



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Southend Fostering Agency (Family Finders)

Family Finders
283 London Road
Westcliff on Sea
Essex
SS2 6TB

20th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Southend Fostering Agency (Family Finders)

Address

Family Finders, 283 London Road, Westcliff on Sea,
Essex, SS2 6TB

Local Authority Manager

Mick Hamblion

Tel No:

01702 354366

Address

Family Finders, 283 London Road, Westcliff on Sea,
Essex, SS2 6TB

Fax No:

01702 437217

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

10/02/03

Date of Inspection Visit		20th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Michael Boettcher	072089
Name of Inspector	2	Patricia Stanton	131052
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ian Marsh	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

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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**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
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Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The fostering service Family Finders is funded and managed by Southend on Sea County Council.

The service is a significant aspect of the provision offered looked after children.

The service comprises of 9 full time staff and two administration workers currently employed.

Some 291 children are placed, a number in independent fostering.

The service has approximately 107 carers and 200 approved beds.

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 fostering service has been inspected as required under the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the Children's Act 1989 as amended. Areas to be progressed are listed in the Requirements and Recommendations section of the report. Any breaches in regulations that pose a more immediate risk to service users have been highlighted for urgent action.

Records, practices, policies and procedures have only been sampled. At future inspections other issues may come to light when different items are sampled or different people are spoken to.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

One of the one standard assessed was partly met.

The Fostering service 'Family Finders' has now produced a comprehensive Statement of Purpose that meets with all elements detailed in standard 1.4.

The children's guide is incorporated into the 'Welcome to the Care of Southend Council' general guide for children and young people. It does not however contain a summary of what it sets out to do for foster children or present information in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

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

Two of the two standards assessed were met.

The service manager and manager of Family Finders have relevant experience of managing the fostering service. The manager's current qualifications in management studies gained in 1993 to be evaluated against standard 2.2 to ensure it meets with a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management. Action must be taken to ensure any gaps in knowledge are addressed by 2005.

Statutory checks are now being carried out every three years.

Staff spoke positively about the support received from managers at Family Finders.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Two of the two standards assessed were met.

There were a number of monitoring systems in place and others being developed in line with children's services generally.

Carers have supervision contracts with link workers and are formally supervised monthly. Likewise staff confirmed that they receive regular supervision from their line manager.

There are proper financial procedures in place. Carers report being paid regularly and on time.

Carers and staff were not familiar with the 'conflict of interest' policy. It is recommended that this policy is brought to their attention.

There is a job description for the manager of Family Finders.

There is deputy cover (senior practitioner) arrangements in place during the manager's absence. The deputy confirmed that they are able to raise issues with the service manager directly at such times.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

Four of the nine standards assessed were met.

The service has made very good progress in terms of recruitment. There were 25 new carers recruited in the last 21 months. A very small number of new carers have moved on. A number of longer term carers have also left. The service has gained 65 beds over a two year period.

Annual household reviews are in place. All parties' views are sought about the placement.

Health and safety checks are carried out pre-approval. Shortfalls noted were not followed up in the reports on file. It is recommended that any shortfalls noted on health and safety checks to be followed up in writing and placed on the appropriate file.

Foster carers spoken with were not made fully aware of the NCSC inspector's role.

There is a national shortage of foster carers recognised at central government level. Most Southend foster carers are white British. There is a shortage of carers from a black or minority ethnic background. A number of children would gain from such a placement.

There are examples of good practice where children from minority groups have been encouraged to maintain their religious and cultural heritage with some success.

There was some evidence of limited use being made of specialist services and the voluntary sector to form appropriate links and obtain information and advise. These links could be developed further.

Disabled children are not offered as regular respite opportunities as could be provided by the service due to a shortfall of shared carers. Also emergency placements were seen to take priority over respite arrangements.

There are acknowledged gaps in the service for disabled child, siblings, remand children and older children.

There is use made of independent fostering agencies to help the local authority provide a broader service.

Safe caring practices are known to carers and made part of training, and in writing.

Guidance on 'missing children' is in place. However it does not give sufficient advice on what action to take and when. The policy needs to be developed further.

Children report in their NCSC questionnaires that contact visits are deemed very important to them. Carers were not always able to support the rate of agreed contact in care plans again due to competing demands of other foster children and birth children. It is recommended that there is closer planning between carers, parents and children's social worker when planning and organizing contact visits.

Children report in their NCSC questionnaires that contact visits are deemed very important to them.

Children report that they do have the opportunity to make their views known and generally feel listened to. Young people confirmed that they attend reviews on a regular basis.

Most carers questionnaires returned stated that they did not consider that anyone has asked their opinion about the way the fostering service runs. This is matched with young people's views.

There are good links formed with the health service to ensure proper health provision for looked after children generally, which benefited foster children.

Some health care provision has been innovative and included the involvement of children in looking at health issues facing young people including drug use and sex education.

The service is committed to maintaining looked after children in local schools. There is good links between education, foster carer, and the children's social worker and link workers.

Files reflected a high level of commitment to the educational potential and achievements of foster children.

There is an aftercare and youth support team accessible to foster children who require this service. The service manager noted improvements for young people leaving care generally in relation to education, employment and accommodation.

There are other inspection indicators from the SSI that reflect the very good stability of placements.

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

Three of the nine standards were met.

Recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff met with good practice. Statutory checks are now renewed every three years.

Staff files examined did not contain detailed references. Referees were not checked by telephone inquiries and the date noted on the file.

There is a clear management structure in place. (See standard 2). Link workers stated that workloads are acceptable and regularly monitored through formal monthly supervision.

It is recommended that the reasons carers give for leaving the service should be analysed.

A number of areas in the F1 assessment that had been presented to panel and had been approved were not carried out effectively in files examined. They reflected a lack of training and knowledge by link workers that should have been addressed in supervision.

Evidence from the work practices of link workers show mixed quality of assessments, areas covered in household reviews and supervision of carers have not been picked up effectively through staff supervision which has allowed some poor practices and omissions to occur.

Both applicants as foster carers did not present the same level of information on the FI assessments or completed the same areas of assessment training, particularly male carers.

An out of hours support/advise service is to be provided to foster carers. It will be run by fostering staff and managers and include a number of experienced carers. It is recommended that the 'take up' rate by carers is monitored to evaluate how effective the new system is.

There is a training officer providing training support for the fostering team. Specific staff are also involved in the organising and delivery of training in-house. The staff training programme is seen as a developing area.

Training does not fully reflect the policies of the fostering service as defined in the Statement of Purpose and Function.

There is a good relationship between the carers support service (AFCAPS) and the Council. Interviews with relevant members of AFCAPS confirmed that carers generally felt valued and listened to by the Council.

Where there are single carers such as working male carers then the support system is less effective. It is recommended unrepresentative carers are encouraged to link with similar carers outside of the borough i.e. Havering and Thurrock who are part of an advisory consortium.

Link workers do not regularly read carers diaries or visit unannounced at some stage during the year.

Supervision records generally paid little detailed attention to the development needs of carers.

Carers report that the pre-approval training offered is of good quality and comprehensive in nature.

Male carers in particular did not always attend all the assessment training where their female

partner had attended. This needs to be addressed.

The fostering service must ensure that all approved carers receive adequate training and that the training is evaluated.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Two of the two standards were met.

Foster Carers report generally adequate level of information they received in relation to the placed child's background and history.

The service is now better at requiring placing social workers to complete pre-placement information checklist which also benefits carers.

There is not a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records in place at the present time. The manager confirmed that there are plans for such a system to be put in place.

Some foster carers and children were fully aware that they can make additions and changes to their file kept by the service and access the file if they so wish.

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

Two of the two standards were met.

There is a separate building used by the fostering service which is located in a main shopping area. There are appropriate administrative and adequate security arrangements in place.

Staff report suffering from a number of physical complaints due to inadequate seating and desks. A recent health and safety assessment has been carried out. Action should be taken to ensure the equipment noted above is appropriate for staff use.

The interior of the premises are in a poor decorative state.

Fire extinguishers were last tested in 2000. This must be remedied.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

Three of the three standards were met.

The fostering service is linked to the Local Authority financial systems. The Assistant Director for Children & Young People's services oversees the service and is the named responsible individual for the fostering service.

The local authority is currently spending a larger portion of the overall budget on services for looked after children above that provided by government.

The service manager was able to evidence that financial systems are in place and all financial arrangements are properly recorded and accounted for.

Foster carers state they experienced delays in receiving payment for claims such as travel. It is recommended that ways to improve the timing of such payments should be examined.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

None of the one standard was met.

The members contributed effectively to the issues raised and their combined experience showed through in the quality of decisions reached. There was frank discussion as to the performance of the fostering service in the process of reaching decisions on the competence of carers.

The quality of the documentation supporting approvals was varied with some aspects poorly put together, noted by the chair. Action should be taken to strengthen the 'quality assurance' role of the panel to ensure that where assessments and/or supporting evidence is not sufficient that this is followed up by the relevant managers.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

None of the one standard was met.

The shared care scheme is currently failing to provide the number of carers and services to disabled children. The current situation disadvantages disabled children (see standard 7) and action needs to be taken to remedy the situation. An additional 12 shared carers are needed to offer the level of service required.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

None of the one standard was met.

There is evidence that the service is attempting to use more kinship carers via a family group conference initiative that is aimed at working with young people and their families. However resources to provide speedy assessments are not in place and there is the risk that potential kinship carers will be lost to the service.

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:

YES

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:

Failure to fully meet Regulations 3(3)(1), 3(3)(4), 15(1)(c), 19, 13(3), schedule 1(4), 19, 35(1)(a), 28(1)(2)(a)(b), 17(1), 23(1), 27(1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Michael Boettcher	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Patricia Stanton	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Gwen Buckley	Signature	_____
Date	_____		_____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(3)(1)	FS1	The children's guide to contain a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for foster children	14/07/04
2	3(3)(4)	FS1	The children's guide to provide information in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.	14/07/04
3	15(1)(c)	FS7	O.T. assessments to be carried out within timescales that best meet disabled children's respite care needs.	14/07/04
4	19	FS9	Link workers to receive training in relation to the service's anti-bullying' policy	14/07/04
5	13(3)	FS9	Guidance on missing children to include a written procedure to be followed if a child is absent without permission.	14/07/04
6	Schedule 1(4)	FS15	References to be checked by telephone inquiries to referees and the contact date recorded on file.	14/07/04
7	19	FS19	Provide sufficient and relevant training specific to the work carried out by link workers.	14/07/04
8	35(1)(a)	FS22	Carers to be visited unannounced at some stage during the year.	14/07/04
9	28(1)(2)(a)(b)	FS23	All potential foster carers to be fully assessed prior to approval.	26/05/04

10	17(1)	FS23	Foster carers to receive training in relation to identified developmental needs.	14/07/04
11	17(1)	FS23	The fostering service must ensure that all approved carers receive adequate training and that the training is evaluated.	14/07/04
12	17(1)	FS23	Training offered carers should be relevant, take account of their current needs and be varied and flexible in delivery.	14/07/04
13	23(1)	FS26	Provide sufficient IT and related office equipment in line with health and safety requirements.	14/07/04
14	23(1)	FS26	Fire extinguishers to be tested in keeping with fire regulations.	Immediate
15	26(2)(b)(c)	FS30	The fostering panel to ensure that the assessments received to decide approvals of prospective carers is of sufficient quality.	14/07/04
16	27(1)	FS32	Kinship carers to be supported by the provision of appropriate assessments within acceptable timescales.	14/07/04

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	FS2	The managers Diploma in Management studies to meet with a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management.
2	FS4	The 'conflict of interest' policy to be brought to the attention of staff and carers.
3	FS6	Shortfalls noted on health and safety checks to be followed up in writing and placed on file.
4	FS6	The assessment for placing a child who has been abused/abusing/ or has behavioural difficulties to be made explicit in writing on the relevant file.

5	FS6	Foster carers to be made aware of the NCSC inspector's role when visiting foster carers in their home.
6	FS7	Greater use to be made of external professionals and the voluntary sector to support and develop children's ethnic background, religion and culture.
7	FS7	Review options to preserve respite places for disabled children.
8	FS7	Establish effective and timely access to OT services for disabled children.
9	FS7	Sufficient respite care opportunities to be offered disabled children by the development of the shared care scheme.
10	FS10	It is recommended that there is closer planning between carers, parents and children's social worker when organising contact visits.
11	FS11	A forum for children and foster carers to be considered with their brief to look at ways the service could be developed.
12	FS13	The education support worker role to be made more effective in practice.
13	FS17	The reasons carers give for leaving the service should be analysed.
14	FS18	The 'take up' rate by carers to be monitored to evaluate how effective the new 'out of hours' support system is.
15	FS21	Unrepresentative carers are encouraged to link with similar carers outside of the borough.
16	FS22	Link workers to regularly check carers professional diaries.
17	FS22	Supervision of foster carers records to detail the development needs of carers.
18	FS24	A system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records to be put in place.
19	FS25	Foster carers and children to be informed that they can make additions and changes to their file kept by the service and access the file if they so wish.
20	FS25	A system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records to be put in place.
21	FS25	Alternative storage systems of saving redundant files should be considered.
22	FS26	The premises to be maintained in good decorative order.

23	FS29	It is recommended that ways to improve the timing of travel and other payments should be examined.
24	FS30	Where decisions reached included increasing support to carers then a record should be kept to evidence action taken and outcomes.

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

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	16.5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	20/01/04
Time of Inspection	9:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	52

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Fostering service 'Family Finders' has now produced a comprehensive Statement of Purpose that meets with all elements detailed in standard 1.4. It is recommended that the document be dated to ensure it is reviewed at least annually.

The children's guide is incorporated into the 'Welcome to the Care of Southend Council' general guide for children and young people. There is relevant information contained in the guide including how to make a complaint, advocacy services and details of the local NCSC area office. The guide was designed by young people in Southend in consultation with children's services. It does not however contain a summary of what it sets out to do for foster children or present information in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The service manager and manager of Family Finders have relevant experience of managing the fostering service. The manager's current qualifications in management studies gained in 1993 to be evaluated against standard 2.2 to ensure it meets with a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management. Action to be taken to ensure any gaps in knowledge are addressed by 2005.</p>		
<p>Statutory checks are now being carried out every three years.</p>		

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Staff spoke positively about the support received from managers at Family Finders.</p>		
<p>Telephone enquiries were not made to follow up references. (See standard 15)</p>		
<p>Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There were a number of monitoring systems in place and others being developed in line with children's services generally. There is monitoring from the initial contact date through to the approval of foster carers, among other systems in place.

Management roles are clearly stated with established lines of accountability.

Carers have supervision contracts with link workers and are formally supervised monthly. Likewise staff confirmed that they receive regular supervision from their line manager.

There are proper financial procedures in place. Carers report being paid regularly and on time.

Carers and staff were not familiar with the 'conflict of interest' policy. It is recommended that this policy is brought to their attention.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

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.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a job description for the manager of Family Finders.

There is deputy cover (senior practitioner) arrangements in place during the manager's absence. The deputy confirmed that they are able to raise issues with the service manager directly at such times.

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 service has made very good progress in terms of recruitment. There were 25 new carers recruited in the last 21 months. A very small number of new carers have moved on. A number of longer term carers have also left.

Comments made by link workers suggest that a number of new carers are highly committed to joint caring and attended all the training programmes. (See standard 17 and 19.)

The homes of foster carers visited were domestic, comfortable and well maintained. There were adequate arrangements for foster children to have their own bed, privacy and space.

Annual household reviews are in place. All parties' views are sought about the placement.

Health and safety checks are not specifically detailed in the household reviews examined. The manager confirmed that there is a new checklist in use, evidenced at the panel meeting.

Health and safety checks are carried out pre-approval. Shortfalls noted were not followed up in the reports on file. It recommended that any shortfalls noted on health and safety checks to be followed up in writing and placed on the appropriate file.

The assessment for placing a child who has been abused/abusing/or has behavioural difficulties is not made explicit in writing.

Foster carers spoken with were not fully aware of the NCSC inspector's role. Foster carers and children should be made aware that Inspectors may visit by arrangement, interview carers, inspect accommodation, look at health and safety issues, interview foster children over 8 years with the agreement of the child, examine diary entries and take action (child protection) if warranted.

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?

2

There is a national shortage of foster carers recognised at central government level. Most Southend foster carers are white British. There is a shortage of carers from a black or minority ethnic background. A number of children would gain from such a placement in the view of senior managers.

The fostering service has made some progress in recruiting a greater diversity of carers to meet the needs of children. Advertisement for carers have been targeted at minority groups. Managers are aware that some potential carers may not be able to fully evidence all statutory checks.

There are examples of good practice where children from minority groups have been encouraged to maintain their religious and cultural heritage with some success.

Statements made by carers show they were encouraging and supporting children to deal with discrimination and bullying as well as respecting their identity.

There was some evidence of limited use being made of specialist services and the voluntary sector to form appropriate links and obtain information and advise. These links could be developed further.

There was evidence of over reliance on parents to preserve child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. Also some foster children's parents may not consider these matters important for the child in placement.

Disabled children that have a planned placement enjoy good health care support and sufficient equipment/adaptations as required.

Disabled children are not offered as regular respite opportunities as could be provided by the service due to a shortfall of shared carers. Also emergency placements were seen to take priority over respite arrangements.

OT assessments are accessible for children but are difficult to obtain for planned respite. This further reduced respite opportunities for disabled children.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are other inspection indicators from the SSI that reflect very good stability of placements.

There are acknowledged gaps in the service for disabled child, siblings, remand children and older children.

It was not possible, given the shortage of carers from minority groups (see standard 7) to ensure that children were matched in relation to ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language. There is use made of independent fostering agencies to help the local authority provide a broader service.

Link workers confirmed that placement considerations took into account matching considerations as far as possible.

There are examples of care plans that record matching considerations.

There were examples of good practice in supporting carers and encouraging the child to develop a positive understanding of their heritage. Carers were given some relevant training, support and information when transracial or transcommunity placements were made. However this was at times limited to reading selected books due to lack of knowledge within the service and links to agencies who could assist, not being established. (See standard 7)

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

Safe caring practices are known to carers and made part of training, and in writing.

The policy on dealing with negative behaviour clearly states that corporal punishment is not acceptable. The carers contacted understood this.

Records are kept of allegations and concerns.

There is an anti-bullying policy in place and arrangements to support the foster carer with assisting the child when bullying occurs. Link workers had not received training in relation to the anti-bullying' policy.

Guidance on 'missing children' is in place. However it does not give sufficient advice on what action to take and when. The policy needs to be developed further.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	0	%
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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
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Contact is encouraged and accommodated in the main. Expenses are paid for transport. Alternative venues are available if contact is known to be supervised. Carers report back outcomes, noted in their supervision with the link worker.

Contact arranged between parent and social worker can be agreed without consulting the carer, which is poor practice. At such times visits have been curtailed.

Carers were not always able to support the rate of agreed contact in care plans due to competing demands of other foster children and birth children.

Children report in their NCSC questionnaires that contact visits are deemed very important to them.

It is recommended that there is closer planning between carers, parents and children's social worker when planning and organizing contact visits.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Foster children and birth children are consulted through household reviews. A sample of questionnaires returned from foster children confirmed that they felt consulted over a number of matters.

Children report that they do have the opportunity to make their views known and generally feel listened to. Young people confirmed that they attend reviews on a regular basis.

Young people spoken with confirmed that they would know how to raise a complaint or a concern.

Carers also felt they were regularly consulted through meetings and phone calls with their link worker and children through their own reviews and during household reviews.

Most carers questionnaires returned stated that they did not consider that anyone has asked their opinion about the way the fostering service runs. This is matched with young people's views. There was little evidence presented of young people being involved in the development of the fostering service. Looked after children have been consulted over the way children's services meet their needs but not specifically foster children and the way Family Finders meets their needs overall. Such a level of involvement is made implicit in Family Finders Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose and Function and should therefore

be developed further. It is recommended that a forum for children and foster carers to be considered with their brief to look at ways the service could be developed.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is evidence of health care being promoted within the service from documentation and discussions with carers.

There are good links formed with the health service to ensure proper health provision for looked after children generally, which benefited foster children.

Some health care provision has been innovative and included the involvement of children in looking at health issues facing young people including drug use and sex education.

Carers report making provision for children to register with appropriate services such as GP, dentist and optician and ensure regular health checks are carried out.

There was an example of a foster carer ensuring that a foster child had received all their inoculations and health checks.

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

The service is committed to maintaining look after children in local schools. There is good links between education, foster carer, and the children's social worker and link workers. Carers are encouraged to attend meetings on reviews (PEP's) and do so.

Files reflected a high level of commitment to the educational potential and achievements of foster children.

There were good examples of carers actively promoting educational opportunities and supporting the young people. This included working with the school in matters relating to bullying.

The education support worker service is not fully understood or utilised as effectively as it could be. Carers spoken with were aware there was support but were unclear about how to involve them. Situations at school requiring intervention are therefore not always brought to the support workers attention or resolved as quickly as they might have been.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This area was not fully inspected.

There is an aftercare and youth support team accessible to foster children who require this service. The service manager noted improvements for young people leaving care generally in relation to education, employment and accommodation.

Foster carers are involved in assisting young people with life and social skills as part of the fostering experience.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff meet with good practice. Police checks are now renewed every three years.

The assessment of foster carers are carried out by qualified social workers. A senior member of staff supervises new staff in assessment methods and the preparation of reports for the fostering panel. External training on assessments are also made available for new staff.

Staff files examined did not contain detailed references. Referees were not checked by telephone inquiries and the date noted on the file. Managers have reported this to personnel for action.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear management structure in place. (See standard 2). Link workers stated that workloads are acceptable and regularly monitored through formal monthly supervision.

Some assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are not being managed effectively. (See standard 2)

There is an appropriate level of administrative support in place.

Staff have written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. There is a distinction made between link worker and child's social worker in terms of roles that is understood by staff.

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

(See standard 7)

Staff confirmed that they felt there were sufficient link workers to carry out the current work demands.

Given the change in the market choices now available to carers it is recommended that the reasons carers give for leaving the service should be analysed. An 'exit interview' process would be appropriate.

There are aspects of assessments that have not been fully considered as defined in standard 17.7. A number of areas in the F1 assessment that had been presented to panel and had been approved were not carried out effectively in files examined. These related to the 'valuing diversity' section and 'future training needs' of carers in particular. Other shortfalls were noted. They reflected a lack of training and knowledge by link workers that should have been addressed in supervision.

(See standard 2)

Some assessments clearly contained link worker's own personal values where this was not needed.

Both applicants as foster carers did not present the same level of information on the FI or completed the same areas of assessment training, particularly male carers. For example a female carer produced several pages of information to cover their education and work history. The male carer provided five sentences only and this was accepted as sufficient information. At panel two references had been sought in one case. The chair's view was they were essentially identical and gave no new information which defeated the purpose of requesting two references in the first place.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is an out of hours support service for foster carers that is part of the general support for children's services. This is shortly to include a service solely for foster carers. It will be run by fostering staff and managers and include a number of experienced carers. It is recommended that the 'take up' rate by carers is monitored to evaluate how effective the new system is.

There are comprehensive health and safety policies.

There is a whistle blowing policy in place and known to both staff and carers.

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
<p>See standard 16.</p> <p>There is a training officer providing training support for the fostering team. Specific staff are also involved in the organising and delivery of training in-house. The staff training programme is seen as a developing area.</p> <p>There is an induction programme for new staff with timescales for achievement.</p> <p>There is some joint training between link worker's and carers. This tends to be training offered essentially to carers with one link worker attending to represent staff involvement.</p> <p>Training does not fully reflect the policies of the fostering service as defined in the Statement of Purpose and Function. The manager confirmed that a large part of staff training days are taken up by statutory training. There is insufficient training specific to the work carried out by link workers. For example valuing diversity course is earmarked for carers rather than link workers. The link workers clearly stated that they would wish to attend the course.</p> <p>Weaknesses in F1 assessments noted in standard 18 and issues around accepting carers with different backgrounds and lifestyles confirm the importance of staff training in this area.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Staff are offered regular supervision and records kept.</p> <p>Evidence from the work practices of link workers show mixed quality of assessments, areas covered in household reviews and supervision of carers have not been picked up effectively through staff supervision which has allowed some poor practices and omissions to occur.</p> <p>There are regular staff planned meetings.</p>		

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

There is a good relationship between the carers support service (AFCAPS) and the Council. Interviews with relevant members of AFCAPS confirmed that carers generally felt valued and listened to by the Council.

Carers speak highly of the support they received from link workers. There also have self help groups and coffee mornings designed to offer support from carers.

There are respite care arrangements for carers.

Where there are single carers such as working male carers then the support system is less effective. It is recommended unrepresentative carers are encouraged to link with similar carers outside of the borough i.e. Havering and Thurrock for example given that they work closely with Southend.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

There are Foster carer agreements in place for all foster carers.

Link workers regularly meet with and supervise carers. Supervision notes are taken and placed on file. Carers receive practical support including prompt payments for extra items in the main.

Carers are aware of the complaints procedure and action to be taken if an allegation is made against them.

Link workers do not regularly read carers diaries or visit unannounced at some stage during the year.

Supervision records generally paid little detailed attention to the development needs of carers.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The initial NVQ course set up last year was not effectively managed. There is now a better-organized programme in place and a number of foster carers are due to start on the NVQ programme early this year.

Carers report that the pre-approval training offered is of good quality and comprehensive in nature.

Carers confirmed that they received training in safe care.

Courses provided over the last 12 months included drug awareness, challenging discrimination, working with behaviour problems, first aid, child protection and children's mental health training.

Birth children's needs are taken into account confirmed by Foster carers spoken with.

Male carers in particular did not always attend all the assessment training where their female partner had attended. This needs to be addressed.

Foster carers skills development were not properly identified and therefore do not become part of the annual reviews appraisal of individual carers training and development needs.

Although the effectiveness of carers training is evaluated, there is no evaluation of carers whose partner has attended training and fed back the main points to them. This is accepted practice by the service. Male carers have stated that this is sufficient for them to keep up to date. Evidence from discussions with carers show that male carers who have not attended training over time can be placed in high risk situations when the trained carer is not available.

The fostering service must ensure that all approved carers receive adequate training and that the training is evaluated.

Although there is now a training officer for children's services the training that had been offered was generally inflexible in terms of time, frequency and dates in the view of foster carers spoken with.

There is work carried out by the training officer to ensure the relevance of courses offered. At present any foster carer who requires some specific training relating to the needs of a particular child are unlikely to receive it when required.

Training offered carers should be relevant, take account of their current needs and be varied and flexible in delivery.

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
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A number of case files were inspected and found to be well organised and comprehensive. There is a policy that clarifies what information is to be kept in particular files and files sampled confirmed that this was being followed.

Foster Carers report generally adequate level of information is received in relation to the placed child's background and history.

The service is now better at requiring placing social workers to complete pre-placement information checklist which also benefits carers.

Carers were able to give a number of examples of their own commitment to assisting the children with understanding their previous history through life storybooks, pictures and other material.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There is not a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records in place at the present time. The manager confirmed that there are plans for such a system to be put in place.

Some foster carers and children were fully aware that they can make additions and changes to their file kept by the service and access the file if they so wish.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			168
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			389
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			15
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			15
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

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?

1

There is a separate building used by the fostering service which is located in a main shopping area. There are appropriate administrative and adequate security arrangements in place.

The space allocated for storing files is now becoming overwhelmed. Alternative systems of saving redundant files should be considered.

There is insufficient I.T. equipment for the staff.

Staff report suffering from a number of physical complaints due to inadequate seating and desks. A recent health and safety assessment has been carried out. Action should be taken to ensure the equipment noted above is appropriate for staff use.

The interior of the premises is in a poor decorative state.

Fire extinguishers were last tested in 2000. This must be remedied. The manager stated that appropriate action is being taken to ensure extinguishers are checked.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service is linked to the Local Authority financial systems. The Assistant Director for Children & Young People's services oversees the service and is the named responsible individual for the fostering service.

The joint inspection by the NCSC and SSI concluded that the financial resources put into children's services overall was not sufficient to deliver the quality of service required. Nevertheless the local authority is currently spending a larger portion of the overall budget on services for looked after children above that provided by government.

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 service manager was able to evidence that financial systems are in place and all financial arrangements are properly recorded and accounted for.

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

Rates and allowances for foster carers were clearly stated in relevant documents and carers reported that although most felt the rates were low they received regular payments promptly from the service.

Foster carers experienced delays for claims such as travel, waiting up to 6 weeks from the time the claim is made. Senior managers are aware that foster carers are often reminded about getting claims in on a monthly basis. It is recommended that ways to improve the timing of such payments should be examined.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A panel meeting was observed on one occasion and the chair of the panel interviewed. The chair has no direct links with the service, was appropriately qualified and independent. There are procedures in place that include how disagreements between panel members are resolved.

The members contributed effectively to the issues raised and their combined experience showed through in the quality of decisions reached. There was frank discussion as to the performance of the fostering service in the process of reaching decisions on the competence of carers.

The quality of the documentation supporting approvals were varied with some aspects poorly put together, noted by the chair. Action should be taken to strengthen the 'quality assurance' role of the panel to ensure that where assessments and/or supporting evidence is not sufficient that this is followed up by the relevant managers.

Where decisions reached included increasing support to carers there was no mechanism in place to show that action had been taken. Such decisions did not appear in household reviews for example which would have been a natural place to make a record of the panel's recommendation and action taken by the service.

The panel chair is aware of the need to introduce new panel members every three years.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The shared care scheme is currently failing to provide the number of carers and services to disabled children. The service has been unable to recruit a shared care coordinator following advertising and interview. Shared carers have reduced in the last two years to around twelve providers who are seen to offer a good service by the parents of the children who value the service.

However without a co-coordinator in post they do not receive any regular supervision. The main contact they have with the service is in relation to organising respite placements and receiving payments.

The current situation disadvantages disabled children (see standard 7) and action needs to be taken to remedy the situation. An additional 12 shared carers are needed to offer the level of service required.

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?

2

This area was not fully inspected on this occasion. There is evidence that the service is attempting to use more kinship carers via a family group conference initiative that is aimed at working with young people and their families.

The service manager is aware that although there has been enquiries from kinship carers, the service has not been able to follow through on the assessment process. This is 'choice protects' monies as a possible source of purchasing assessors to ensure kinship carers are not lost.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 20/01/04 of Southend fostering service 'Family Finders' and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>	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	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA

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 2nd June 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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