



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

**Cambridgeshire County Council  
Fostering**

18-20 Signet Court  
Swanns Road  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th & 25th February 2005

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

### The role of CSCI is to:

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

## Inspection Methods & Findings

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

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering

**Address**

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering, 18-20 Signet Court, Swanns Road, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

**Local Authority Manager**

Mary Milton

**Tel No:**

01223 718441

**Address**

Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering, 18-20 Signet Court, Swanns Road, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

**Fax No:**

01223 718656

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

26.01.04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		21st February 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09.30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Lindsey Blickem	098780
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Jacqui Barry	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	Alison Hilton	
<b>Name of Inspector(s)</b>	<b>4</b>	Samantha Wandera & Maureen Conroy-Brown (Student Social Workers)	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Nicky Hale, Fostering and Adoption Manager	

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**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**  
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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Cambridge County Council (Mainstream) Fostering Service assesses, approves and provides on-going support to foster carers. As of February 2005, the service had 151 approved carers offering 209 placements. The service's primary aim is to provide an adequate supply of high quality family placements for children who are looked after by the local authority.

The Cambridgeshire County Council Link Service is a separately line managed service providing short-term/respite family placements for disabled children who are not the child's primary carer. This service has a separate system for the approval and support of carers and a separate specialist team.

The Mainstream service has discreet specialist carers within the following categories: Time-Limited, Respite, Youth (adolescent) Care, Youth Care Challenge (alternative to specialist residential care), Long Term and Permanent Fostering and Kinship (Friends and Family) Care.

The Mainstream service is organisationally merged with the County Adoption service and share administrative functions as well as being line managed by one Fostering and Adoption Manager. The Mainstream service provides experienced and qualified social workers responsible for the assessment and support of carers. The Link Service provides social workers for the assessment and support of its own approved carers and also shares administrative functions with the mainstream service. Both services employ non-social work staff to undertake specific pieces of work such as family support and duty.

Full details of the facilities and services offered by the Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Service and the Link service are contained within the respective services' Statement of Purpose.

## **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.)

#### **OVERVIEW**

During this inspection ten cases were tracked. Three cases were kinship arrangements. Three cases were children with carers 'exceeding the usual fostering limit' and four cases from the link service. Questionnaires were sent to placing officers and foster carers. A consultation exercise with young people looked after in foster care planned by the Commission was cancelled due to a lack of response. The case tracking methods employed during this inspection included interviewing fostering social workers; placing social workers, foster carers and some young people. The placing social worker's case files were seen, as were the foster carer case files. Interviews with the management team were also conducted.

#### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (St 1)**

##### **This standard was met**

The statement of purpose for both the mainstream service and the link service contained all the required information. The children's guide(s) developed and implemented for the mainstream service were of high quality.

#### **FITNESS TO PROVIDE OR MANAGE A FOSTERING SERVICE (St 2 & 3)**

##### **Both standards were met**

These two standards were largely unchanged since the last inspection. The day to day management of both the main stream service and the link service was largely unchanged although the mainstream service was carrying an additional section manager vacancy since November 2004.

#### **MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE (St 4 & 5)**

##### **One of the two standards assessed was met**

There was evidence to suggest that aspects of the mainstream fostering service had been poorly managed specifically relating to kinship care arrangements and problems providing permanent placements for some children who had been in the looked after system for some considerable time children. The proposed expansion of the service was designed to meet the demands of two discreet areas of need within the fostering service although there were practice issues that could have been more effectively managed without increased resources.

#### **SECURING AND PROMOTING WELFARE (St 6 to 14)**

##### **Three of the nine standards assessed were met**

The ten sets of carers seen during the inspection were providing safe secure and nurturing environments for the children placed with them. The evidence available at the time of the inspection suggested that the mainstream fostering service had not appropriately responded to the specific needs of the kinship carers whom they were supporting. The children seen during the inspection were relatively well matched with the carers, although there was little evidence that the service had carefully and purposely placed the children in their present placements. There were concerns expressed by the inspection team about the proportion of placement breakdowns and emergency placements. There was evidence of careful and



thorough matching within the link service.

None of the kinship carers seen during the inspection had received guidance or training in child protection or acceptable behavioural management techniques. Given the lack of clarity relating the format and content of supervision sessions for carers it was unclear how the fostering service would review and monitor behavioural management techniques employed within carers' homes.

The carers seen during the inspection supported contact arrangements well. The standard of looked after children (LAC) paper work was generally quite poor and it was difficult to ascertain specific contact arrangements. Carers did not routinely record the outcome of contact visits.

The consultation undertaken with young people looked after by Cambridgeshire County Council through the 'Just Us' group continued to provide a valuable service to the fostering service and young people.

The young people seen during the inspection had been appropriately supported and encouraged to access health services. The fostering service had employed a psychologist and assistant psychologist since the last inspection. The link service had made progress towards ensuring greater access to an Occupational Therapist.

There were two examples during the inspection of young people and carers not being appropriately supported with education and training. The fostering service should have routine access to information relating to the attainment of children looked after by the service.

One carer complained that the level of support received by the 16+ service was poor. The 16+ service was responsible for completing Form F assessments for supported lodgings and the standard of assessment was inadequate.

### **RECRUITING, CHECKING, MANAGING, SUPPORTING AND TRAINING STAFF AND FOSTER CARERS (St 15 to 23)**

#### **Two of the nine standards assessed were met**

Two of the five personnel files seen during the inspection did not contain evidence of a CRB check having been completed.

The evidence available at the time of the inspection suggested that staff in the mainstream service were not organised in a way that ensured effective service delivery. The practice issues relating to kinship arrangements and carer training/supervision were not about capacity but related to how parts of the service were managed. The link service was effectively and efficiently organised.

There were some significant gaps in information in some Form F assessments. The evidence available during the inspection suggested that there was a shortage of permanent placements for looked after children in Cambridgeshire leaving some young people with poor prospects of long term placement stability.

All staff employed by the fostering agency who were spoken to during the inspection reported receiving regular formal supervision from their line manager. There were issues relating to the supervision of carers that had not been effectively managed since the last inspection and also significant deficits in kinship assessment/support and supervision suggesting some flaws in the staff supervision processes. There was clearly no effective

strategy in place to work with kinship carers.

There were some good evidence of excellent case working practices by fostering social workers and link workers.

The supervision and support offered to kinship carers was consistently poor. The supervision of mainstream carers link carers did not adequately assess the training needs of carers and also lacked structure and consequently sessions to be specifically about practical day to day issues.

There was an extensive programme of training available to carers with a very modest take up. The format and purpose of supervision sessions was not conducive to encouraging carers to attend training. The training opportunities for kinship carers were poor.

### **RECORDS (St 24 and 25)**

#### **One standard was met**

The quality of LAC paperwork seen during the inspection was generally poor with the exception of the review meeting minutes. The fostering service maintained the majority of records required by regulations.

### **FITNESS OF PREMISES FOR USE AS FOSTERING SERVICE (St 26)**

#### **This standard was met**

This standard was largely unchanged since the last inspection.

### **FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS (St 27 to 29)**

#### **Both standards were met**

These standards were largely unchanged since the last inspection.

### **FOSTERING PANELS (St 30)**

#### **This standard was not met**

The functioning of the fostering panel was efficient although membership did not include an employee of the fostering service with fostering expertise. Also the panel had not received any guidance or training relating to kinship care or supported lodgings.

### **SHORT TERM BREAKS (St 31)**

#### **This standard was met**

The link service was a well-run service providing high quality placements to young people and support to their families.

### **FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS CARERS (St 32)**

#### **This standard was not met**

There were some significant practice issues relating to the assessment, approval and support of kinship carers. There were significant flaws in the assessment process for some carers and the support offered to carers post approval was inconsistent and at times very poor. The training offered to kinship carers was also poor. There was also a high level of anxiety from staff relating to kinship care and there was no clear strategy in place for this area of work.

## **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:**

There is no duty to report to the Secretary of State about failing Local Authority fostering services under Section 47 of the Care Standards Act as this was repealed by section 81 of the Health and Social Care Act 2003.

**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	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<u>Lindsey Blickem</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<u>Jacqui Barry</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	<u>Cathryn Bramham</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<u>23rd May 2005</u>		

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	27(2)(a) Schedule 3 (13)	FS17	The fostering service must ensure that all foster carers are subject to a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check prior to approval.	Immediate
2	21(4)(a)	FS19	The fostering service must ensure that all staff receive appropriate training.	30.06.05
4	17(1)	FS22	The fostering service must ensure that foster carers receive appropriate support and supervision.	30.06.05
5	24 (3) a	FS30	The fostering service must ensure that the panel membership includes a social worker that has expertise in the provision of a fostering service.	30.06.05
6	35(1)	FS32 & FS16	The Local authority must ensure that visits to children placed in foster care comply with the requirements of this regulation.	30.06.05
7	17(1)	FS23	The fostering service must ensure that all carers receive appropriate training. The service must review the training needs of carers and develop the training programme accordingly.	30.06.05
8	34(3)	FS8 &FS24	The fostering service must ensure that placement agreements are in place for all carers.	30.06.05

9	20(3)(d) Schedule 1 (2)	FS15	The fostering service must ensure that all staff are subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check	Immediate
10	28(5)(b)	FS22	The fostering service must ensure that each carer has in place a foster care agreement.	30.06.05
11	Schedule 7 (3) Children Act 1989.	FS17	The fostering service must ensure that the number of children placed with individual foster carers does not exceed the 'usual fostering limit' of three children as stated in Schedule 7 (3) Children Act 1989.	30.06.05
12	22(1) Schedule 2 (3)	FS25	The system for recording accidents to children within the foster home must be more effectively implemented.	30.06.05
13	27(1)(b)	FS17	The fostering service must ensure that all carers have two personal references in place prior to approval.	Immediate
14	16(5)	FS13	The fostering service must ensure that young people are assisted in securing appropriate education, training or employment.	30.06.05

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS10	The fostering service should ensure that carers make a written record of the outcome of any contact.
2	FS9	The fostering service should have in place a system for monitoring behaviour management techniques employed by carers.
3	FS22	There should be a clear policy on written records made by foster carers that is monitored and reviewed consistently.
4	FS5	The fostering service should ensure that all aspects of the service are managed effectively and efficiently.
5	FS7 & FS32	The fostering service should specifically review the kinship service to develop and implement better and more effective working practices.

\* 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	16
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• 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	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	21/02/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	128



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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The statement of purpose for the mainstream service was last revised and updated in August 2004. This document contained all required elements, as did the statement of purpose for the link service.

Two separate children's guides had been developed and implemented for the mainstream service since the last inspection, one for younger age groups and one for older. The format and content for both was excellent.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The day-to-day management of the two separate fostering services was largely unchanged since the previous inspection. One section manager in the mainstream service had left November 2004 and this post was to be filled in April 2005. The mainstream service continued to carry a half time section manager vacancy.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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This standard was unchanged since the last inspection.

## 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 evidence from the cases tracked as part of the inspection indicated that some aspects of the service were not monitored appropriately. Specifically the activities relating to the kinship service as detailed in this report. The communication and expectations between managers and staff in relation to kinship care arrangements was at times poor.

All staff spoken to in both fostering services reported receiving regular formal supervision.

The staffing structure and lines accountability within both services was clear.

The development of manager and carer clinics within the mainstream service was positive.

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

As a Local Authority Fostering Service there is no requirement under Regulation 43(1) to notify CSCI of incidents detailed in Schedule 8. Below is listed incidents detailed in the Pre Inspection Questionnaire.

**Death of a child placed with foster parents.**

1

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

0

**Serious illness or accident of a child.**

1

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

0

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

0

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

2

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

1

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

1

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

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The kinship service had not been managed efficiently and effectively. There were a number of practice issues identified during the inspection that suggested that the management of the mainstream service at times lacked clarity. The proposed expansion of the service was viewed as a positive development, although there were a number of critical day-to-day practice issues that were not being adequately addressed. The mainstream service required a more balanced approach to its development to allow greater focus on day-to-day practice whilst fundamental change to the service was managed.

## 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?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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Ten carers were seen during the inspection; three carers approved as 'kinship' carers, three approved as 'time-limited' carers and four approved as 'link' carers.
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The three children placed with time-limited carers were in safe, secure and nurturing families. These carers were routinely over the 'usual fostering limit' although had managed to care for children with significantly complex needs very well.

The three children placed in 'kinship' placements were enjoying stable, safe and nurturing environments. In one household there were clearly issues relating to space for which there should have been formal acknowledgement and planning. The kinship service is addressed later in this report.

The four link carers seen during the inspection were providing a high quality of care to the children placed there. There were good examples of how carers and the link service were improving services to the young people in placement and resources were allocated where possible.

### 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?
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Standard met?
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Standard met?
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The kinship service was more operationally active than in the previous inspection and these arrangements recognised the particular needs of those children and families. Conceptually, the kinship service was viewed as a positive development although there were some significant practice issues highlighted in this report, suggesting that this aspect of the service was poorly managed.
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One kinship carer reported that the service had not adequately responded to her specific needs.

The link carers seen during the inspection reported that the service had provided all the appropriate equipment required for young people and had received OT input when required.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

Some of the children seen during the inspection had moved to their current placement in an emergency and it was evident that they had not been carefully matched to the carers; the success of those placements was predominantly due to the flexibility and skills of those carers. The fostering service had been able to access highly skilled carers for young people who required emergency care.

There were two children whose cases were tracked during the inspection who had both been moved from permanent placements in an emergency. One child had experienced significant disruption due to multiple placement breakdowns. The inspectors were concerned about the apparent lack of foresight and planning for children in permanent placements who experienced placement disruption. The Inspectors were also concerned with the apparent lack of permanent placements for children who had been in the looked after system for some considerable time.

There were a number of examples of carers assessed as 'time limited carers' who were taking children under permanent arrangements. These placements were usually in an emergency.

Not all carers had placement agreements in place and the content and quality of some other agreements was poor.

The link carers seen during the inspection were well matched with the young people in their care. There was good communication between the service and the carers and the needs of the young people were well known to carers and responded to appropriately. There was a recognised lack of carers from ethnic minorities although young people from ethnic minorities were being placed. Placing social workers commented that there was a lack of carers able to offer more specialist medical care for children with more profound medical and health needs.

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b> The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>None of the three kinship carers seen during the inspection had received training in child protection. The supervision of kinship placements was generally very poor and where formal supervision took place, it was unstructured and issues relating to protection were not routinely raised.</p> <p>Time limited carers were very clear about approved behavioural management techniques. It was not clear however how the service reviewed and monitored carer's responses to behaviour and these issues were not routinely discussed during supervision.</p> <p>The kinship carers managed behavioural difficulties well despite them having not completed any training with regard to current acceptable methods in line with departmental policy.</p> <p>The link carers seen during the inspection had received appropriate training in child protection.</p>		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	X	%

<b>Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)</b> 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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>The carers seen during the inspection facilitated and supported contact well, even where there were practical difficulties. Contact arrangements were not always detailed in the looked after children (LAC) paperwork. The standard of LAC paperwork was at times very poor.</p> <p>Carers did not routinely record the outcome of contact visits.</p>		

<b>Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)</b> 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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	4
<p>The Just Us group continued to offer regular opportunities for young people to comment on aspects of the service. The range of work undertaken from training to interviewing new staff was impressive, showing good examples of active participation and consultation.</p> <p>Children and young people seen during the inspection reported that their views had been listened to and acted upon. Despite limited take-up, the service had provided training on children's rights and advocacy.</p> <p>One social worker within the link service was in the process of a communication and</p>		



consultation with children with disabilities course to enable the service to develop in this area.

**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 evidence available during the inspection indicated that children's health needs were being met. The introduction of a consultant psychologist and assistant psychologist was a particularly positive development and meant that looked after children in Cambridgeshire in need of this type of provision were being seen considerably sooner than would be using mainstream health services. There were two clear examples of this during the inspection.

The Link service was developing a formal system for referring cases to an OT covering South and East Cambridgeshire and Fenland. There continued to be a need for this service in the Huntingdon area. The carers seen in the link service actively promoted the health needs of the young people in their care.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

There was a specific example within kinship of a foster carer struggling with her relationship with the school and ESLAC support appeared to have been withdrawn. One other young person in kinship care had not been appropriately supported in securing further education.

Other young people seen during the inspection were attending education appropriate to their needs. Educational issues were routinely raised in children's LAC reviews. Children placed in link carers were appropriately supported with their education.

Systems for monitoring the educational attainment for young people in care were in place within the County Council. It was unclear how the fostering service would be routinely access information specifically relating to children in foster care.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**2**

There were unsatisfactory arrangements in place for a young person placed in kinship care being supervised by the 16+ Team. The view expressed by the carer was that there was insufficient support offered to the young person at a crucial time in terms of the young person's education. The carer also commented that there was a distinct deterioration in the level of support offered by the 16+ Team compared with the previous social work team.

There were some anxieties from another set of carers regarding the future planned move for the young person they were looking after. The carers felt that some issues of safety and protection required greater consideration by the 16+ Team as the planning progressed.

The 16+ Team was responsible for assessing supported lodgings as foster carers using the BAAF Form F assessment. The one example seen during the inspection did not contain relevant information required for an approved foster carer.

In addition, there were effectively three separately line managed services responsible for completing Form F assessments. The 16+ Team had received no specific training for assessing carers and the line management of this team very distinct from the mainstream fostering service and evidently without relevant fostering expertise.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Five personnel file were seen during the inspection. Not all files contained records of interviews although more recently recruited staff had a record on file.

Two personnel files did not have evidence of a CRB check having been completed. One file did not contain written references relating to the individuals role within the fostering service, although did have two written references from a previous position within the County Council.

Total number of staff of the agency:

46

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

2

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The link scheme was organised efficiently and effectively and there was good evidence of sound service delivery.

The fostering service required radical reorganisation both in terms of structure and practice in order to effectively manage the existing workload as well as introducing proposed new schemes such as Family Finders and a Kinship team. There was evidence that the existing workload was not being managed effectively particularly relating to kinship care. There was further evidence to support that the mainstream service was not ensuring effective service delivery.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

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

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

One issue within the kinship service related to the CRB check on an approved foster carer. (It is acknowledged that the child was placed by an area team in an emergency). Within the Form F this issue was raised by the fostering social worker and was not explored in sufficient enough detail. Obvious issues of separation and reunification had not been explored. The assessment on the whole was completely inadequate. The same carer did not have adequate references on file. The assessment was on the whole very poor.

One other carer approved as a kinship carer was approved prior to a satisfactory CRB having been completed. One carer approved in the mainstream service did not have any written references.

The assessment process within the link scheme was working well and efficiently. The assessments seen during the inspection were sound and included all relevant information.

The mainstream services declared position was that they were not sufficiently resourced to accommodate the needs of some children requiring permanent placements and kinship placements. The evidence available during the inspection was that there was a shortage of carers able to offer permanent placements and this had a profound impact on the matching process for some children. The kinship service had not been implemented appropriately and effectively during the previous year.

Most of the carers who completed the questionnaires reported that there was not enough staff within the fostering agency.

**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 evidence available during the inspection suggested that the County Council was a fair and competent employer. There were issues relating to the supervision of carers, which are addressed in Standard 22.

All staff employed by the fostering service(s) reported that they received regular formal supervision. The absence of one section manger had reduced, for some fostering staff, the opportunity to access day-to-day support and informal supervision.

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The County Council did not have any in-house training programmes specifically for the fostering task. All training relating to fostering was commissioned on an ad-hoc basis. Fostering social workers spoken to during the inspection had attended the same training offered to carers.</p> <p>The most obvious training need from the evidence available during the inspection related to the assessment and supervision of kinship carers. The lack of formal training in this respect had left workers feeling ill equipped to carry out their role.</p> <p>All link social workers seen during the inspection had a good knowledge base of children with disabilities. The standard of in-house training available was not pitched high enough for most link social workers. In response to this, the service had bought into the shared care network and council for the disabled child.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>All staff spoken to during the inspection reported receiving regular, formal supervision. The majority of staff members reported that they were satisfied with the level of support received from their line manager.</p> <p>It was evident from speaking with staff and reviewing case files that key issues relating to the support of carers had not been addressed or effectively encouraged during formal supervision, which consequently meant these issues persisted. The two most obvious issues related to foster carers recording and foster carer training.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The evidence available during the inspection suggested that there was no clear strategy in place for supporting kinship carers and fostering staff were unclear about how to work with this group of carers. This issue had created a great deal of anxiety amongst workers.</p> <p>One of the three kinship carers seen was unclear about the difference between the role of placing social worker and FSW.</p> <p>There were some good examples of excellent communication between placing social workers and fostering social workers. There were also good examples of flexible working practices from some fostering and link social workers that had achieved better outcomes for children placed with carers. The practice of children placed with the link service having no identified placing social worker had meant that the link service was being placed under unacceptable pressure.</p>		

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**

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

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

The supervision and support offered to kinship carers seen during the inspection was inconsistent. There was evidence of some kinship carers receiving a very poor level of supervision. One newly approved carer had not seen a fostering social worker for six months during 2004.

The recording of supervision sessions for all carers by fostering social workers was inconsistent and workers were not using a prescribed format for recording supervision although one was available. The fostering service did not have in place a supervision policy for carers so these inconsistencies were in the context of there being a lack of clarity and guidance from the fostering service.

The expectation placed upon carers in terms of recording and attending training was inconsistent and the format for supervision sessions did not include systematically addressing areas of practice such as behaviour management. Supervision had however dealt with presenting practical issues and did not account for supporting carers to develop their knowledge and skills.

The link service also did not have a system in place to assess the needs of carers in terms of training needs. The kinship carers seen during the inspection had a limited understanding of the Foster care Agreement. The fostering service had clearly not met the obligations set out in the agreement. Not all of the carers seen had a foster carer agreement in place.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

There was an extensive training programme in place and courses were available and accessible to carers, although there was a modest take up.

The service had no system in place for assessing and monitoring the training needs of all carers outside the annual review. The supervision records of the carers seen during the inspection did not include assessing the training needs of carers and therefore the assessment made at annual reviews often was based on what courses were available rather than on what the training needs of the carers were.

There was no training strategy in place for kinship carers

## 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?

1

The kinship arrangements seen during the inspection did not have placement agreements in place and the quality of LAC paperwork for the majority of cases tracked in both services was poor in both quality and quantity.

The review meeting minutes in place for most young people were consistently of a good standard.

### 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

The service had in place a system for recording accidents to children in foster homes although most carers were vague about this system, one carer reported that she was informed a week prior to the inspection about recording accidents. The service did not have in place a system for monitoring and reviewing behaviour management within foster homes.

There were in place appropriate systems for storing and securing records within the fostering service. The majority of records required by Schedule 2 were in place.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	289
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	158
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	X
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<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	40
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<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	24
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<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	108	<b>Maximum £</b>	554
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## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

This standard was largely unchanged since the last inspection. However it was noted that both premises in Cambridge and Huntingdon appeared cramped for space and would become a significant problem with any expansion of the service. The asbestos was in process of being removed from the Huntingdon premises.



## 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

As local authority provision, both services continued to be financially viable. This standard was unchanged since the last inspection.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

The financial processes and systems in place were largely unchanged since the last inspection.

**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

There were two issues raised by carers about payments. One carer (mainstream) reported frequently not receiving payments on time. Another carer (mainstream) had not been informed of the change of source when the responsibility for payments had transferred to the 16 plus team. Payment slips to carers continue not to be itemised. Otherwise the payments system appeared to be operationally sound.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Link fostering panel members and link social workers had received joint training on each other's respective roles. This was reported to have been beneficial. The link fostering panel operated efficiently and executed its functions lawfully and effectively.

The membership of the fostering panel was operating outside of the Regulations. The mainstream panel had not appointed two social workers employed by the fostering service provider.

The fostering panel generally operated efficiently and effectively although the panel were unclear about how to proceed with supported lodgings and also had no clear guidance nor had received any training in kinship care. One case brought to panel was the first of its kind and related to supported lodgings, the panel had no prior warning of this case and again suggested that the management of some cases was haphazard.

## 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 link service had provided appropriate placements children and the support offered to carers was appropriate to their needs and the needs of the children in their care.

The impression formed throughout the inspection was that the link service was an extremely valued service by the children, parents and carers.

It was noted that the communication between parents and link carers was excellent.

## 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?
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This report highlights some significant practice issues relating to the assessment, approval and support of kinship carers. There were significant flaws in the assessment process for some carers and the support offered to carers post approval was inconsistent and at times very poor. The training offered to kinship carers was also poor.

Workers within the fostering service expressed a great deal of anxiety about the issues relating to kinship care and there were no clear guidelines or policies relating to kinship care being implemented by the service.

Young people placed within kinship care were not receiving supervisory visits as required by Regulation 35(1) FSR.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

On the whole, I accept the findings of the inspection report.

I would however, wish to clarify some of the issues.

1. I accept that no carers should be approved formally without a CRB check and, as outlined in the action plan, this will not happen again. In the case referred to, the young person had been in placement under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 for some time. This in no way excuses the approval but it places it in context.
2. The case raised where no personal references were on file; I understand the reason for this was referenced in the Form F, the file recordings and in the panel minutes relating to their approval, all of which were submitted for inspection, and were child centred and accepted by the panel and the decision maker.
3. Concerns raised about CRB checks for staff; I can confirm that as evidenced by the spreadsheet at inspection, all staff who do not have an administrative role have current clear CRB checks, including S.K whose check was completed in 2003. There has been a departmental policy not to check administrative staff, this has not changed and had not been raised as an issue in the previous inspections, 2003 and 2004. However, concerns raised by this inspection, and that of the adoption inspection has caused the department to review its position on this matter and as per the action plan, CRB checks are to be undertaken on all staff in this service.
4. Statutory requirements from the previous inspection had not been addressed; the service regularly reviews, and where appropriate reduces, the number of carers over the usual limit of three. The process, as evidenced, is that the support social worker completes an exemption report – the Head of Service acts as an auditor, and the decision maker for foster panel makes the decision on a time limited basis. This is reviewed and noted at foster panel. Risk assessments, safety plans and all children's social workers are spoken to prior to any carer being given agreement to exceed their approval. The matter was raised at the inspection in 2003-2004 when there were 15 sets of carers over the usual limit of three unrelated children in placement. This was addressed following the inspection and the current situation 2004/05 is eight sets of carers have more than three children in placement and of these four are placements where it is considered to be in all the children's best interest to remain. Of these, three were visited as part of this inspection and without exception the inspectors were extremely impressed with the standard of care the children/young people were receiving. In the cases of those visited during the inspection, in all but one family, both carers are full time foster carers; the inspectors commented on the very high standard of care, and had noted all the extra safety precautions that had been taken. Extra

support is provided for carers, both financial and practical, and carers are visited more frequently.

5. Accident recording was not clearly evidenced; carers have been written to regarding recording of accidents in their homes and they are provided with forms. Copies of these forms are sent to the social worker for the child and held on carer's files. Since this inspection, further reminders have been sent and the routine checking of carers understanding of the process will be recorded on carers and social workers supervision records.

Finally, the report on the whole has highlighted a number of basic practice issues which will be addressed over the next twelve months and is, with these issues taken into consideration, a reasonable reflection of Cambridgeshire's fostering service at this time.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES



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

**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 27th April 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

Action plan was required

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

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

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

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

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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