of Purpose, and to respond promptly to requests for support. There was evidence that contingency plans are set up to cover staff absence although this may not be as prompt as the service would like. Staff members unanimously said they feel valued and well supported by the managers.

All carers spoken to also said they feel valued and well supported by the fostering service. Staff members also said that there was a high level of commitment to their professional development, and training needs were identified as part of the annual appraisal and through staff supervision.

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 EvidenceStandard met?2All staff members receive an induction programme when they commence working with the
organisation. All staff members said they felt the programme had enabled them to gain an
understanding of their role within the organisation, and of the work of the organisation as a
whole.

The "Out of hours service provided by the Emergency Duty Team for the Avon area and a support line provided by one of the Child Care Teams was found at the last inspection not to meet the needs of the foster carers. As previously stated, this is currently being reviewed and may involve foster carers providing an 'Out of hours' service themselves with social worker supervision. It is planned that this new service will start in October 2004. The foster carers who contributed to this inspection were positive about the new 'Buddying system' where foster carers support each other but were still unsatisfied with the current "Out of Hours" system. By the time of the next inspection the new system should be in place. This will be a focus of that inspection.

It was highlighted at the last inspection that the whistle blowing policy should be included in South Gloucestershire Fostering Services Page 25

the Foster Children's Handbook and be included in the foster carers induction training. The Inspectors observed that the policy is in place and the training is included in the training plan for the coming year.

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
The managers stated the there is an annual training pro	gramme for staff that includes the
planning, health and education for looked after children.	Scrutiny of the training programme
confirmed that that it met the required standard.	

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

All staff at the service have a written job description that gives a clear description of their duties and responsibilities. A copy of the job description and contract of employment is held on their file.

Discussions with the staff and scrutiny of the staff supervision records confirmed that that there are clear lines of accountability and the staff are appropriately supported.

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

There is a clear policy for the training and development of foster carers. Information is available in the foster carer handbook, which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of foster carers.

Scrutiny of a sample of foster carers files confirmed that they meet the required standard. There is a newsletter for foster carers called "Planet Foster Care" which includes articles and training events.

The Children's Partnership Officer organised a consultation event for foster carers. Foster carers described this as an excellent event. It included a disco for the children, workshops and games. Over 200 people attended the last Christmas party. At the time of the inspection the service held their annual "Oscars" where children receive Oscars for their achievements.

The Inspectors noted that the preparation that went into each event was detailed and thoughtful. The food provided at the events was of a high standard and crèches were available for the very young children.

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 EvidenceStandard met?3Each foster carer has an allocated supervising social worker from the area team to provide
support and undertake supervision. There was written evidence on files to demonstrate that
carers are informed if their social worker is away from the office for a significant period.

Scrutiny of the supervision records and discussions with the staff team and foster carers confirmed that the supervision for foster carers met the required standard.

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 Inspectors read the training records and noted that 11 foster carers have completed the		
'Training the trainer' course to enable there to co train on the preparation course. Eleven		
foster carers have facilitated the 'Webster Stratton' course on positive parenting.		

The service now ensures that foster carers complete the Core Training over two years. The Inspectors noted that the number of courses about disability and ethnicity issues have been extended since the last inspection.

A copy of the annual training plan was seen at the inspection, this is provided for all carers and details all the available courses and their links to either NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) modules, Core Training requirements or National Minimum standards. Safe caring training is provided in the training curriculum. The manager said that that they have introduced a system where foster carers are visited routinely to discuss any specific issues arising from training. The managers stated that they have recently sent out a questionnaire to foster carers to establish their preferred venues and times for training to ensure that the service is providing training that they have access to given their child care commitments.

Each carer's annual review includes an appraisal of training and development needs which also facilitates the review of the effectiveness of the training provided.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

The Operations Manual contains policies about the maintenance of children's records and access to the files. The case records are maintained by the child's social worker. Scrutiny of the files and discussions with social workers confirmed that the format of the records are consistent with those adopted by the Authority. The LAC (Looked After Children) information was seen to meet the required standard. The information about placement breakdowns or moves for other reasons was limited, as the present I.T. system will not allow the social workers or administrative assistants to add additional information. The managers stated that this would be improved by the introduction of the new I.T. system in April 2004.

Foster carers who were seen by the Inspectors or who responded to the questionnaires stated that they were, in the main, provided with information in line with NMS 24.4. As noted at the last inspection, there is a variety of experiences about the extent of the information they received. Some foster carers stated that it could be inadequate others wee satisfied with the amount that they received.

The foster carer's files about the children contain dates of the placement and any supervision notes about the children. The Inspectors intend to focus at the next inspection, on the extent to which 'Heritage' life story work has been started or completed.

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 EvidenceStandard met?3Separate records are kept for staff, carers, and children; a random selection inspected
showed they contained significant information relevant to the running of the fostering service
and recording was found to be clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. There was clear
consistency of recording and filing information, and evidence that the files were monitored
regularly.

There are procedures in place for access to files, secure storage and management of confidential information. The storage for information includes lockable cabinets, password protected computers and security systems protecting the building.

The managers stated that, since the last inspection they have introduced a performance monitoring system in relation to disrupted placements. The information is gathered by the

social workers and overseen by the managers. This information then informs the future planning for the service and is sent to the Children's Review Panel.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £ 76 Maximum £	321.00

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?

The Family Placement Team Offices are part of a large building belonging to the local authority. They share the premises with the Children's Health and Disability Team and the Looked After Children's Social Work Teams. The Quality Review Team has moved out of the building since the last inspection. The managers and social workers in each of the teams stated that their proximity assists communication.

The premises are bright and spacious, except for the meeting room, which is small. Discussions with the staff teams confirmed that they are satisfied with the accommodation. Parking is limited but supplemented by ample off site space for cars.

As previously stated the I.T. systems are shortly to be updated. The managers stated that the new system called SWIFT would be a more useful package than their current one as it is designed to be more useful to their service. This will be a focus of the next inspection.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and EvidenceStandard met?3The family placement team fostering services are funded as part of the local authority Social
Services department. The Service Plan determines how the annual allocated budget is
spent. The managers receive a monthly breakdown of expenditure to monitor spending
patterns. This was seen by the Inspectors to be satisfactory. The Einance Department

patterns. This was seen by the Inspectors to be satisfactory. The Finance Department provides advice about budgets.

A financial assistant works as part of the administrative support within the family placement team as a point of contact for foster carers. In the main foster carers who responded to the questionnaire sent out by the Inspectors were satisfied with the service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and EvidenceStandard met?3The Chief Executive, Chief Elected member and the Director of Social Services determine
how the overall budget will be allocated. The budget is held centrally, and delegated to the
team managers of the individual budgets.

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
As previously stated, the Service is reviewing the allowand	ces for foster carer	s. Some of the
foster carers who contacted the Commission stated that the	ey had reservatior	ns about the
changes and fear they will receive less money as a result	of the review. The	Inspector noted
that the Service intends to consult foster carers via working parties. The developments in		elopments in
this area will be a focus of the next inspection.		

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9) Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
An inspector observed the Panel in operation and noted the	nat it adhered to its	written terms
and reference and met the required standard.		

The members of the Panel meet the requirements of regulation 24. Since the last inspection they have recruited a new member who has an expertise in education. The Chair of the Panel stated that they have made efforts to recruit a member who has been placed with foster carers or whose child has been placed with foster carers, but have so far been unsuccessful. They are hoping to " do a swap with a neighbouring authority".

Each member of the panel meets the requirements of suitability and has been subject to Criminal Record checks. As noted at the last inspection, the Fostering Panel members receive training in competency-based assessments and the terms and references, which reflect the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Prospective carers are invited to the Panel where the members of the Panel ask them questions about their assessment report. They also consult with the Family Placement Team Manager who supervises the assessment process for foster carers recruited/ approved by South Gloucestershire Council.

The Inspector observed the Panel make a decision about a change in a foster carers registration approval details and noted that it met the required standard. The Inspector notes that the Panel members are very sensitive to the needs of the foster carers who may find the process intimidating.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2) Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Family Link Service provides short-term breaks for dis	abled children. Th	e Family Link
Carers are subject to the same assessments and checks a	as mainstream fost	ter carers and

receive the same training and support.

Policies and procedures about the service and good practice guidance are available in the Operations Manual.

The service manager stated that the regulation 38 for placement are now completed by both the child's social worker and a social worker from the Family Link Service at the start of the process rather than at the end of six weeks. He stated that this enables a greater clarity about each social worker's role.

Discussions with the staff team and the manger confirmed that close links are maintained between the child's family to provide support and facilitate information sharing.

A leaflet has been produced by the Family Link Service, which provides information about the service.

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 EvidenceStandard met?3The operations manual contains guidance for Social Workers about exploring a Child's
kinship and family and friends when considering a placement. The Child's Social Worker
undertakes the assessment with assistance from a member of the Family Placement Team.
There is an updated flowchart for involvement in the assessment process. The managers
stated that this would become practice once it has been ratified by the Panel.

Family and friends are called "Supportive Carers". At the last inspection the Inspectors noted that their files contained the same amount of information and background checks as for all foster carers. At this inspection the managers stated that this still remains the case.

PART C	LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY (where applicable)
	Not applicable
Lay Assessor Date	Signature

PART D

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 Draft report relating to the Inspection conducted on 15th March 2004 of inspection South Gloucestershire Fostering Service and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC 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 21st June 2004 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	NO
	Provider has declined to provide an action plan	NO
	Other: <enter details="" here=""></enter>	NO
Pu	blic reports	

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I of South Gloucestershire Fostering Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	Peter Murphy
Signature	
Designation	Director of Social Services
Date	11 th June 2004

Or

D.3.2 I of South Gloucestershire Fostering Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name	 -
Signature	
	 -
Designation	
Date	
	-

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.