

inspection report

Fostering Services

Child Care Bureau Ltd

H1 Blackpole Trading Estate (East)

Blackpole Road

Worcester

WR3 8SG

27th September 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

Child Care Bureau Ltd

Tel No

01905 754754

Address

H1 Blackpole Trading Estate (East), Blackpole Road,
Worcester, WR3 8SG

Fax No

01905 754566

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

E030000420

Name of Registered Provider

Child Care Bureau Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

4th March 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

8th April 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

28.07.04

Date of Inspection Visit		27th September 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sally Woodget	113975
Name of Inspector	2	Pat Pollock	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Jennifer Foster	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 Child Care Bureau Ltd. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Child Care Bureau Ltd is a family run business. The three directors are Mr. and Mrs Hemming and their daughter Samantha Purser. Mr and Mrs Hemming were previously themselves foster carers for a number of years. Mrs Hemming is the company secretary and the responsible individual for the foster care agency. Samantha Purser also works as the "Managing Director" of the foster care agency, overseeing the business and administration operations. The company also employs Louis Hemming as the Finance administrator. The company is a profit making organisation. It has been operating since June 2000.

The stated purpose of Child Care Bureau is to offer children and young people, who are in need of foster placement, approved and experienced foster carers of a high standard in a stable, safe, nurturing and caring family environment.

The Agency undertakes the recruitment, assessment, support and training of foster carers and is involved in ensuring that appropriate matches between the assessed needs of children and carers are made.

Child Care Bureau Ltd recruits carers to undertake a variety of tasks in more than one category within an age range 0-18 years

The categories of placement that the Agency states it provides include; long term, short term, respite, task-centred/assessment, emergency, bridging, parent and child, and pre-adoption and adoption breakdown placements.

Child Care Bureau Ltd is based in Worcester and supports carers in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire. At the time of the inspection the fostering service supported 12 carers with 17 young people in placement.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This is the second inspection of this agency under the national minimum standards for fostering services. The first inspection revealed a number of significant shortfalls and a large number of requirements and recommendations were made. The standard of the agency has improved and there has been a great deal of progress since the last inspection evidenced by the fact that all but 11 of the 63 requirements made last year have been addressed. The agency also achieved their Investors in People Award in March 2004. However there are still a number of concerns raised in this inspection that need to be addressed with some urgency to ensure that proper and robust measures are carried out in relation to employment of staff, complaints, the panel and to ensure the separation of the business and professional aspects of the company.

Statement of Purpose

Standard 1

This standard was nearly met

This document has improved greatly since the last inspection but still requires some additions to fully comply with the Standard.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

Standards 2 – 3

1 of these standards was met, 1 was not assessed

The acting manager was organised and enthusiastic but does not fully meet the standard in relation to her level of experience working at a senior level. She also needs to broaden her experience and skills in family placement work by undertaking further training.

Management of Fostering Service

Standards 4 – 5

2 of the 2 standards were nearly met

Improvements had been made in the organisation of the company since the last inspection but further separation of the business and professional aspects of the company are recommended to ensure that the business concerns of the organisation do not influence the professional decision making. A conflict of interest policy needs to be developed, and supervision for the acting manager needs to be set up immediately.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

Standards 6 – 14

One of these standards was not assessed, 6 were nearly met, 1 was not met, 1 was met.

The fostering service needs to further improve its information gathering and recording on all children requiring a placement or placed with their foster carers.

Consultation with children needs to be improved, and any changes in the child's care plan need to be fully agreed with the placing authority.

Recruiting, check, managing, supporting and training staff and carers

Standard 15 - 23

3 of these standards were not met, 5 of these standards were nearly met and 1 was met.

The company need to improve its recruitment and selection policies and practices to comply with its equal opportunities policy. There were concerns that staff had been recruited without understanding about the level of experience and skills they required and without proper undertaking of references and checks. Training is required for all managers involved in recruitment and selection of staff. Further additions are required to the foster carer agreement in relation to terminations of approval and the circumstances in which a foster carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

Records

Standards 24 – 25

1 of these standards was met, 1 was not met

The arrangements for managing the content of and for storing files was good, and paper systems were in place for staff to follow about the retrieval of files. Foster carers were sensitive about keeping appropriate memorabilia for children placed. Further training is required for staff responsible for undertaking complaints investigation for the agency.

Premises

Standard 26

This standard was exceeded

The new premises provided spacious accommodation and appropriate facilities for staff and for foster carers' meetings for their informal support group as well as for Panel meetings.

Financial Requirements

Standards 27 – 29

2 of these standards were met, 1 was nearly met

The financial aspects of the company were well developed with good systems in place which were clearly documented and available for all staff.

The company needs to devise a written procedure to follow in the event of a financial crisis.

Panel

Standard 30

This standard was not met

The fostering service need to ensure robust checks and references are carried out on all Panel members and that Panel's policies and procedures are revised and developed. The fostering service provider needs to ensure that the person appointed to chair the Panel has the skills and experience necessary for this role.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
-----	------------	----------	------------------	--

10	5,7,and 20	FS3 FS3.2	The Fostering service must ensure that all the requirements of Schedule 1 are undertaken for all staff including sessional workers, professional experts, support workers and Panel members	To be arranged
12	42 (1) b &(3)	FS4 FS4.1	The fostering service must establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care provided, this system shall provide for consultation with foster carers, children placed with foster carers and the placing authorities.	To be arranged
13	42 (2)	FS4 FS4	The company shall supply to the Commission the report of the review conducted for the purposes of Regulation 42 (1) b and (3).	To be arranged
19	11 & 34 Schedule 6	FS8 FS8.4	The Fostering service must ensure that Foster Placement Agreements are completed, meet the requirements of Schedule 6, and contain specific reference to elements of matching.	To be arranged
21	11,12 & 34	FS8 FS8.3	The fostering service shall ensure that matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and her/his family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement.	To be arranged
23	11 & 12 (2) b	FS9 FS9.1	The Fostering service shall promptly refer to the area authority any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by them.	To be arranged
24	11 &12 (2) c	FS9 FS9.1	The Fostering service shall notify the Commission of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by them.	To be arranged
29	14	FS10 FS10.2	The Fostering service shall ensure that there are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed.	To be arranged
33	11	FS11 FS11.1	The Fostering service must ensure that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues which are likely to effect their daily life and their future	To be arranged

40	20.3.b	FS15 FS15.1	The Fostering service shall not employ (or use) a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless he/she has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work he is to perform.	To be arranged
45	27	FS17 FS17.6 & 7	The Fostering service must ensure that, a consistent and thorough approach to foster care assessment is undertaken.	To be arranged
47	21.2.a & 29	FS18 FS22	The Fostering service shall operate a disciplinary procedure which provides for the suspension of an employee, carer or director where necessary in the interests of the safety or welfare of children placed with them and must ensure that a clear policy framework exists, which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be moved from the register.	To be arranged
51	28	FS22 FS22.2 & 4	The Fostering service must ensure that the foster care agreement meets the requirements of Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations.	To be arranged
62	5, 7, 20, Schedule 1	FS30 FS30.3	The fostering service shall ensure that all panel members have checks carried out in respect of each of the matters specified in paragraphs 1-6 of schedule 1	To be arranged

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Sally Woodget**Signature** _____**Second Inspector** Pat Pollock**Signature** _____**Regulation
Manager** Alan Sholl**Signature** _____**Draft Date** 27 January 2005

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	Reg 12	FS6FS9 FS8	The fostering service must ensure that <u>all</u> information is collected on the child requiring placement and that risk assessments are undertaken and fully documented and shared with prospective carers to enable an appropriate match and appropriate training and support to be provided	End of December 2005
2	Reg 34 (3)	FS8 FS8.4	The fostering service must ensure that Foster Placement Agreements are fully completed and are live documents.	End of December 2005
3	Reg 43 (1)	FS9	The fostering service must ensure that all allegations are properly notified to the Commission, and that records containing this data are regularly scrutinized to ensure that this has happened.	Immediate
4	Reg 42 (1) (b) and 42 (3)	FS11	The fostering service must establish a system for improving the quality of the foster care provided by them, including consulting with foster carers, children placed and the placing authority.	End of February 2005
5	Reg 20 (3) (b)	FS15 FS18	The company must not employ a person to work with the fostering service unless he has the qualifications skills and experience necessary and that he is physically and mentally fit for the work he is to perform.	Immediate

6	Reg 8 (2) (c)	FS15 FS18	The Responsible Individual must undertake recruitment selection training, including equal opportunities.	End of January 2005
7	Reg 8.3	FS15 FS18	The manager and person responsible for Human Resources must undertake recruitment and selection training including equal opportunities.	End of January 2005
8	Reg 20	FS15	The company must ensure that all the elements of Schedule 1 are carried out, in particular where a person has previously worked in a position whose duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults, verification of the reason why the employment or position ended (these checks must be carried out retrospectively on staff who were appointed without this check having been carried out).	End of December 2004
9	Reg 8 (3)	FS16	The manager must undertake training in Supervising Child Care Practice to include monitoring of workloads and prioritising	End of February 2005
10	Reg 8.3	FS17	The manager must undertake further training about the latest practice and research on family placement, to include the recommendations of the Serious Case Review Brighton and Hove and the Bichard Report.	End of February 2005
11	Reg 27 Schedule 3	FS17	The fostering service must ensure that all assessments of prospective foster carers that are carried out comply with Schedule 3 in particular evidencing the skills, competence and potential relevant to his capacity to care effectively for a child placed with him.	End of December 2004
12	Reg 28 (5) (b)	FS22	The fostering service must ensure that all the elements of Schedule 5 are included in the foster carer agreement, in particular, the arrangements for meeting any liabilities of the foster parent arising by reason of a placement.	End of December 2004
13	Reg 29	FS22	The fostering service must ensure that its Foster Care Agreement complies with the Regulations in relation to the procedure for termination of approval of foster carers.	End of December 2004

14	Reg 29	FS22 22.10	The fostering service must devise a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.	End of January 2005
15	Reg 18	FS25	The fostering service must provide training for all members of staff and directors on the complaints policy and procedure to ensure that any complaints investigations are carried out in the proper manner.	End of January 2005
16	Reg 20 Schedule 1	FS30	The fostering service must ensure that all references and checks required by Schedule 1 are carried out on all Panel members and that a file is kept to record and document these checks.	End of January 2005
17	Reg 24 (2) (b)	FS30	The fostering service shall appoint a person to chair the Panel who has the skills, experience and knowledge necessary for this post, or provide immediate training such as the BAAF Panel Chair Training Course to ensure that this person obtains these skills	End of January 2005

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1 FS1.4	The agency's Statement of Purpose needs to contain further information about the procedures and process for recruiting, supporting and reviewing foster carers.
2	FS2 FS2.2	The acting manager should undertake further training to broaden her experience of family placement work and understand the issues concerned with supervising staff undertaking child care work
3	FS4 FS4.2	The fostering services professional team meetings should not be attended by Directors, in order to ensure distinct separation and clarity of roles between the business of the company and the operation of the fostering service.

4	FS4 FS4.5	The company should develop a conflicts of interest policy which include all staff, carers and directors, and provides examples of what might constitute a conflict of interests.
5	FS5 FS5.4	The fostering service must identify a person who will be in charge in the absence of the manager. This must be clearly agreed and documented with the said person.
6	FS22	The company should provide professional social work consultation and supervision for the acting manager.
7	FS9 FS9.3	The fostering service should review their 'House Rules' policy
8	FS10 FS10.2	The fostering service should be vigilant that the contact arrangement agreed in the child's care plan are fully articulated in the foster placement agreement and that they are being adhered to in a proper manner. Any concerns relating to contact should be fully addressed with the Placing Authority before changes are made in the arrangements
9	FS11 FS11.3	The fostering service needs to ensure that the opinions and view of children on all matters affecting them, including day to day matters, are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis and not taken for granted.
10	FS12 FS12.3	The fostering service should ensure that documents recording health and development information for a child to be placed or already placed are fully completed and provide detailed information.
11	FS15 15.2	The fostering service should develop a recruitment and selection policy which accord with its equal opportunities policy propounded in the Statement of Purpose and staff handbook. This policy also needs to include the agency's recruitment strategy for both staff and carers.
12	FS15 FS19	The fostering service should ensure that all staff undertaking casework responsibilities have training in <u>all</u> the matters outlined in this standard
13	FS16 FS16	The fostering service manager should undertake further training on staff disciplinary matters as a matter of urgency and ensure all matters of this kind are fully discussed with a professional consultant/supervisor.
14	FS16 FS16.8	The fostering services manager should ensure that discussion on all matters of training, preparation and required reading are fully discussed and recorded during supervision with staff.
15	FS17 FS17	The fostering agency needs to develop a recruitment strategy for carers and staff which reflects the diversity and range of referrals made to the organisation.

16	FS17 FS17.7	The fostering service should provide training for all staff carrying out assessments of prospective carers to ensure a more evaluative and analytical approach, and one which records their competences and skills. These assessments need to consistently contain all the elements outlined in standard 17.7
17	FS18 FS18	The fostering service should ensure that the company's 'whistle blowing policy' is fully independent from the business side of the company to assure staff and carers that this policy is fully impartial.
18	FS21 FS21.2	The fostering service should develop a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers that is documented and understood by all parties. This should include <u>all</u> the elements of this standard
19	FS21 FS23 FS30 FS21.5 FS23.8 FS30	The fostering service should ensure that all relevant documents are provided at the annual review of foster carers including any minutes of disruption meetings.
20	FS23 FS23	The manager of the fostering service should ensure that she has attended the training on the delivery of the "Choosing to Foster" or "Skills to Foster" course provided by Fostering Network.
21	FS23 FS23.6	The fostering service should develop a programme of training on safe caring which includes <u>all</u> members of the fostering household (as appropriate depending on age and understanding)
22	FS24 FS24.4	The fostering service should ensure that respite carers are given full information on the child/ren they are caring for.
23	FS25 FS25.3 FS25.6 FS25.12	The fostering service should ensure that all foster carers are aware of the policy on access and that they encourage children to access their records, make additions and comments, record personal statements, including any dissent.
24	FS25 FS25.13	The fostering service should ensure that records of complaints are kept on relevant files for staff, carers and children, including the details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.

25	FS27 FS27.2	The company should pull together the various methods they have in place to deal with issues of financial crisis, and devise a procedure which deals with the disclosure of information to purchasers and liaising with them to safeguard the welfare of children receiving services through the agency.
26	FS30	The fostering services Panel's policies and procedures should be reviewed and brought together to make one comprehensive document. The language needs to be altered to ensure that no assumptions are made by the Chair when making the Panel's recommendation.
27	FS30 FS30.4	The fostering service should ensure that the Panel have access to medical expertise.

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NA
• 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	27/09/04
Time of Inspection	9.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	90

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose is provided for all carers, staff and purchasers of the service. A young person's guide is available in 2 formats – one for 0 - 8 years and another for 8 – 18 years. The Statement of Purpose states clearly the aims and objectives of the service and is reviewed by the directors of the company and the manager of the fostering service. It was last reviewed in June 2004.

The statement includes nearly all the details outlined in Standard 1.4, but needs some further information about the procedures and processes for recruiting, supporting and reviewing carers. The policies and procedures of the service accurately reflect the Statement of Purpose.

Inspectors found that the information contained in the Statement of Purpose regarding the complaints that had been received is misleading. It would be more appropriate to state that CSCI investigated these complaints and that some were upheld. The company need to be clear in the Statement about what measures it has taken to address any shortfalls found in complying with the standards and regulations where the complaint was upheld.

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?

2

The acting manager impressed the inspectors as an organised and enthusiastic professional. She has a Diploma in Social Work and has recently commenced a course in management which she hopes to successfully complete by the end of the year. Staff and carers interviewed during the inspection felt that the manager exercised effective leadership and that the new separation between the business and professional fostering parts of the organisation had helped to improve clarity of roles. The manager needs to address the more complex issues of quality assurance and to develop her staff team to provide high quality support and guidance to foster carers. The manager was struggling at the time of the inspection with a depleted staff team but appeared to be exercising coherent and decisive leadership in covering the shortfalls whilst, at the same time, maintaining some consistency and on-going support to foster carers.

The manager has submitted an application for registration to the Commission which is currently being processed. Whilst the applicant does not fully meet the experience criteria it is anticipated that she will do so by January 2005. At the time of the inspection there was no arrangement for the manager to receive professional consultation and supervision which, in the light of her lack of experience, inspectors feel is crucial and have advised the directors to arrange this expediently.

Inspectors would further advise that the manager undertakes training with a Professional Organisation such as B.A.A.F for the Fostering Network regarding all aspects of Family Placement work and in particular regarding supervising assessment work. Furthermore they would strongly advise the manager to network and interface with other professionals in the field of Family Placement, in particular at training events organised by the West Midlands Family Placement Consortium in order to broaden her experience and obtain opportunities to discuss professional practice issues, development opportunities and update regularly on legislation and research.

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?****0**

This standard was not fully assessed as the acting manager has yet to be interviewed for registration purposes. However all the appropriate checks and references had been undertaken by the agency on the acting manager at the time of her recruitment as a social worker. (Please cross reference with Standard 2).

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The service has developed clear procedures for monitoring and controlling its activities, and all staff are aware of the lines of accountability within the organisation.

The service has financial procedures and these will be discussed in more detail in Standards 27, 28 and 29.

Inspectors were told that the business and professional social work practice aspects of the service are separated. Staff felt that the new premises and office arrangements had helped to create this. However inspectors felt that the business concerns of the directors could still influence the professional decisions that needed to be made in the fostering service by virtue of their attendance weekly at the team meetings. Inspectors advised the Directors that they use other forms of monitoring the activity of the service via their regular meetings with the manager and the monthly Schedule 7 monitoring meetings, in order to avoid the conflicts of interest that could arise from their attendance at the weekly team meetings.

Inspectors were unable to confirm that carers, directors, managers and staff are aware of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts or had any guidance to indicate what these conflicts of interest might be. Inspectors therefore recommend a conflict of interest policy is produced and made known to all relevant parties.

Information is provided to purchasers of services and carers receive written statements of their remuneration.

The directors and manager of the fostering service meet regularly at the management meetings to discuss the matters outlined in Schedule 7 and the manager then writes the Schedule 7 reports which are overseen by the responsible individual. The manager also keeps minutes of all the staff meetings and records of supervision sessions with staff.

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

6

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

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.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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
<p>The manager has a clear job description setting out her duties and she is clear about the levels of accountability and responsibility she holds.</p> <p>At the time of the inspection inspectors were told that an external consultant provided cover as a temporary arrangement when the manager was absent. The details of this arrangement and contract with the external consultant had not however been documented and agreed and this issue needs urgent attention. This individual is not 'on site' and the agency recognise that this is not altogether satisfactory or sufficient to avoid the directors to becoming involved in the professional decision making during these times to solve situations in crisis may cause difficulties and confusion of roles. However, in the longer term the manager is seeking to employ a Senior Practitioner to whom she can delegate authority in her absence.</p>		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The standard of physical care provided by the carers was appropriate in the homes visited by inspectors. All carers' homes are subject to Health and Safety checks carried out annually prior to their review.

The Inspectors were not convinced that appropriate safeguards were in place to protect children who may have been abused or might abuse. In one case tracked by the inspectors, staff were unable to confirm that all risk assessments detailed the child's previous behaviour or that this was clearly communicated to the foster carers.

Foster carers' preparation covered health and safety issues, and a policy on Health and Safety issues is provided for carers in their handbook. The agency ensured checks had been made on foster carers' vehicles to ensure up to date insurance, MOT and clean driving licences.

Foster carers fully understood that they may be interviewed as part of the Commission's inspection process.

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?

3

The Foster Carers' Handbook, Statement of Purpose and staff handbook, all include the expectation that the service will respond to and value diversity. This is supported by training for carers and staff which the inspector observed. Carers and staff are clear that discrimination is a disciplinary issue. However the service is not currently employing any non-white carers. The service needs to consider carefully the impact on children from different ethnic backgrounds placed in predominately white communities where the carer has no connections with ethnic minority groups.

One member of staff has many years' experience of working with children with disabilities and she is providing a valuable resource to carers and staff alike. There is evidence that she is offering some useful insights, advice and support to carers caring for some children with specific learning needs. Carers are responding well to this practical input and are being encouraged to develop the self-esteem of these young people, and to develop their social and recreational interests.

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?****1**

The service has a written policy called "Receiving a Referral" which details the procedure to be followed by the duty social worker. The duty social worker is expected to complete the "Matching Considerations/Risk Assessment" document to obtain details of the child's needs. Whilst there was evidence of matching activity, inspectors were not convinced that this process is sufficiently vigorous or high profile to prevent inappropriate or risky placements.

In 2 cases inspectors found evidence of inappropriate matching, in one case the placement disrupted suddenly creating much distress for all parties. Inspectors noted that the matching consideration documents were not fully completed or not adequately detailed to provide proper information about a child's needs.

The procedure states "the carers should be advised of the possible placement and asked if they are happy to consider it". Inspectors would expect to see a much more robust and evaluative approach to information sharing and consultation with potential carers and their families, as well as other children in placement and their social workers before a match was made.

The matching considerations paperwork needs to include information on the views of the birth family about the sort of placement which would best meet their child's needs, as well as the views of the child about the sort of family they may like to be placed with.

It may be helpful for the profile of the foster carers to contain information about their skills competence and ability to cope with the considerations documented in the Matching Consideration form, so that any shortfalls in the match can be easily noted and discussed.

Inspectors noted that written foster placement agreements were also poorly completed, and did not impress as live and useful documents.

There was evidence from children and carers that introductions do occur on occasions. Children commented that this was a positive event when it did occur and the agency should strive to achieve this whenever possible.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

The Agency's foster carer handbook contains a clear and sufficiently robust Child Protection procedure. This is supported by mandatory training for all carers and staff at two levels of complexity. Inspectors were told that the agency procedure has been sent to all the Local Authorities who have children placed with them, as well as to the local Area Child Protection Committee and no adverse comments or concerns have been raised by them. The agency have also obtained copies of the ACPC policies and procedures for the areas where all their foster carers reside.

The foster service has policies and procedures in place regarding the management of behaviour "discipline, care and control", "anti-bullying" and a "safe care philosophy". These and the foster carer agreement make it clear that corporal punishment is not acceptable. All carers and staff are aware of these policies and procedures and informed inspectors that they knew what to do in the event of an allegation being made.

Inspectors discovered however that not all allegations of abuse had been notified to the Commission. This occurred during the time of the previous manager who is now no longer employed by the agency. However as this is a requirement under the Fostering Services Regulations, the process of notifications needs to be scrutinized vigilantly in the future by the new manager.

As already stated, there are still problems in obtaining full information about children to be placed to enable staff to ensure safe matches are always made.

Inspectors noted that the CCB 'House rules' policy, which is required by the agency to be displayed in each foster home, is negative in its tone and content. Inspectors advise that this document is reviewed and the language and content altered to make it more encouraging, helpful and explanatory to children and young people placed.

The agency maintains a sanctions book which records the sanction given to the child placed. It does not however record the behaviour which afforded the sanction. It is advised that details of the behaviour are recorded so that the manager can scrutinise regularly that the sanctions are fair and appropriate.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

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

The agency's Foster Care Agreement and Foster Placement Agreement include details of what is expected of foster carers in relation to assisting any child placed with them to maintain contact with their birth family as appropriate. The agency state that they promote contact issues and foster carers report that they are actively involved in ensuring appropriate contact arrangements. Evidence was found in the files that efforts were being made to ensure that contact arrangements were adhered to and that meetings were arranged to ensure contact agreements were understood by all parties. However inspectors were informed by a placing social worker that in one case the agency and foster carer changed the contact arrangements for one child without consultation or negotiation with the placing authority. Clearly there had been a breakdown in communication between the parties concerned and the agency need to be vigilant that the contact arrangements agreed to in the child's plan are fully articulated in the foster placement agreement and that they are being adhered to in a proper manner. If there are any causes for concern or difficulties ensuing from contact issues then these must be fully addressed and discussed with the placing agency.

Another issue is the use of other forms of contact such as letter writing or telephone contact. Foster carers must be encouraged to assist children and young people placed to use other means to contact their family as agreed by the Placing Authority, and these arrangements must also be articulated in the foster placement agreement.

The outcomes of any contact arrangements are recorded and fed back to the agency staff regularly and all issues are discussed at support and supervision visits. Regular reports are sent to the child's social worker on the child's progress and this includes a section on contact issues.

Inspectors were able to confirm that appropriate risk assessments had been undertaken in relation to contact of all children with their siblings or parents where necessary.

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 agency's Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide detail the processes that children can use to raise their concerns or make a complaint. There was evidence on the children's files that their views had been taken into account at placing meetings and statutory reviews.

Children who responded to the questionnaire reported that they were often asked how they were getting along with their foster carers, but two thirds of young people felt they had not been asked their opinions about the fostering service. The agency do need to think of ways in which they consult meaningfully with children placed with them, about the service they receive from the agency.

The agency also need to establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care provided, this system needs to include consultation with foster carers, children placed

and the placing authority as required by Regulation 42 (1) (b) and 42 (3).

Inspectors were not persuaded that children were being consulted at every point in their care history. Children interviewed did not all have an awareness of how to make their wishes and feelings known and some presented as powerless and confused by the decisions of adults around them when events were occurring outside the formal LAC decision making forums i.e. choice of school, choice of placement following disruption, or a new foster child joining the family. The agency need to increase their vigilance of the impact of these sorts of events on children placed with them and ensure that their voices are heard (particularly where the children concerned may have a learning or any other form of disability which impacts on their understanding), and that their views are recorded and action taken to take account of their view and to reassure them that they are being listened to.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Foster Carer Agreement outlines the carers' responsibility to ensure each young person placed with them receives appropriate health care, which meets their needs for physical, emotional and social development. The foster placement agreement requires information regarding consents for medical treatment and examination and other relevant ongoing health and medication concerns. The referral matching considerations documents also includes space for details about medical and disability needs to be fully completed. Children's case files included a Child Health Record Document. However inspectors found that these documents were often poorly completed and lacking in sufficient detail.

There was evidence that foster carers were actively involved in promoting the health of the young people placed with them and that they had developed good relationships in their local areas with health agencies.

Foster carers contribute to the review of the child by supplying information as appropriate and relevant on the child's health issues.

Inspectors were concerned that carers were unsure about the child's rights of access to information recorded on them. Inspectors advised that the young person should be included (depending on their age and level of understanding) in all recording that is undertaken by the foster carer and have an opportunity to comment on it wherever possible and that this process should be transparent and inclusive.

All other elements of this standard were met.

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**

Child Care Bureau have a policy on Education in the Foster Carer Handbook and foster carers are encouraged to assist children placed with them to reach their full educational potential.

The Matching Consideration form and the Foster Placement Agreement require information to be provided on children's educational needs and details of the individuals responsible to complete the Personal Education Plans, attend parents' evenings etc... However inspectors found that some of the information recorded was inadequate or inaccurate for example one document stated that the child attended mainstream school, but did not record that he had been excluded.

Foster carers, staff and young people reported to inspectors that educational provision was positive and that carers make specific efforts to achieve good educational outcomes for the children placed with them. Carers confirmed that high priority is given to attendance, homework and school liaison.

The agency records achievements of children in placement and staff indicated that they regularly monitor school exclusions. The manager collates and monitors this information.

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?****0**

The training schedule and Foster Carer Handbook specify the need for carers to prepare young people for independence and adulthood. However inspectors were unable to assess how successful the agency's effectiveness would be as there were no young people in placement at the time of the inspection who were the appropriate age as specified under the Leaving Care Act 2000.

The agency is currently providing training for staff and carers in this significant area to prepare for the event of a placement being made of a child within the relevant age range.

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?

1

The company has produced a policy on recruitment and selection of staff. This does not include reference to their equal opportunities policy which is propounded in the Agency's Statement of Purpose and staff handbook. The document is an administrative procedural document and does not include details of the company's recruitment strategy. The document does not include details about how to shortlist or select staff based on the job description and person specification and inspectors found that neither the acting manager, the Responsible Individual or the managing director responsible for Human Resources had training in these matters. Inspectors noted that the need for and purpose of the person specification had not been clearly understood by staff responsible for recruitment and had led to some unusual practice.

The inspectors evidenced that the procedures as laid down in the Company's own policy had not always been adhered to, and in one case an applicant who was a personal friend of the Directors had not been interviewed competitively. The inspector has subsequently been informed that the acting manager and an external consultant were involved in the interview and appointment discussion with this applicant. However, this was not a sufficiently broad and robust selection process to ensure the appointment of staff with the most appropriate qualifications, skills and experience.

The Managing Director had devised a useful tool/checklist to ensure compliance with the regulations under schedule 1, however inspectors were very concerned to note that important references had not been undertaken. In 2 cases staff who had had longstanding employment in professions that were considered crucial to provide evidence of their experience and skills for working with the agency were not undertaken. Other references that were accepted were not sufficiently professional or relevant. In one case comments made by the applicant in the application form were not followed up or investigated appropriately.

This is a serious omission and does not evidence practice that is sufficiently robust or rigorous regarding the safeguarding of children placed.

It is strongly advised that staff involved in recruitment and selection undertake training urgently on these issues. Inspectors were informed that this is intended. This needs to include the importance of equal opportunities. The policy and procedure for recruitment and

selection needs to include all matters relating to schedule 1 in particular following up previous employers where a person has previously worked in a position whose duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults, and reasons why the employment ended.

The Responsible Individual was undertaking the telephone enquires to follow up written references and this was well documented.

The Inspectors were not convinced that all staff had appropriate knowledge and skills or could evidence that they had sufficient understanding of the matters outlined in Standard 15.5 and the manager needs to address this matter urgently and ensure appropriate levels of scrutiny of these individuals' work and practice. Nor were inspectors convinced that staff carrying out assessments had acquired an appropriate level of experience in family placement work, the manager has however acknowledged this and has organised some training in assessment for her staff in the near future.

Total number of staff of the agency:	10	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	6
---	----	--	---

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 social work team is led by a qualified social worker who has recently been promoted to acting manager and the Commission for Social Care Inspection have received her application for registration which is being processed. The acting manager is currently studying for NVQ 4 in Management Studies.

The staff team is composed of 2 qualified staff one of these had only recently been recruited on a temporary basis through an agency, following the dismissal of a permanent qualified social worker for disciplinary matters. The unqualified assistant social worker was due to commence an Open University Degree in Social Work shortly.

At the time of the inspection the above dismissal case was awaiting an appeal hearing with the independent complaints officer. Whilst Inspectors were informed that there was liaison with an employment solicitor and with ACAS, they noted that the acting manager had no formal social work management guidance as to how to deal with this matter at the time of the inspection. Inspectors advise that the acting manager undertake some professional training about managing disciplinary issues with staff urgently.

Supervision sessions were timetabled by the acting manager and inspectors evidenced that this was regular. Inspectors noted however that in the case of the trainee social worker advice on relevant training, preparation and reading material was not evidenced in the minutes; for example, following a discussion on this member of staff carrying out life story work or undertaking the Panel coordinator's work. It is recommended that the acting manager ensures such discussions take place and when they do that these are evidenced and checked thoroughly to ensure the advice has been taken up and preparation carried out. Inspectors advise that a supervision contract is drawn up and agreed by both parties, which details the reasons for the supervision, and that the minutes of each supervision session are signed by both the supervisor and supervisee, with an agreement about who and when and for what purpose these records will be shared.

It was noted that all the supervision records of staff were signed off by the Responsible Individual and inspectors advise that this practice is not necessary. These documents are confidential to those who are involved and would only need to be scrutinised in such a way if there were specific issues raised regarding for example disciplinary issues. The document will contain also confidential information about the carers and children placed, again which is inappropriate for a director to be accessing routinely.

Inspectors were given copies of the training programmes available for staff and carers (these will be discussed more fully in Standards 19 and 23).

The temporary member of staff has been given responsibility for duty and has also been directed to create a resource system for the service which is good practice.

Inspectors noted that there are occasionally tensions between the Local Authority Social Workers and agency staff. The acting manager informed the inspectors that she is working towards developing an ethos of partnership. This needs to be evidenced via team meetings, supervision, records and correspondence.

The acting manager must undertake training in "Supervising Child Care Practice" to include the monitoring and prioritizing of workloads.

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?

1

The agency currently has an adequate number of staff but recognise the need to recruit more qualified staff who are experienced in family placement into the team. Inspectors were informed of the agency's intention and commitment for ongoing training and development of staff. The agency currently have a number of carers with varying degrees of experience and a range of skills to meet the needs of children and young people placed. As already stated earlier in the report the staff and carer groups are all white British and are therefore not representative of the referrals which may be made. The agency need to consider how to address this issue and a recruitment strategy for staff and carers has yet to be developed which reflects this.

All staff need to undertake training on carrying out Foster Carer assessments and inspectors noted that this had been planned. Inspectors noted that of the cases tracked, the assessments lacked a thorough evaluative and analytical approach. Opportunities were missed to explore issues in more depth and ensure evidence of skills and competencies. Foster carer assessments did not address all the issues outlined in Standard 17.7 or all of the elements in Schedule 3, in particular the skills, competence and potential relevance to his capacity to care effectively for a child placed with him. Inspectors are therefore not convinced that the agency can at present properly match children to carers or to safeguard and promote their welfare at the present time.

Inspectors have already required that the acting manager supervising assessors undertakes further training to keep up to date on practice issues, in particular in following the

recommendations of the Serious Case Review Brighton and Hove, and the Richard Report.

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?

2

Parts of this standard have already been addressed in Standard 15 and 16. Inspectors are concerned that employment practices do not always reflect the equal opportunities policy or Statement of Purpose, and that the acting manager requires training in the management of disciplinary issues.

The agency provide a health and safety checklist for all carers in their handbook and a health and safety check of carers' homes is carried out during the assessment process and updated prior to every review.

The directors and manager have assured inspectors that there is a public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers. Inspectors have not scrutinised this document.

There is a whistle-blowing policy and procedure that is made known to staff and carers. Carers have commented however that to obtain guidance on how to use this procedure the managing director is the named contact. As this person is a director of the company and relative to the other 2 directors they felt that this was not a totally satisfactory arrangement where they could feel confident that their concerns would be dealt with complete impartiality. Inspectors advised that an Independent Complaints Officer is approached to take on the role of providing guidance to ensure that this policy is robust and ensure no conflict of interest.

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?

2

Inspectors have seen evidence of induction programmes developed individually for new staff. These are adequate but, for staff who are not experienced in social work practice or in particular family placement work, need to include further information on the values of the agency, the needs of children requiring placement, the purpose of detailed matching process, safe caring issues and Child Protection matters.

The acting manager has devised a staff training programme, and it is intended that further courses are identified for individual members of staff through the supervision and appraisal processes. The acting manager informed inspectors that she intended to evaluate and review the usefulness of training courses provided to her staff. This will need to be evidenced for the next inspection. Other issues regarding training have been raised in

Standards 15, 16 and 17.

Staff files indicate that all staff have annual appraisals and are appraised at the end of their probationary period. There is evidence that there is joint training between fostering service staff and fosters carers on a regular basis.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All staff have a job description and received regular supervision from the acting manager. Access to the policies and procedures of the organisation is available in the office at all times.

Team meetings are held weekly and all staff are expected to attend. As noted earlier in Standard 4, inspectors were concerned that professional staff were not having the opportunity to meet as a team to discuss practice issues separately from the business issues of the company. The fostering services manager informed the inspectors that she intends to introduce this arrangement.

Other details of this standard have already been commented on in Standard 18 and 19

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The policies and procedures of the service require that each carer has a dedicated supervising social worker who visits twice monthly, once to undertake a support visit and once to carry out a supervision visit. Both these visits have pro forma documents to be completed during or following the meeting. These are signed by each carer as well as the supervising social worker. This is good practice.</p> <p>The agency has recruited foster carers who undertake respite care for children placed with other foster carers, and this service works well. Inspectors evidenced that proper planning and introductions were taking place to ensure that children and young people were properly prepared for this respite.</p> <p>An out of hours support service is provided for foster carers, however a clear strategy of working with carers that includes all the elements of standard 21.2 is not documented, and this needs to be developed.</p> <p>Carers reported that they have been very unsettled by the number of changes that have occurred in the social work staff team, which affected their confidence in the agency. However most carers report that the appointment of the acting manager has stabilised the situation.</p> <p>Each carer is presented annually to the Panel for review. However inspectors were not convinced that the Panel were equipped to make appropriate comment in their recommendations about the annual reviews by virtue of the fact that disruption meeting minutes were not made available to them. Inspectors recommend that these documents be included with all other documents to be considered by the Panel for review purposes.</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?	1
<p>The agency's foster care agreement covers a large range of matters indicating what is expected of all parties, foster carers, the local authority and the agency. However there is one omission required by Schedule 5 Regulation 28 (5) (b). The agency need to ensure that the arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster parent arising by reason of a placement are included.</p> <p>The foster care agreement also includes a paragraph on the Company's right to terminate the services of a foster carer "giving no less than 28 days' written notice." This paragraph does not comply with Regulation 29 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002 and needs to be corrected to include the procedure of terminations of approval outlined in this regulation.</p> <p>These are requirements of the Regulations and therefore reflect the low scoring of this standard.</p> <p>The company also need to produce a clear policy framework, which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register. This policy could be added to the foster care agreement or referred to in the foster care agreement and produced as a discrete document and included in the foster carer handbook.</p>		

The agency's policy is to ensure that each approved foster carer is supervised by a named social worker. Inspectors were assured that staff who did not have the appropriate qualifications or experience were adequately supported and supervised by the acting manager.

On approval all foster carers are given a handbook which covers the policies and procedures of the agency, and this information is updated regularly.

Arrangements for regular visits to support and supervise carers are in place, and carers reported that they particularly appreciated the Monday morning telephone call by staff to check how their weekend had gone and keep up to date on any issues concerning the placements. Inspectors evidenced that unannounced visits were being carried out as recommended.

Carers' reported that they felt the level of support and the different support arrangements including support groups, social meetings, newsletters, were good and helpful. All carers had received a copy of the complaint procedure and knew about the procedures to deal with investigations and allegations. Child Care Bureau policy includes the provision of independent support to the foster carers during an investigation.

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
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The agency staff are presently delivering the "Skills to Foster Course" to prospective foster carers as part of the assessment process. Inspectors noted however that no member of staff had been trained in delivering this course. The acting manager was aware of the need to develop the skills of her staff and is looking into providing training for herself and them in this area.

Inspectors noted that foster carers were happy with the training provided, and that agency staff encouraged them to be involved in training on a regular basis. The manager had drawn up a training programme for carers and staff in 2004 which covered a number of areas including Drug Awareness, Child Protection, and vigilant practice, child development, valuing diversity and parent and child assessments. The manager has also arranged for a company to deliver restraint training to all carers. Training in life story work was not established but the acting manager intends to address this in the coming year.

The company need to consider how to deliver training on safe caring to all members of the fostering household, this is to include birth children of the carer in an age appropriate manner.

Carers have reported that help is on offer to birth children by agency supervising social workers if required.

As stated earlier in the report the minutes of any disruption meetings which are relevant to specific foster carers must be considered at their annual review.

The manager intends to develop a system whereby the effectiveness of training is evaluated

and reviewed annually. This will need to be evidenced during the next inspection.

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 agency keep separate files for children which detail the nature of the care provided. There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and contents of the file and clarifies what information is kept on the foster carer files and what information is kept on the child's file.

The agency have improved enormously since the last inspection in ensuring that it has obtained relevant documentation on each child placed with them, and the inspectors evidenced that, where this had not been provided, the agency had made efforts to obtain it. As already stated the agency still need to do further work in this area, however, to acquire all the information it requires to be able to make appropriate matches. The agency has developed a protocol about the retrieval of records from foster carers at the end of the placement, and its responsibility to return relevant documents to the placing authority.

Foster carers keep a triplicate diary which they complete daily on each child placed. The present practice is for the copies to be collected by the supervising social worker when the book is completed, or at the end of the placement. Inspectors have advised that it would be more appropriate for them to be collected at each supervision visit to the carer, scrutinised by the supervising social worker to ensure that all the relevant information has been addressed in the carers' monthly report, which is sent to the placing social worker.

Foster carers have received training in recording and paperwork, but as stated earlier in the report there was some confusion about whether children were allowed to access to their recordings. Inspectors advise that this issue is addressed by supervising social workers during their visits to ensure children are encouraged to access their records and comment on what is written in an open and supportive manner.

Most of the foster carers interviewed report that they knew why the child was in foster care and understood the basis for the child's current placement, and details of the child's legal status. Inspectors were concerned however that this was not always the case with respite carers. It is advised that respite carers are given full information on the child/ren they are caring for to enable them to prepare to respond to any issues appropriately themselves.

Foster carers reported that they were involved in collecting appropriate memorabilia such as photographs and school certificates, and assisting children to come to terms with past events.

As stated earlier no formal training has been provided for carers on life story work but the acting manager informed the inspectors that this is intended.

The agency has a record storage policy which ensures that children's files are stored securely.

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?

1

The agency have clear, efficient and well organised systems for recording and storing information securely. The carers' files were kept in an open system but as soon as this was discussed, the staff responded immediately and secure storage was organised.

All records are typed and filed by administrative staff to ensure legibility of records and an easy tracking system for audit. The acting manager has established a system for regular audit of the files through the supervision of staff. As already stated carers complete their daily log in a triplicate book supervising social workers need to ensure that the office and placing social worker copies are collected at each supervision session with the carers. Information from the daily log is collected into a monthly report which is sent to the placing social worker.

Written entries in the records are greatly improved since the last inspection, but still need to contain more detail and evaluation.

As already stated earlier in this report inspectors were concerned that foster carers were not always encouraging or welcoming children to access their records or to make comments and record personal statements including any dissent. Inspectors were very worried to observe that in one case a carer had chastised a child for writing "lies" about her. Clearly some work needs to be done in this area.

There are systems in place to record allegations and complaints. Inspectors found however that in 3 cases the complaints process had not been followed appropriately and there was no information about the investigation or the outcome on the complainants' files.

Information from a complainant was used as evidence in a disciplinary case regarding a member of staff without their knowledge. The acting manager was asked to rectify this situation immediately. It is advised that further training on the handling of complaints, about what constitutes a complaint, is provided for all staff.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			17
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			11
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			12
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			5
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			2
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	302.45	Maximum £	351.45

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?

4

The Child Care Bureau has recently moved premises. Their new offices are spacious and well equipped and are situated in the Business Park in Blackpole on the outskirts of Worcester City. The premises are secure and there are efficient and robust IT and administrative systems with appropriate security measures in place. There is a large conference room where the Panel meet regularly and a small “confidentiality room” as well as spacious office for the social work team and the manager. Directors have their own office as do the finance, personnel and administration parts of the company. The manager also has her own office.

The Directors assured the Inspectors that the premises and its contents were adequately insured.

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?

2

The managing director and finance assistant are responsible for the financial viability of the company, assisted by accountants and their finances are audited annually by an independent auditor.

Whilst the company has strategies understood by the managing director and finance assistant they have not yet developed these into written procedures which outline whose responsibility it is to inform purchasers, or liaise with them to safeguard the welfare of children receiving services through the agency in the event of a financial crisis.

All other regulations and guidelines imposed on business are complied with such as income tax (PAYE) National Insurance and VAT.

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 managing director and finance assistant of the company have devised a set of processes and system, which document the financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and for governing its financial management. Documents explaining the procedures to be followed by staff, consultants, directors and the manager have been produced and are fully understood by all parties.

The Directors meet regularly to share information on the financial state of the agency.

The agency's Terms and Conditions of business for Local Authorities provides information about the charges for each of its services. The agency has recently raised its charges considerably more than the approved amount agreed by the West Midlands Family Placement Consortium. Whilst the agency is not a member, it is advised that prior to raising their costs in future that the company should liaise with the Consortium.

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 foster care agreement and foster carer handbook provide details of the policy regarding the payment of allowances. These were reviewed recently but not raised. Carers reported that they were satisfied with the arrangements for payments and expenses from the agency. Inspectors were informed that the boarding out allowance element of the foster carer payment was raised in line with inflation earlier this year.

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?

1

The agency have written procedures and policies about the handling of their functions, these include written procedures that cover decision making when all members of the Panel are not in agreement.

All the policies; “decision making policy”, “fostering panel policy” and “panel approval procedures” and the “panel coordinator role” are separate documents and it would be helpful for clarity that they were amalgamated to form one booklet for Child Care Bureau’s Panel.

Inspectors were concerned about the language and content of parts of the Panel approval procedure (paragraph 18.6) and advise that this document is reviewed to ensure no assumptions are made by the Chair when making the Panel’s recommendations.

Panel members had not been checked and vetted appropriately as required by Schedule 1, references had not been taken up, curriculum vitae were not provided, there was no documentary evidence of qualifications or proof of identity. In one case there was no CRB check carried out. These are serious omissions and are concerning as these individuals have access to confidential information about children. The agency need to ensure that these checks are undertaken retrospectively as a matter of urgency to convince inspectors that they are appropriately safeguarding the interests of children placed with them.

Medical expertise is not currently available to the Panel and this is of concern as several applicants are presenting with issues, which warrant clear, objective medical assessment such as alcohol dependency, depression or back pain. Whilst a specialist assessment was requested in one case this practice was not consistent. Inspectors were informed that the acting manager is actively seeking a medical advisor to provide such expertise to the Panel.

Inspectors were very concerned to note that the Panel Chair was not fully cognisant with her role in terms of quality assurance. During the observation of the Panel inspectors noted that the Chair failed to recognise that the assessments lacked detail and evidence and that they had not encompassed all the information required by Standard 17.7. Nor was the Chair conversant with the recent changes in legislation and practice following the Brighton and Hove Serious Case Review or the Bichard Report and as a result carers were being recommended for approval without additional checks having been undertaken (see Standard 17.7).

Inspectors noted that the Panel Chair lacked the skills and abilities to appropriately manage the meeting, there were no introductions and the Panel’s quoracy was not checked.

Inspectors were concerned to note that Panel members asked questions directly to the applicant without these having been agreed prior to the applicant joining the meeting and that the chair allowed speculation and assumptions to pass unchallenged during the meeting. It is the Panel Chair's responsibility to check all questions asked to ensure they are appropriate, respectful and sensitive prior to meeting with the applicant. It is a requirement under Regulation 24 (2) (b) that the fostering service provider shall appoint a person who has the skills and experience necessary for chairing the Panel. Inspectors expect that Panel Chair training should be arranged immediately such as that provided by BAAF, or a new Panel Chair who has the skills and experience sought as soon as possible.

Inspectors also advise that disruption meeting minutes should be considered by the Panel either at the foster carers' annual review or sooner, to ensure proper discussion about the suitability of the foster carer and their approval range.

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?
Not Applicable	9

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?
Not Applicable	9

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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.

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary (as previously advised to you)

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

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

YES

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 23 December 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

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

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

D.3.1 I Jennifer Foster of Child Care Bureau Limited 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	<u>JENNIFER FOSTER</u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u>Fostering Services manager</u>
Date	<u>17-1-05</u>

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of Child Care Bureau 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	<u></u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u></u>
Date	<u></u>

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

S0000034788.V170281.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source