

inspection report

Fostering Services

Barnardo`s Shared Care N.E

Suite 4

Durham Business centre

Littleburn Industrial Estate

Langley Moor

Co.Durham

DH7 8HG

12th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Barnardo's Shared Care N.E

Tel No

0191 378 4800

Address

Suite 4, Durham Business centre, Littleburn Industrial Estate, Langley Moor, Co.Durham, DH7 8HG

Fax No

0191 378 4801

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

B040000387

Name of Registered Provider

Barnardo's

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Judith Latheron

Date of first registration

22nd October 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

22nd October 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

4/3/2003

Date of Inspection Visit		12th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Joan Scarr	076522
Name of Inspector	2	Michele Hargan	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last 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**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
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D.1. Provider's comments

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Barnardos Shared Care North East provides services to children with a physical and or a learning disability or life limiting condition. The project provides regional, short-break, sitting and befriending services to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. Some children are also provided with carers on a full time though temporary basis. Carers who are assessed for specific care tasks provide care in all instances.

This inspection relates to the inspection of the short-break and temporary care aspect of the project's work, this forms the major part of the project's work and involves the assessment, linking, supporting and approval process of foster carers.

Care is predominantly provided within the Durham and Darlington area, though the project is expanding and there are now children from other Northern Counties being Looked After.

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 Barnardos Shared Care North East since the fostering services have been subject to regulation as of April 2002 under the Care Standards Act. The project was registered last year in accordance with regulations, which also requires an annual inspection of the service to be carried out. The information contained within this report, therefore, is a summary of the work undertaken during the inspection of the agency and also details how the requirements and recommendations, made at the time of the last inspection have been progressed.

Shared Care North East is one branch of Barnardos fostering projects; the branches are based within the North East of England. The Headquarters in Newcastle is based within the Cramlington area NCSC office where there are also several other projects. At the time of registration last year Cramlington NCSC office, undertook key areas of provider and agency fitness, which it was understood, incorporated an overview of Barnardos national policies. This inspection, therefore is concerned with locally based policies.

Shared Care is a very well established fostering agency with many years of experience of practice to draw upon. It also benefits from wider input in relation to good practice, which is shared on a national basis and, from Barnardos own national standards and quality audit system. There is also full involvement by the project within external national fostering forums in order to keep up to date on practice issues.

This second inspection is again extremely positive in terms of meeting standard areas and progressing those areas identified for development at the last inspection. It is pleasing to report that of the 32 standard areas 11 areas have achieved a rating of level 4 indicating that minimum standards in these areas have been exceeded. In 19 areas a level 3 has been awarded denoting that minimum standards have been met and in 2 standard areas a rating at level 2 is indicated which denotes minor deficiencies, which need to be addressed. Staff and management are to be commended for their hard work in progressing matters to such an extent that minimum standards are exceeded in a significant number of areas. It is anticipated that further ratings at level 4 will be achieved when a number of the advisory recommendations made within the reports are achieved at a future date.

All requirements and recommendations should be read in conjunction with the relevant standard area where there are more detailed comments. It has been evident throughout the course of the inspection that there is a sound commitment on a continual basis to improve and develop standards.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard area is fully met. The Statement of Purpose has been updated and now includes all of the required information aside from policies and procedures governing the review of foster carers. An attractive children's guide is also in place, assurance was given that this could be reproduced in various formats designed to meet the differing needs of the children placed. The latter document should contain the name and address of the NCSC.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standard 2-3)

Standard 2 has achieved a rating at level 4. The project benefits from an effective management team who assure both the high standards of practice amongst the team members and the delivery of good quality services. The registered manager has attained a management qualification and there are plans for the deputy manager to also undertake this qualification. The present managerial arrangements, which allow for the sharing of some

tasks and responsibilities, also enable development work to be undertaken by the project.

Standard 3 has been accorded a level 2 rating because of areas that require further development. This includes the provision of an improved checklist within personal files so that the process of monitoring the information required concerning recruitment could be signed off by the registered person. In addition there must be a statement within staff disciplinary procedures which inform staff that the failure on the part of an employee to report and incident of abuse or suspected abuse of a child placed with foster parents to an appropriate person is grounds on which disciplinary procedures may be instituted.

Management of a fostering service (Standard 4-5)

Standard 4 is rated at level 3. Three good practice recommendations have been made within this area concerning the production of a financial protocol detailing the relevant procedures, the need to draw the conflict of interest policy to the attention of carers and the use of a proforma concerning regulation 42 monitoring by the registered person. There is a policy in place regarding allowances made to foster carers, which are paid at a level commensurate with the identified needs of the child. With regards to foster carers records, there were some improvements taking place with this practice. It was recognised that this is an incremental process and it is anticipated that further progress would continue to be advanced. Standard 5 is exceeded and rates a level 4. There are clear lines of accountability within the team at all levels. The project manager meets regularly with the responsible individual concerning all relevant matters who also provides supervision to the registered manager.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standard 6-14)

Standard 6 is rated at level 3. Improvement has been achieved in this area since the time of the last inspection in that input from Occupational Health services is now more significant. Health and safety matters are taken account of within foster carers reviews. The administration of medication sheets are returned to the project when completed and these are further checked by staff. A recommendation is made that carers should be supplied with lockable boxes in which to store medication. A further recommendation is also made concerning risk assessments, to the effect that these should be completed by the project and established within the matching details information if not provided by the placing authority. Standard 7 has been awarded a level 4 rating. It was evident that wide ranges of carers are recruited. Training for foster carers includes non-discriminatory practice, the promotion of a positive identity for children/young people who are disabled and the promotion of self-esteem within this user group. Good quality information is issued to foster carers. A "Listen Up" pack has recently been purchased as an aid to increased communication with children/young people who require additional support with communication.

Standard 8 has also achieved a level 4 rating. The Shared Care Allocation Panel (SCAP) is the forum by which links are made between carers and service users. Unmet needs with regards to matches are also recorded. A recommendation is made within this standard that efforts to secure the required documentation pertaining to children/young people should continue. Standard 9 has achieved a level 3 rating. Staff have had two days training in child protection recently and mandatory annual training takes place. Child protection updates for carers also take place. Copies of the relevant Area Child Protection Policies (ACPC) were in the process of being obtained for references purposes. Standard 10 is rated at level 4. Expectations with regards to contact are very clear. This is an area of strength of the project built up over many years and a positive example of partnership. There are areas for development within Standard 11 and as such warrants a level 2 rating. A central complaints

log is in place within the "Live Link" IT system. No written complaints have been received by the service. It was considered overall that whilst there have been some useful initiatives and the area of consultation is improving that this area is still lacking in respect of evidencing service user consultation.

Standard 12 is rated at level 3. Foster carers are issued with two guidance documents "Safe and Sound" and "Safe and Healthy" which contain useful information about healthcare and safe care. It is recommended that a health care plan be devised. In view of the significance of health care needs of the children placed it is also recommended that further information be incorporated within the Statement of Purpose. Standard 13 is rated at level 3.

Statements of Special Educational Needs are held on some of the children's file particularly where temporary care was being offered. The involvement in carers with regard to reviews varies according to the expectations of the local authority and the level of involvement of the carers. Standard 14 is rated at level 3. The service takes young people up to the age of twenty- one; this demonstrates that transition to adulthood is given careful consideration. It was reported that the majority of young people would go to bridging courses and college upon leaving school and that the project will liaise as appropriate.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers. (Standard 15-23)

Standard 15 is rated at level 3. Staff are highly suitable to be working with children and carers most of these staff are senior practitioners and there are no staff who work with carers who are not trained social workers. The standard is capable of higher grading if the recommendations within standard 2 are actioned and the recruitment and selection procedure updated. Standard 16 is accorded a level 4. The agency was considered to be going from strength to strength in this area. The deputy managers role in assisting with managerial responsibilities is proving to be an asset in that this allows more time to develop work, focus upon reviews and has helped in the area of recruitment. Consultation with staff confirms that the current management arrangements are experienced as supportive and the practice of an open dialogue between all staff and the promotion of thought-provoking culture remains. Standard 17 is rated at level 3. There is a clearly laid out assessment process, which meets the standard save in one area, which should be addressed to include the qualities expected of carers. Many carers have been involved in care work as demonstrated by the training events. The project has a stable workforce, which contributes significantly to the positive running of the service.

Standard 18 is rated at level 3. The policy in relation to health and safety has been updated. Out of hours support works well. Carers commented upon excellent levels of support. A support issue for a carer which had arisen prior to the inspection, was noted to have been appropriately addressed. Measures were also put into place to ensure no re-occurrence of events. Whistle blowing policies are in place. Standard 19 has achieved a level 4 rating. Staff have a training plan, which is addressed at every supervision. The project leader does an appraisal with each member of staff and is therefore able to keep abreast of training needs. Training is an area identified within a project development plan. Barnardos have made some changes in terms of centralisation of training resources, which were beginning to impact and need to be kept under review to ensure that this does not result in diminished training opportunities. Standard 20 rates a level 4. Practice is excellent in this area. Staff meetings are at monthly intervals, are agendaed and recorded in an excellent manner. The items agendaed cover practice issues etc. Standard 21 is rated at level 3. The foster carer handbook has been reorganised to include sections. Whilst this has improved matters there could still be further improvements to this area by a tab type system to make accessibility

easier. The Family Placement Unit (FPU) have established a foster carer group to look at corporate issues in relation to family placement which include issues of support. Review reports are presented to panel.

Standard 22 is rated at level 3. Foster carers agreements have been updated. The formalised supervision process has started with foster carers and it is anticipated that this will improve as time goes on. Logistical problems continue to occur in relation to placing social workers, which have an impact, though the project has brought these to the attention of the local authorities concerned. Improvements in levels of placement agreements on files were noted although certain were still missing. Standard 23 has achieved a level 4 rating. There is a well-established training programme for Barnardos carers, which are organised on a bi-monthly basis and repeated in two areas to facilitate attendance by the carers. A training plan was supplied indicating a wide variety of topics are covered. Additionally Barnardos commence their own pre-carer training sessions approximately four times a year. There is now a section within reviews, which cross-references when training updates are needed. The project is considering the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) for carers who may wish to be considered as temporary carers.

Records (Standards24-25)

Standard 24 is rated at level 3. There is an expectation in place that the link worker will see the foster carer diary on each occasion, with a tick box on the supervision sheet to evidence that this has been viewed. Foster carers have undertaken a session on administrative matters; they have been given information as to how to maintain the required documentation. This also demonstrates an attempt at achieving greater understanding as to the necessity of maintaining accurate and up to date records. Clearly administration is an area which most foster carers do not enjoy, some spoke within the support group of the repetitiveness of form filling etc. Standard 25 is rated at level 3. The required information is retained appropriately and improvements have been made to files. Managers for the project confirmed that there are procedures in place for staff concerning the keeping and retention of case files of service users. The policy is made known to all concerned and includes details of how to access information.

Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service (Standard 26)

Premises used are suitable for their purposes. The office location, whilst difficult to access without a car is very accessible for disabled people and has facilities for people with disabilities. The office is located close to a railway line which does pose the occasional problem from a noise perspective though this is not a major issue. The office is brightly decorated with literature designed to be of assistance to those attending the office with a pleasant reception area. Storage facilities were suitable with all confidential records being stored securely. The property is alarmed also and access is by a secure means. It was reported that the IT system has additional secure features to protect confidentiality in that entries cannot be changed afterwards. Staff have access to computers and IT training. The IT system used is linked into the Barnardos website. Copies of insurance related to premises and important buildings checks have been made available to the NCSC.

Financial requirements (Standards27-29)

Standard 27 is met and rates a level 3. The project continues to be financially viable therefore the level of financial support from Barnardos is being reduced. The project was in

the process of arranging for payment of foster carers to be made through the bank. As previously referred to foster carer allowance are decided on an individual basis, which, is influenced by the care needs of the child. Standard 28 is met and rates a level 3. The agency sends financial records to Headquarters at Barkingside on a regular basis where monitoring takes place of budgetary matters overall. The agency forwards regular accounts to the regional office, which receive some monitoring. Service Level Agreements are a key feature of work with Local Authorities. Standard 29 is also met. In view of the individual needs of each young person placed a written policy concerning the payment of allowances is not considered to be realistic. Finance levels are clearly outlined before prior to the child being linked to a carer.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

Standard 30 is fully met. CRB checks have been completed with regards to all panel members. Panel members are all given a comprehensive information pack. An independent chair presides at panel meetings. The panel observed at the time of inspection appeared to be rather reticent in expressing their views. Reviews are taking place however these are not being held within the required timescales. It was reported that there have been issues with ensuring the panel is quorate. The registered person should ensure a concerted attempt is made to secure expertise on the panel in the areas of health and education.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard area is awarded a level 4 rating. This is a well-established project with considerable years of experience to draw upon and good practice in the area of short term breaks. At the time of inspection there remained widespread opinion that these standards do not fully meet the needs of a short- term break service, which is specialised in nature. The project have developed their own policies or added to national policies over the period of time, examples of this being included within the carer handbook e.g. child protection, smoking, moving and handling etc

Family and friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard achieved a level 3 rating. The Project will undertake a full assessment on individuals who refer themselves for a named child and the project will respond quickly to such referrals. In such an eventuality, any prospective carer would receive as comprehensive an assessment as other prospective carers though in accordance with 32.2 would take into account the sensitive and pre-existing relationships. Additionally support and training would be supplied in line with other carers and with standard 32.3

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	11	FS6FS6	The registered person must ensure that risk assessments are completed regarding each child in liaison with local authorities.	31/03/2004
2	21	FS3FS3	The registered person should ensure that a procedure for signing off files by the registered person is developed and maintained.	31/04/2004

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)

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)
(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition			Compliance	
Comments				

Lead Inspector	Mrs Joan Scarr	Signature	
Second Inspector	Mrs Michele Hargan	Signature	
Locality Manager	Mrs Anne Watson	Signature	
Date			

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3 (3) (c)	FS1FS1	The registered person must ensure that the address and the telephone number of the National Care Standards Commission be included within the Children's Guide.	31/03/2004
2	11	FS6FS6	The registered person must ensure that suitable arrangements are in place concerning the upkeep and maintenance of any equipment issued to carers for use by the child placed in line with manufacturers instructions and HSE guidance including the formulating of risk assessments as to the safe use of any such equipment e.g. cot sides.	30/05/2004
3	22	FS8FS8	The registered person must ensure that evidence is maintained to demonstrate the continued attempts to secure the required documentation from placing authorities.	30/05/2004
4	11 (b) (i) (ii)	FS11FS11	The registered person must ensure that the views wishes and feelings of children are elicited as far as is possible about all aspects of the service they receive.	30/05/2004
5	29 (1) (2)	FS21FS21	The registered person must ensure that reviews of carers are carried out not more than one year after approval and thereafter as necessary but at intervals of not more than a year to this end it is recommended that a priority list be compiled so that this is achieved in the timeliest way possible.	30/05/2004

6	21 (2) (b).	FS18FS18	The registered person must ensure that the policy concerning disciplinary measures is amended to incorporate a statement making it clear to staff that the failure to report an incident of abuse or suspected abuse of a child placed with foster parents to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.	30/05/2004
7	25 (1)	FS30FS30	The registered person must take adequate measures to ensure that sufficient members of the panel attend meetings to ensure quoracy.	30/05/2004
8	43 (1) (2)	FS25FS25	The registered person must ensure that systems are in place so that in the event of a Notifiable Event the NCSC is informed without delay.	30/03/2004

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	FS1FS1	The registered person should also ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes details as to the procedures by which reviews of foster carers are undertaken.
2	FS4FS4	The registered person should ensure that a financial protocol be established for reference purposes and also ensure that the conflict of interest policy is drawn to the attention of carers. A single proforma, covering all aspects of schedule 7 and regulation 42, which is completed by the registered manager on a regular basis, should be adopted.
3	FS6FS6	The registered person should ensure that a lockable box is to carers as appropriate provided for the storage of medication.
4	FS8FS8	The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so as to ensure that service users who provide temporary care receive the necessary additional resources. Consideration should be given to the further development of a consistent and user -friendly document for placement agreements.

5	FS9FS9	The registered person should ensure that Link workers sign foster carers diaries at each visit. Sources of independent support should be identified for carers who may be subject to allegations. ACPC procedures should be obtained from placing authorities for reference purposes.
6	FS13FS13	The registered person should ensure that a health care plan be devised in respect of each child placed. It is also recommended that further information be incorporated within the Statement of Purpose concerning healthcare.
7	FS21FS21	The registered person should ensure accessibility is further improved to the foster carer handbook by the introduction of a tab type system being incorporated into this document.
8	FS30FS30	The registered person should ensure a concerted attempt is made to secure expertise on the panel in the areas of health and education.
9	FS3FS3	The registered person should ensure that personal files be further sectioned to improve accessibility of information.
10	FS12FS12	The registered person should ensure that the further information regarding meeting healthcare needs of children/young people be incorporated within the Statement of Purpose.
11	FS17FS17	The registered person should ensure that the recruitment policy take full account of the needs of temporary carers in particular.
12	FS24FS24	The registered person should ensure that an audit of records maintained by foster carers is carried out so as ensure that record keeping is consistent and also that unnecessary documents are not being kept.

* 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

11

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

YES

Interview with panel chair

YES

Observation of foster carer training

YES

Observation of foster panel

YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

YES

Date of Inspection

12/01/2004

Time of Inspection

9:30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

80

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

The scale ranges from:

4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)

3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)

2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)

1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The statement of purpose has been updated it now includes all of the required information aside from details concerning the procedures for the review of foster carers.
- The statement has received formal approval by the registered provider.
- A children's guide has been devised which is attractive and colourful and includes useful information. Assurances were given that this document would be further developed in, order to meet the varying needs of children placed.
- It's reported that there is increasing numbers of policies at local level these being adapted as necessary for the project. With regard to Shared Care North East for example issues around regulation 38 are being addressed.
- Information for parents has been updated in the form of a "Parents Pack". This is a comprehensive user- friendly document, which provides useful information about all aspects of the service. Readers are invited to comment on its contents by the agency.
- The quality of documentation available to service users was noted to be good.
- Establishing effective communication for children with learning disabilities is still an area for development and this is also an issue nationally.
- The registered person must ensure that the address and the telephone number of the National Care Standards Commission be included within the Children's Guide.
- The registered person should also ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes details as to the procedures by which reviews of foster carers are undertaken.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- The registered manager has recently completed the relevant manager qualification.
- The assistant manager is in the process of pursuing management training which when obtained will exceed the required minimum standard.
- The appointment of the assistant manager has relieved the manager the workload of the manager and resulted in shared duties and tasks, which are well defined.
- It was clear that the registered manager runs the service in such a way as to ensure that the best possible child -care is delivered.
- Administrative support has increased since the last inspection demonstrating that pro-active attention has been given to this area.
- The appointment of the deputy manager is allowing for further development opportunities to be undertaken.
- Progress in this area has been excellent.

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 following information evidences that this standard is almost met: -

- There has been little turnover of staff since the last inspection.
- Issues with regards to personal files have been drawn to the attention of the personnel department. Some changes have been made which has resulted in some improvement though this is still an area for further progression.
- Areas still requiring attention include an improved checklist of recruitment data at the front of files which needs to be made more definitive to include dates when information has been requested etc.
- There also needs to be a section within files for the registered person to evidence that files have been signed off as satisfactory. The current system does not meet the required standard, as the system needs to be maintained by the registered person.
- The contents of files have been labelled which improves the accessibility of information though it is recommended that files be further sectioned to improve accessibility of information.
- There was evidence that telephone verification of references has been made in the case of the files sampled.

- There is an expectation that staff receive CRB checks at three yearly intervals and it was reported that all staff are currently up to date with these checks.
- Photos of staff have been added to all files.
- The Disqualification of Caring For Children's (DCRR) Regulations have been incorporated into all files.
- Dates of months are now included within application forms.
- Explanations as to gaps in periods of employment had also been ascertained.
- The registered person should ensure that a procedure for signing off files by the registered person is developed and maintained.

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?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The management now have the “Live Link” IT system, which is used by the manager to sign off all files.
- This new system has significant advantages over the previous one and should result in more sophisticated data being available and in timesavings also. However at this point the information is still in the process of being transferred onto live link and as such the task is not yet complete.
- The system has points of accessibility and therefore maintains confidentiality.
- Accountability lines are clear within this project and there were no areas of confusion.
- Regular meetings take place with the responsible individual at the time of the inspection the responsible individual was on sick leave and the regional director was undertaking the responsibility. It was commented that this was a robust source of support to the project.
- Financial procedures and service level agreements are in place.
- A process is in place with regards to rates of pay for foster carers, which is commensurate with the levels of care needs of the child.
- It is recommended that a financial protocol be recorded particularly given that the project administrator is approaching retirement and the increasingly complex nature of financial matters, which have to be managed.
- There is a conflict of interests statement, which notifies staff of the need to inform their manager as to the any matter which, may arise within this area.
- The area of conflict of interest needs to be drawn to the attention of carers.
- Effective system monitoring is in place as evidenced by cross referencing of records also the responsible individual is made aware of the areas within Schedule 7 by the regular forwarding of documentation. However there should be increased clarification around this issue in terms of how all aspects related to Regulation 42 monitoring link together. A single proforma, covering all aspects of schedule 7 and regulation 42, which is completed by the registered manager on a regular basis, would be of assistance. This would provide easily accessible direct evidence of this area. The inspectors were confident, however, that in practice that quality of care is being addressed proactively.
- With regard to monitoring and improving the records of foster carers some improvements have been made, it is recognised that this is an incremental process and there can be some variance in this area. At this stage it is satisfactory that this area is being actively progressed.
- There is increased organisation overall in this area.
- The manager has drawn up a list of allowances for foster carers depending upon level of care needs and skill since the last inspection.
- The organisation has a regional based quality officer whose remit is to improve standards of care within all projects.
- Financial procedures are in place and service level agreements are drawn up between the agency and placing authority.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	0
Death of a child placed with foster parents. Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children. Serious illness or accident of a child. Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home. Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution. Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home. Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	<div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div>
Number of complaints made to NCSC 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?	4
The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions are in place across all tiers • Levels of accountability are clearly defined and in line with 5.3 • There are clear arrangements to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent. • This area has improved with the appointment of the Assistant manager. • The responsible individual visits on a regular basis for professional supervision with the manager. • The manager and assistant manager roles have now dovetailed together. 		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is

- The involvement of an Occupational Therapist has improved the assessment process with regards to adaptations within foster carers homes.
- The health and safety checks are being picked up on at the review stage and this has included additional checks with regards to fire protection.
- The area of safe care guidelines is being updated at the time of carer's reviews this has included additional checks with regard to fire provision.
- Consultation is taking place with Barnardos health and safety officer regarding adequacy of fire protection arrangements within foster care homes, who was reported to be satisfied with current provision.
- The area of medication is being addressed and medication can only be administered in its original packaging. A new form has been recently introduced which provides more detail regarding administration of medication. These are returned to the project on a regular basis and are checked.
- The area of self-medication has now received attention and it is understood that this is included within the placement agreement.
- It may be helpful if carers maintained their medication within a lockable facility such as small box in order to increase safeguards.
- Training sessions were to be extended for carers with regards to health and safety and staff have also received training since the last inspection in this area, which is positive.
- Smoking patterns are in line with BAAF guidelines and are kept under review.
- Risk assessments concerning children are still not in place, this is the most significant area still to address. Given that the Local Authorities have not been pro-active in progressing this it is recommended that the project take action in this area in order to safeguard and promote welfare. It was considered that the matching details form could be further extended to encompass this area and it should form a crucial part of matching and ongoing review. This should be undertaken in liaison with the placing authority.
- Carers have also been issued with two booklets "Safe and Healthy" and "Safe and Sound".
- Child protection training was being offered at the time of the inspection and staff had received 2 days child protection training within the last year.
- Risk assessments should be in place with regards to all children placed.
- Where any type of bed rail or cot bumpers is in use a risk assessment must be formulated and expert opinion established as to the necessity of use. Appropriate Health and Safety guidance must be followed concerning up keep and maintenance of this equipment including the carrying out visual checks of equipment.
- The numbers of requirements have reduced in this area since the time of the last inspection.

- The issue of self medication has been addressed with the drawing up of a policy, this area is now included within placement agreements.
- The registered person must ensure that risk assessments are completed regarding each child in liaison with placing authorities.
- The registered person should ensure that a lockable box is provided to carers as appropriate for the storage of medication.
- The registered person must ensure that suitable arrangements are in place concerning the upkeep and maintenance of any equipment issued to carers for use by the child placed in line with manufacturers instructions and Health & Safety Executive guidance (HSE) including the formulating of risk assessments as to the safe use of any such equipment e.g. cot sides.
- It is pleasing to note that the numbers of necessary recommendations have reduced in this area as vigorous action has been taken to address the previous requirements.

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 following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -.

- The project recruits carers from a wide range of backgrounds, which looks at skills carers can offer and is non discriminatory in approach. E.g. carers who are older are considered carefully given the value of experience and time they can bring and similarly young people who may be relatively inexperienced in caring but who may demonstrate a sound commitment would also receive careful consideration
- The project issues advice with regard to the sexual health of young people which is non discriminatory in approach
- The project will accept as a referral all children who have a learning or physical disability regardless of degree and is therefore non- discriminatory in approach. This can be evidenced in that there are children who have very high dependency and health needs receiving care as well as children who have moderate needs and are generally more in need of ongoing supervision.
- The charity has a sound basis and values.
- All foster carers receive training on discrimination, promoting self-esteem and a positive identity for young people with a disability throughout the assessment process thus meeting 7.3.
- Mandatory training is organised by Barnardos for all staff concerning race, culture etc.
- Given the area within Durham County is predominantly white, this is reflected within both the referrals of children made to the project and the bulk of referrals which are received in respect of referrals for prospective carers. There were instances highlighted in the life of the project, however, when there have been carers and children from differing cultures.
- Placements made to this agency in an emergency are rare; therefore part 2 of 7.2 is unlikely to be an issue. In most respects a child will normally be placed on a waiting list until there is a suitable link with a child, which takes into account all matching considerations. Whilst it is not positive that a child may have to wait, it is positive that a link will not proceed until there is confidence that there is good chance of success, which will have taken into account cultural and diversity factors.
- There is full information given to foster carers at the point of any link information, which will include the requirements of 7.7 concerning their hobbies interests etc. During the tracking processes, the foster carers demonstrated excellent knowledge of the activities that the children enjoyed and were actively encouraging this area.

- In line with 7.6 the project will supply any safety equipment or other equipment such as cots etc that is necessary for the care of the child. Should the child have additional needs, project staff will liaise with the appropriate health or social services staff concerning this aspect of need and there has been some funds accessed from Quality protects which is a good initiative which assists also. Improvements have been made by the project in accessing appropriate levels of occupational therapy support for carers. This is most easily accessed where there are health related issues necessitating the use of health care equipment. Specialised training by health care professionals can be accessed for carers of children on as required basis.
- There is a national strong equal opportunities policy and the charity demonstrates their commitment to this important area by responding to key legislation as in the Race relations Amendment Act.
- It was considered that this standard area is a considerable strength of the agency both at organisational and project level and the standard is regarded as exceeded.
- The service has recently purchased a "Listen Up Pack" which is designed to assist in listening to the views of children with disabilities.
- The project is non-discriminatory in attracting carers, e.g. older people, single carers and carers with a disability.

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?

4

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- A good number of links have been established on along term basis, hence demonstrating a thorough assessment and link process.
- The SCAP records unmet needs after 6 months, which is positive in that the child's needs remain buoyant and can then be sought elsewhere if appropriate.
- Matching forms were considered to be comprehensive and only require the addition of a risk assessment as previously referred to.
- Meetings of staff to discuss allocation of children linked to carers were viewed as useful in enabling a satisfactory matching process.
- Levels of documentation from placing authorities have improved, however there are still a number of issues in relation to this, which result in day-to-day management problems for staff. This includes different types of documentation such as core needs assessment and varying LAC forms completed to inconsistent standards. However some information is now coming through more readily following written representation by the registered manager.
- The measures taken by the manager to gain the necessary documentation are beginning to have effect. There had been verbal dialogue at strategic level with one authority and written and verbal representation with another.
- Children's files had received an audit to ensure that all material was there for the purposes of care. In the sampling process, there were still deficiencies with a number with no care plans and certain had no placement plans.
- A situation had arisen which had brought some reflection to the appropriateness of short-term carers looking after children on a medium term basis by. Project staff as a result of

the issues raised where to consider this in more detail and to refine the current systems in place. This would include training issues and the appropriateness of the environment and skills of the carer/s. This is a pertinent matter given that the project is now being asked to care for more children than previously on a temporary care basis, therefore the agencies recognises that this increased service provision places greater demands on carers. This may have additional resource implication's, which, will need to be addressed as they arise.

- Placement agreements format were not always appropriate to the needs of this type of service. Certain agreements were found which were from the agency, which were an improvement. It was considered that this could be modified to ensure it meets the legal requirements and placing authorities approached as to agreeing to pilot the usage of such forms. This would provide increased consistency and ensure the documentation is more user friendly and amenable.
- Barnardos need to recognise additional resources, which may need to be available to cares who move on to provide temporary care. The current efforts to gain documentation from local authorities should continue and Barnardos should consider developing a consistent and user- friendly document for placement agreements.

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 following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The live link system takes makes provision for concerns of this nature to be logged.
- Files have been trawled to ensure that any appropriate information has been transferred onto the live link system.
- There were no carers about whom there were significant concerns at the time of the inspection.
- An issue had arisen which had prompted some practice review in relation to this area. This included the expectation that there would be up dates with regards to child protection training and prompt reporting and recording practice, ensuring that link workers look at carer's diaries and amendments in how child protection training was delivered in preparation training.
- The project has expanded on the number of local authorities in which children reside and staffs were trying to access ACPC procedures from these new areas.
- During the inspection a local authority social worker was undertaking training with a large group of carers, the level of attendance was encouraging.
- The area of child protection is given high profile within Barnardos and this is reflected within the organisational polices and procedures.
- Staff have had two days training in child protection recently and mandatory annual training takes place.
- Carers tracked were more aware of the safe care policy than on the previous occasion reflecting that some attention has been given to this area.
- The issue in relation to carers, which are subject to an allegation, is a matter requiring some progression, the external sources have ceased and alternative provision needs to be identified. In the interim Barnardos were exploring other possible sources of support for carers.
- Barnardos should identify a means of independent support for foster care workers who are subject to allegation/s.
- Link workers should sign carer's diaries at each visit.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACPC procedures should continue to be sought. 		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	0	%

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?	4
The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations in this area are very clear. For temporary care arrangements any issue regarding contact arrangements are specified within the placement agreement. This is an area of strength of the project built up over many years and a positive example of partnership. 		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5) The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
The following information evidences that this area is almost met: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A central complaints log is in place within the live link system. No written complaints have been received by the service. There has been some progress in relation to eliciting the views of children. Areas of improvement include purchasing a "Listen up pack". It is established practice to consult carer's children as part of the review process. The children's guide has been adapted and is in a much more child friendly format, this was undertaken in consultation with parents and children. It was considered overall that whilst there have been some useful initiatives and the area of consultation is improving that this area is still lacking in respect of evidencing service user consultation. Barnardos as an organisation has a lot of skill to bring to the development of this area and it is recognised that there is still some way to go by the project. One means whereby Barnardos has started this recognition is by the appointment of a worker within the region who will be considering service users involvement. A recent initiative has been the establishment of a forum for carers which joining with others from within Barnardos is aimed at informing and influencing practice as well as looking at support issues. The registered person must ensure that the views wishes and feelings of children are elicited as far as is possible about all aspects of the service they receive. 		

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 following information evidences that this standard is

- Link workers are expected to check on medication records at every visit.
- These forms are returned to the project when completed.
- Those sampled were satisfactorily completed.
- The process for self-medication is now in place, which was completed in consultation with parents and social workers.
- There is plenty of health information on children's files. However this does not yet constitute a health care plan. The information kept could easily be developed in to such a document, which would achieve the recommended National Minimum Standard.
- Foster carers are issued with two guidance documents "Safe and Sound" and "Safe and Healthy" which contain useful information about healthcare and safe care.
- It is recommended that a health care plan be devised.
- In view of the significance of health care needs of the children placed it is recommended that further information be incorporated within the Statement of Purpose.

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**

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The link worker visits the child in school which is clearly good practice to see child in this setting.
- Transport is arranged by placing authority social workers.
- Statements of Special Educational Needs are held on some of the children's file particularly where temporary care was being offered
- The involvement of carers with regard to reviews varies according to the expectations of the local authority and the level of involvement of the carers.

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**

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The service takes young people up to the age of twenty-one; this demonstrates transition to adulthood is given careful consideration.
- It was reported that the majority of young people would go to bridging courses and college upon leaving school and the project will liaise as appropriate.
- The young people are predominantly placed with their families who take primary responsibility for this area.
- The project staff will encourage the local authority to meet their responsibility in relation to adult life however this area is not yet developed well nationally.

- Pathway plans are not in place neither are substantial links with leaving care teams. However when children reach the age of transition some support is available through the education authority.
- Carers will aim to develop independent skills with children placed in accordance with their identified needs.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The recruitment and selection procedures have not been updated to take account of NMS although practice is followed as required by Schedule 7. Comment has been made on this area within standard 3.
- Staff are highly suitable to be working with children and carers most of these staff are senior practitioners there are no staff who work with carers who are not trained social workers.
- The standard is capable of higher grading if the recommendations within standard 3 are actioned and the recruitment and selection procedure updated.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9.5

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

0

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?

4

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- The agency was considered to be going from strength to strength in this area.
- The deputy managers role in assisting with managerial responsibilities is proving to be an asset in that this allows more time to develop work, focus upon reviews and has helped in the area of recruitment.
- Consultation with staff confirms that the current management arrangements are experienced as supportive and the practice of an open dialogue between all staff and the promotion of thought-provoking culture remains.
- There is a good awareness of workloads and systems are in place to support this.
- There is an improved level of administrative back up.

- Office facilities are good
- The requirements from the previous inspection report have been proactively progressed.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- There is great diversity with regards to carers recruited to the service.
- There is clearly laid out assessment process, which meets the standard save one area, which should be addressed to include the qualities expected of carers.
- Many carers have been involved in care work as demonstrated by the training events.
- The project has a stable workforce, which contributes significantly to the positive running of the service.
- A marketing consultant has recently been appointed to look at the area of recruitment for the family placement unit, this work should lead to a recruitment policy being available. It is recommended that the recruitment policy should take full account of the needs of temporary carers in particular.
- It is anticipated that if the aforementioned advisory recommendations is achieved that this standard area would be exceeded.

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

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The review form has a checklist in relation to the necessary health and safety matters.
- The policy in relation to health and safety has been updated.
- Out of hours support works well. Carers commented upon excellent levels of support A support issue for a carer which had arisen prior to the inspection, was noted to have been appropriately addressed. Measures were also put into place to ensure no re-occurrence of events.
- Whistle blowing policies are in place.
- There are good employment practices evident within the organisation. The disciplinary procedure must make clear to staff that the failure to report an incident of abuse or suspected abuse of a child placed with foster parents to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.
- Management systems for carer supervision and support have been progressed. At the time of the inspection there was some variance in quality, however this is expected to improve significantly as the new systems become established.
- The registered person must ensure that the policy concerning disciplinary measures is amended to incorporate the aforementioned requirements the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 21 (2) (b).
- It is anticipated that if the supervision and support services continue to progress and if the requirement detailed above is met that this standard area could be exceeded.

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

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- Staff have a training plan, which is addressed at every supervision.
- The project leader completes an appraisal with each member of staff and is therefore able to keep abreast of training needs.
- Training is an area identified within a project development plan.
- Barnardos have made some changes in terms of centralisation of training resources, which were beginning to impact and need to be kept under review to ensure that this does not result in diminished training opportunities.
- There has been some very useful training taken place for staff, which has included health and safety training and child protection.
- Certain aspects of training are mandatory including child protection and equality.
- There is a comprehensive induction in place.
- There are a number of in house training courses now being run utilising the expertise from staff from different projects.
- Certain staff are undertaking additional PQ qualifications.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- Practice is excellent in this area.
- Staff meetings are at monthly intervals, are agended and recorded in an excellent manner.
- The items agended cover practice issues etc.
- Supervision is regular and there is evidence that matters are appropriately addressed within the supervision process.
- There is regular planned supervision and supervision agreements are in place.
- The appraisal system is well developed and a useful process.
- Job descriptions are in place.

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

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The foster carer handbook has been reorganised to include sections. Whilst this has improved matters there could still be further improvements to this area by a tab type system to make accessibility easier
- Family Placement Unit have established a foster carer group to look at corporate issues in relation to family placement which include issues of support
- Review reports are presented to panel.
- Handbook is a useful document kept up to date
- There is an issue requiring some attention relating to the timing of reviews, as they are often late.
- The registered person must ensure that reviews of carers are carried out not more than one year after approval and thereafter as necessary but at intervals of not more than a year.
- The registered person should ensure accessibility is further improved to the foster carer handbook by the introduction of a tab type system being incorporated into this document.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- Foster carers agreements have been updated.
- The formalised supervision process has started with foster carers and it is anticipated that this will improve as time goes on.
- Logistical problems continue to occur in relation to placing social workers, which have an impact, though the project has brought these to the attention of the local authorities concerned.
- Improvements in levels of placement agreements on files were noted although some were still missing.
- The project have undertaken some work concerning procedures for dealing with allegations.
- Complaints are maintained via the "Live Link" system and this is referenced within documentation.
- It is understood that there is a policy for the family placement unit as a whole which outlines circumstances whereby carers should be removed from the register and this is being amended at this point in time following a practice issue, though this did not concern this project.
- The national helpline number is made available to all 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?****4**

The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- There is a well-established training programme for Barnardos carers, which are organised on a bi-monthly basis and repeated in two areas to facilitate attendance by the carers. A training plan was supplied indicating a wide variety of topics are covered.
- Additionally Barnardos commence their own pre-carer training sessions approximately four times a year.
- There is now a section within reviews, which cross-references when training updates are needed.
- The project is considering the development of NVQ for carers who may wish to be considered as temporary carers.
- Where there are two adults in the house it is the expectation that there is a joint application
- The review report has been adapted to include a section on training.
- The registered person should ensure that any additional training needs for temporary carers who offer accommodation to a child on a full time basis are established and 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 following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- There is an expectation in place that the link worker will see the foster carer diary on each occasion, with a tick box on the supervision sheet to evidence that this has been viewed.
- Foster carers have undertaken a session on administrative matters; they have been given information as to how to maintain the required documentation.
- This also demonstrates an attempt at achieving greater understanding as to the necessity of maintaining accurate and up to date records.
- Clearly administration is an area which most foster carers do not enjoy, some spoke within the support group of the repetitiveness of form filling etc.
- The project has developed a process for returning information when a placement ends.
- Records are expected to be maintained confidentially within foster carers homes.
- The registered person should ensure that an audit of records maintained by foster carers is carried out so as ensure that record keeping is consistent and also that unnecessary documents are not being kept.

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
<p>The following information evidences that this standard is met: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The required information is retained appropriately and improvements have been made to files. • Managers for the project confirmed that there are procedures in place for staff concerning the keeping and retention of case files of service users. The policy is made known to all concerned and includes details of how to access information. • As previously referred to the project experiences some difficulties in securing all the required LAC documentation. A recommendation concerning this has been made within the Statutory Requirements section of this report. • A notification had been made to the NCSC in line with regulation 43. However this was not made without delay as specified by regulation. • The registered person must ensure that systems are in place so that in the event of a Notifiable Event the NCSC is informed without delay. 			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			74
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			18
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			16
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			4
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			7
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	225.12	Maximum £	450.24

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?
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The following information is evidence that this standard is exceeded: -

- Premises used are suitable for their purposes. The office location, whilst difficult to access without a car is very accessible for disabled people and has facilities for people with disabilities.
- The office is located close to a railway line which does pose the occasional problem from a noise perspective though this is not a major issue
- The office is brightly decorated with literature designed to be of assistance to those attending the office with a pleasant reception area.
- Storage facilities were suitable with all confidential records being stored securely. The property is alarmed also and access is by a secure means.
- It was reported that the IT system has additional secure features to protect confidentiality in that entries cannot be changed afterwards
- Staff have access to computers and IT training. The IT system used is linked into the Barnardos website.
- Copies of insurance related to premises and important buildings checks have been made available to the NCSC.
- Public liability insurance is in place
- There are adequate facilities for training and meetings within the premises and office availability to staff is very good.
- The premises are good, though it was noted that these premises can be excessively hot, staff do not have control over the central heating and fans for staff are available when required.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The project continues to be financially viable therefore the level of financial support from Barnardos is being reduced.
- The project was in the process of arranging for payment of foster carers to be made through the bank.
- As previously referred to foster carer allowance are decided on an individual basis, which, is influenced by the care needs of the child.
- There is a now an increased level of administrative support within the project. Good progress is being made within this area.

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 following information evidences that this standard is met:-

- The agency sends financial records to Headquarters at Barkingside on a regular basis where monitoring takes place of budgetary matters overall.
- The agency forwards regular accounts to the regional office, which receive some monitoring.
- Service Level Agreements are a key feature of work with Local Authorities
- The manager and the Project Administrator attend regular meetings at regional level concerning the budget. The registered provider is fully aware of the financial state of the budget given the financial system in place
- There are key principles and expectations in relation to the operation of financial procedures; an outline of which was forwarded and the project can receive a financial audit at any time.
- There is an annual report and annual review of financial accounts produced nationally on an annual 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**

The following information evidences that this standard is met:-

- Individual arrangements are in place concerning the payment of allowances and increasing numbers of children are receiving higher allowances commensurate with their level of need.
- In view of the individual needs of each young person placed a written policy concerning the payment of allowances is not considered to be realistic.
- Finance levels are clearly outlined before prior to the child being linked to a carer.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

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

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- CRB checks have been completed with regards to all panel members.
- Panel members are all given a comprehensive information pack.
- An independent chair presides at panel meetings.
- The panel observed at the time of inspection appeared to be rather reticent in expressing their views.
- Reviews are taking place however these are not being held within the required timescales.
- It was reported that there have been issues with ensuring the panel is quorate.
- The registered person should ensure a concerted attempt is made to secure expertise on the panel in the areas of health and education.
- Panel members and staff have been trained with regards to applicants attending Panel. A protocol for Panel members regarding this process is in place.
- The registered person must take adequate measures so that sufficient members of panel attend meetings to ensure quoracy.
- The registered person must ensure that reviews are carried out in accordance with regulatory requirements; to this end it is recommended that a priority list be compiled so that this is achieved in the timeliest way possible.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The following information evidences that this standard is exceeded: -

- This is a well established project with considerable years of experience to draw upon and good practice in the area of short term breaks
- At the time of inspection there remained widespread opinion that these standards do not fully meet the needs of a short- term break service, which is specialised in nature.
- The project have developed their own policies or added to national policies over the period of time, examples of this being included within the carer handbook e.g. child protection, smoking, moving and handling etc
- Both policy and evidence of practice support that parents are central in the lives of children and that short-term carers have a position of support within the family.
- It is clear that there is a thoughtful approach to short term breaks and the standard exceeded.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The following information evidences that this standard is met: -

- The Project will undertake a full assessment on individuals who refer themselves for a named child and the project will respond quickly to such referrals
- In such an eventuality, any prospective carer would receive as comprehensive an assessment as other prospective carers though in accordance with 32.2 would take into account the sensitive and pre-existing relationships. Additionally support and training would be supplied in line with other carers and with standard 32.3
- The project will receive a number of referrals from friends of carers given that personal recommendation is a very productive means of recruitment.
- The policy in relation to the assessment of prospective carers who are known to parents or children has now been included within the carer handbook.

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)**

A Lay Assessor did not participate in this inspection.

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 week commencing 12th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The Providers Response and Action Plan have been received and can be viewed at the Darlington Area Office

Action taken by the NCSC 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 1st April 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>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I, Mrs Deborah Gaskin of Barnardo's Shared Care North East 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, Mrs Deborah Gaskin of Barnardo's Shared Care North East 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
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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