

inspection report

Fostering Services

Park Foster Care Ltd

Regent House
Beam Heath Way
Nantwich
Cheshire
CW5 6PQ

13th-17th December 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

Park Foster Care Ltd

Tel No

01270 626562

Address

Regent House, Beam Heath Way, Nantwich, Cheshire,
CW5 6PQ

Fax No

01270 625937

Email Address

info@parkfostercare.com

Registered Number of IFA

F510002025

Name of Registered Provider

Park Foster Care Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mrs Bridget Miltiadous

Date of first registration

22nd June 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

22nd June 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

N/A

Date of Inspection Visit		13th December 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jeff Banham	162529
Name of Inspector	2	None	
Name of Inspector	3	None	
Name of Inspector	4	None	
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.		None	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		None	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mrs. Bridget Miltiadous; Mr. Telemachus Miltiadous	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Park Foster Care 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.
<p>Park Foster Care Ltd. is an independent fostering agency falling within Regulation 4(4) of the Care Standards Act 2000. It was registered in June 2004. The agency's office is situated in Nantwich, South Cheshire, from where its services are managed and delivered. The agency is an approved provider of fostering services with the West Midlands Child Care Consortium and is a corporate member of the Fostering Network.</p> <p>Park Foster Care provides foster care placements for children and young people who are looked after by local authorities. The agency's statement of purpose sets out its intention to provide local authorities with short, medium and long-term placements, and emergency, respite and bridging placements for permanency and other plans for looked after children. Placements are supported through the provision of supervising social workers and other specialist staff and services in health and education fields, as appropriate.</p> <p>Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers are intended to allow the agency to provide a range of carers to meet the diverse needs of the children referred to it.</p> <p>At the time of the inspection the agency had thirteen approved foster carers and eight children placed.</p>

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.)

Statement of purpose

The statement of purpose and the children's guide accurately reflected the services currently provided by the agency, and the legislation and values on which the service was based. This is the agency's first inspection and it has been in operation for six months. The registered manager was aware of the need to review the statement as the agency's services develop in the future

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

The agency was registered in June 2004. The three main individuals responsible for the management of the service have all been assessed as having the skills, experience and qualifications appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

Management of the fostering service

The management of the fostering service has so far been conducted to a high standard. The necessary policies and procedures are all in place.

The key issue for Park is the need to regularly monitor the tasks and responsibilities of the responsible individual and the registered manager to ensure the most effective and co-ordinated management of the organisation. The fact that these two people are married should also be taken in account in order that objective accountability is maintained.

Securing and promoting welfare

Standards of care practice were good and the agency set high expectations of support from placing agencies. Case files were well organised and demonstrated high standards of childcare planning by Park Foster Care. One issue of matching was identified in the inspection, and the agency has noted the implications of this.

Recruiting and managing staff and foster carers

Efficient and comprehensive systems have been put into place to ensure foster carers are recruited, supported and well managed. Foster carers felt that the service provided by the agency was commendable and very supportive. As the agency grows the registered manager will need to ensure that effective out-of-hours support systems remain in place.

Records

Records were maintained to a high standard. The responsible individual has created a comprehensive system that covers the requirements of the Foster Care Regulations. Records are well kept, accessible and clearly useful to foster carers, staff and placing authorities.

Fitness of premises

The premises are currently suitable for the size of the agency and the work it undertakes. As the service grows the need for a larger more flexible space may become apparent. The registered manager said she was aware of the need to monitor the suitability of the work area.

Financial requirements

The finances of the agency were monitored in accordance with the set procedures and legal requirements agreed at the time of the registration. Regular budget reports enabled the Board to monitor the accounts and cash flow within the context of the business and financial plan of the agency.

Fostering panel

The foster panel has met three times. On each occasion it has had the required membership and been chaired by the identified chair. Foster carers have been approved, but none yet de-registered or reviewed. Foster carers reported they believed the panel to have acted fairly and reasonably at all times.

The panel chair said he was aware that the panel would need to implement its monitoring processes as the agency's work grows.

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?

NA

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	Jeff Banham	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Julie Hunt	Signature	_____
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	11(a)	FS6	The registered manager must ensure that homes are free from avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury and harm.	January 31 st 2005
2	11(a)	FS6	The registered manager must ensure that all foster carers have the necessary car and home insurances.	January 31 st 2005
3	33(b)	FS8	The registered manager must ensure that children are placed with foster carers capable of meeting their needs. The rationale for apparent discrepancies in matching, and any additional support required, must be recorded in the placement agreement.	January 31 st 2005
4	14	FS10	The registered manager must ensure that evidence confirming restrictions on contact is available on the child's file where appropriate.	January 31 st 2005
5	28(5)(b) Schedule 5(9)	FS24	The registered manager must ensure that information relating to a child placed with a foster carer is kept confidential and not disclosed to any person.	January 31 st 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	FS9	The registered manager should produce a description of the physical characteristics of each young person, including a photograph, to be provided to police in the event of a child going missing from home.
2	FS24	The registered manager should ensure children's files evidence their participation in the compilation of the records.

* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	13/12/04

Time of Inspection
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

09.00
35.00

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency's statement of purpose set out its aims and objectives, and described the services it provides. The document presented comprehensive information, using the headings identified in 1.4 of this standard, about all aspects of the agency's functioning. A children's guide was available in a text version and a picture version.

The statement of purpose could usefully include the diagrammatic version of the complete agency staffing and management structure that is contained in the foster carers' brochure. Some aspects of the wording could be reviewed in order to make them more accessible to the complete range of foster carers. For example there was a reference to "*therapeutic services*" without explaining what they might be, and a reference to the agency's intention "*...to provide optimum care along the various dimensions of parenting capacity..*".

The inspector discussed these and other issues relating to the wording of the statement of purpose with the registered manager and it was acknowledged that it would be reviewed as a normal part of the agency's operation.

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

The responsible individual and the registered manager are both qualified social workers with a wide range of experiences in many aspects of social care. The registered manager reported that she is undertaking the Certificate in Management Studies.

The other Board Member is a qualified accountant. The report written for the registration of the agency in June noted that he was to undertake some training in fostering issues to provide him with more knowledge of the key elements of the work.

The agency has been operating since June 2004, and is still relatively small in scale.

Management and service delivery were provided by both the responsible individual and the registered manager as needed, and responsibilities were inevitably blurred as the staff became familiar with the main issues involved in developing the service.

The responsible individual and registered manager are married. Discussion about the potential issues arising from this (e.g. whistleblowing, complaints, professional boundaries and impact on other staff) took place during the registration process and again during the inspection. The inspector was told that staff have been informed of their professional responsibilities to contact other people or organisations, such as CSCI, should any perceived difficulties arise.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The registration process was completed in June 2004, six months before the inspection, and all qualifications, checks and references for the people carrying on and managing the fostering service were obtained and established then.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The statement of purpose described the three key people managing the service. The responsible individual and the registered manager were based in the office and available to staff, carers and other agencies as required.

Financial procedures had been established and were monitored by the Finance Director. A statement of charges and payments to foster carers was available, and payments to be made to carers are included in the foster care agreement.

At the time of the inspection the agency was still relatively small, and both the responsible individual and the registered manager carried out tasks and responsibilities as the occasions demanded. As the agency grows this situation will need to be monitored in order for the efficient management of the organisation to be carried out.

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

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.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

At the time of the inspection the agency was still small in its scale of operation. Both the responsible individual and the registered manager carried out day-to-day management. The registered manager had a clear job description, but the needs of the agency and the availability of staff dictated that she, and to some extent the responsible individual, had to involve themselves in a range of tasks that ensured the service operated effectively. For example, 24-hour cover, seven days a week, had been provided jointly up to the time of the inspection. The registered manager had also operated as an assessing social worker. The pre-inspection questionnaire, completed by the manager, noted that she was “....*available at all times (including 24-hour cover).*”

Whilst this has had no apparent adverse impact on the effective management of the service in the first six months of its operation, the levels of delegation and lines of accountability will need to be closely monitored as the agency continues to develop.

The registered manager told the inspector that it is the intention of the agency to conduct more regular and formal senior management meetings.

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 agency had approved thirteen foster carers, through three meetings of the Approval Panel, at the time of the inspection. The statement of purpose and foster care handbook set out the requirements of an applicant, and the standards of the accommodation, to be approved as a foster carer. The reports submitted to the Panel covered all aspects of recruitment, and included evidence of all necessary checks and included home visits and health and safety checks.

The inspector visited four foster carers in their homes as part of the inspection. These were found to be satisfactory and as described in the foster carers' files and assessment reports. One house had a wall mounted light switch in a downstairs toilet. Whilst a pull or cord switch is not a health and safety requirement in such rooms a wall switch it does represent a potential hazard. This was brought to the attention of the registered manager who agreed to review the matter with the carer.

See requirement 1

One foster care file contained a car insurance certificate that was out of date.

See requirement 2

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

Park Foster Care had an equal opportunities policy and promoted the issue of diversity and equality through the training and assessment process. Foster carer approvals recognised the strengths and preferences of individual carers, and subsequent matching of children with foster carers ensured that a child's identified needs could be met.

The agency had not yet offered placements for children with disabilities, and the ethnic mix of foster carers so far approved reflected the predominantly white population of the area.

One Muslim child had been placed. The placing officer felt that although *"good basic care was provided the foster carer had little insight into a Muslim child's needs."*

The registered manager told the inspector that the placing authority had specifically requested a non-Muslim family in order to take the child out of her immediate geographical area and away from the religious community with which there was tension. Minutes of the matching meeting and a letter to the child's social worker recorded the discussions about the need for a non-Muslim family. The registered manager said that the designated foster carer was selected because of her experience, skills and knowledge of religious issues.

The registered manager said the agency made every effort to recruit carers who would be able to meet a range of ethnic, cultural and religious needs.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

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

Minutes of the foster care panel and the foster carer register identified that each foster carer was approved with identified and recorded conditions established at the time of approval. The agency required referrals on prospective placements from local authorities to include full information on children's needs. The children's files contained this information in "Looking after Children" documentation, care plans, assessments using the National Assessment Framework and, where appropriate, Statements of Special Educational Need.

The registered manager reported that there were occasional difficulties in obtaining this information from local authorities, but that the agency would not proceed to endorsing a placement until all the information had been received.

Matching then took place using the conditions of approval for foster carers, the information on the child, and discussions and meetings with appropriate staff and carers. It was the agency's policy to ensure children had introductory visits to prospective carers, except where this could not be possible due to the need for an emergency placement. The carers and children with whom the inspector spoke confirmed that introductions and meetings had taken place.

One placement had been made between a young person whose needs were identified as long-term care, and a foster carer approved for short term or emergency care.

The registered manager said she was aware of this apparent discrepancy, but it had been agreed that that the placement was in the best interests of the child.

Where placements occur in circumstances of a possible gap in the match foster care agreements should reflect the issues that were taken into account in agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers may need additional support.

See requirement 3

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

The agency's policy and processes required every applicant to undertake pre-approval assessments and checks. When placements had been made supervisory visits were undertaken and records of these kept on the foster carer file. Unannounced visits had been made in line with the agency policy.

A foster carer training programme had been started and the contents included training on child protection, bullying and abuse. Written child protection procedures were available and the agency had clear statements on the unacceptability of corporal punishment. Information about managing behaviour was given in the policy document in the foster care handbook. Each placement had a written "safe care" policy particular to the situation in which that child was placed.

Every placement was based on information about a child's background and previous circumstances, and care plans reflected the strategies that were required for each child.

The foster carer handbook contained a "child missing from home" procedure.

The agency could consider a factual description of a child's physical characteristics with a

recent photograph to be given to police in the event of a child going missing from home.
See good practice recommendation 1

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%
--	-----	---

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 foster carer's handbook contained a policy on contact. This set out the expectations of the agency in respect of foster carers' responsibilities towards promoting and supporting the contact of young people with family and friends. The preparation course emphasised the significance of contact and the foster carers' responsibilities in supporting it for each child. Children's documentation described the people with whom a child should have contact, and the arrangements to be implemented for that contact to take place.

Children and foster carers described to the inspector the contacts that had taken place.

Contact arrangements were monitored through supervisory visits and case reviews. Minutes of both processes were available on the file.

The inspector saw that some children had people with whom contact was restricted. The registered manager must ensure that in such cases copies of the order restricting contact are available on the child's file in the foster home.

See requirement 4

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Children's Guide was available in written and pictorial form. Children with whom the inspector spoke confirmed that they had seen the document.

The Guide set out the agency's approach to enabling young people to have their views taken into account. These were described as through more formal processes such as placement meetings, case reviews and regular meetings with the child's social worker, and informal processes such as discussions with foster carers and the supervising social worker. Information about making a complaint is given in the guide.

Children with whom the inspector spoke said they were happy with the way they were treated by their carers and the agency.

The Children's Guide described the Voice for the Child in Care advocacy service and informed young people how they could contact the service.

The registered manager told the inspector that the agency has produced questionnaires for children to complete every six months, and end-of-placement questionnaires for children, and their parents, have been devised.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

The carer's handbook described the agency policy towards promoting the health of children looked after. The importance of health care was endorsed through the content of pre- and post-approval training. Information contained in documentation provided by local authorities described health needs and health care arrangements.

Placement agreements identified the health care issues relating to each child, and records of case reviews demonstrated that health needs were identified and met.

Records indicated that children were registered with a GP; one child placed in an emergency in November was being registered with the foster carer's GP at the time of the inspection.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

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

The policies of the agency set out the commitment to ensuring children's educational needs were identified and met. Foster carers with whom the inspector spoke were aware of the education needs of the child placed with them. One carer told the inspector about the issues relating to one placement and her response in liaising with the school from which the foster child had been temporarily excluded.

Records of case reviews identified educational issues and the responsibilities of various people in ensuring the needs were met. Records of the supervisory visits also confirmed health care issues were considered by the supervising social workers.

One child was placed on the 17th November and the agency was negotiating with the local secondary school and the education department of the responsible authority to ensure a successful placement.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The fostering service set out its policy towards assisting children and young people towards independence in the foster carer's handbook. The "Preparation for Independent Living" guidance clearly stated how young people should be supported by the agency within the context of pathway and transition plans that were the responsibility of the placing authority. The training programme organised on a two-year cycle will provide carers with information on their roles and responsibilities in promoting independence.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency employed a range of full-time, part-time and sessional staff. Most of these were in position at the time of the registration of the agency in June 2004, six months before the inspection. At the time of the registration all references and checks had been obtained in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations.

One full time member of staff had recently been appointed as a supervising social worker. Her personnel file demonstrated that she had the appropriate qualifications, and that all references and checks had been obtained in line with the agency's staff recruitment and selection procedures.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Park Foster Care had a responsible individual and registered manager who are husband and wife. They were based at the agency's office in Nantwich, where all administrative records are kept. Three part-time administrative staff ensured records were maintained and procedural and financial systems were implemented.

The inspector established, through discussions with staff, that they believed the agency to be well managed and a good place in which to work.

The agency had clear procedures to cover all areas of its operation, and these were available in the office at the time of the inspection.

Staff said they had been given information about policies in relation to working practices and health and safety procedures.

The agency had policies about its work on assessments, approvals and reviews of foster carers.

A foster care training programme had been implemented, and the topics that had been covered and were to be covered were recorded. Foster carers told the inspector that the

response of and support from the agency was effective and efficient, and of great help in enabling them to become proficient in their work.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Park Foster Care had been in operation for six months at the time of the inspection. Apart from the responsible individual and the registered manager there was one recently appointed full time supervising social worker.

Up to the time of the inspection sessional staff had undertaken assessments and support work. The numbers of staff have up to now been sufficient to meet the needs of the agency in recruiting, assessing and supporting the foster carers registered with the agency.

The recruitment process was based on the competency-based approach as recommended by the Foster Carer Code of Practice and UK National Standards for foster care. The agency used the Fostering Network's tools "Assessing Foster Carers."

Applicants were given a copy of the guide to the assessment process. Signed agreements to the assessment process were held on the foster carer file.

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

A number of policies set out the agency's approach to its employment practices. These included recruitment and selection of staff, induction and guidance, staff disciplinary and grievance procedure, and the staff supervision and appraisal policy. Staff meetings have been held and minutes kept.

The responsible individual and registered manager between them provide 24-hour cover for foster carers. Foster carers with whom the inspector spoke confirmed that support had been available when required, and at level and availability that was highly appreciated.

Staff and foster carers were aware of the whistleblowing policy.

The insurance certificate that was on display in the office confirmed the appropriate level of liability.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

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

The policies and procedures index contained a copy of the agency training strategy and a copy of the training strategy for foster carers.

The newly appointed member of staff, a supervising social worker, was attempting to access training to enable her to develop skills in relation to the assessing and supporting of foster carers.

The registered manager told the inspector that the agency would ensure that all new staff receive appropriate training and induction programmes.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

Staff supervision and appraisal policies were in place and administrative staff were receiving formal supervision. Minutes were available for staff meetings that had taken place.

Staff confirmed to the inspector that they were well supported by the manager.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

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

The agency had set up a variety of methods and processes by which foster carers were worked with and supported. These included the pre-approval sessions, post-approval training and the foster carer support groups.

Foster carers were positive about the level of support provided by the agency, and the quality and quantity of the information that was provided at all stages of their involvement with Park Foster Care.

The inspector was able to observe discussions between the supervising social workers and local authority social workers in which tasks were agreed in order to support carers and meet children's needs.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

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

Foster carers who spoke with the inspector were enthusiastic about the level of support they received from the agency. None of the current foster carers had been previously approved and therefore needed high levels of supervision.

The practical support has been provided through foster carers groups and regular supervisory visits from social workers of the agency.

Verbal and written information provided by the agency were felt to be of a high standard, and the agency's policies and procedures are put together into a carer's handbook.

Each foster carer had a written foster care agreement, copies of which were held on file

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The agency has produced a training and support programme to enable foster carers to gain and develop the skills they need to provide safe and effective care. The training policy set out the context of values and legislation in which training took place.

The agency's written training programme said that preparation sessions were set up for every applicant and were based on the Fostering Network preparation course. This was a seven-session course, six of which are for applicants and the seventh is for the sons and daughters of applicants.

An induction session was arranged within four weeks of the fostering panel.

After approval foster carers were able to access a monthly training session that covered a wide range of topics over a two-year period.

Foster carers told the inspector that they appreciated the training provided by the agency and they found it very helpful.

No carer has yet been subject to an annual review.

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?

2

The agency had written policies on recording and access to records. These were held on the "Policies and Procedures" file in the Nantwich office.

Each child placed had a case record held securely in the office; the inspector saw a sample of these and was able to confirm that they contained relevant and up-to-date information provided by the placing authority, together with records such as supervisory visits, made by Park Foster Care staff.

Foster carers held records on the children placed with them. Foster carers confirmed that children were able to see the information held on these files, and told the inspector that they were actively encouraged to participate in the compilation of records. Foster carers kept a "daily log" on significant events. The amount of information kept varied between foster carers. The inspector felt it would be good practice for children to be asked to indicate they had seen the records made about them, perhaps by initialling.

See good practice recommendation 2

Foster carers kept children's files in different ways. Some had bought a secure box in which the files were kept, others kept them in a drawer. Foster carers said that the files were not locked away as children should have access to them. However the files need to be held securely within the home to ensure they are not accessible to people without authorised access.

See requirement 5

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

All the service's administrative records were kept in the Nantwich office. Records about foster carers and children were stored separately from other administrative records in lockable cabinets.

The agency had a policy on confidentiality and access, and staff confirmed they were aware of the need for keeping records secure.

Information in records was kept to a high standard; it was well presented, factual and relevant to the purpose of the record. Files were clearly labelled and efficiently stored.

The records kept conformed to the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			9
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			21
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:			13
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			0
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	200.00	Maximum £	266.00

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Park Foster Care was based in serviced offices in Nantwich. The premises were secure within an office building containing a number of other businesses.

Lockable cabinets contained information relating to children and foster carers, and the premises were appropriately furnished and equipped.

If the agency continues to grow it is likely that the premises will not be suitable for the work that the agency needs to do. The Finance Director told the inspector that the premises were rented on a monthly lease, as Park Foster Care was aware that more space could be needed in the future.

The public liability insurance certificate was displayed in the office and demonstrated that the organisation was adequately covered.

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 inspector spoke with the Finance Director about the finances of the agency. The agency's business and financial plan and cash forecast until 2006 was considered and accepted as part of the registration of the agency in June 2004. Statements of cash accounts demonstrated that the agency has fulfilled its financial obligations to date.

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 Finance Director told the inspector the Board of Directors, of which he was a member, received a documented financial statement each month. Copies of these statements had been made available for the inspection. The agency had a clear statement of its scale of charges, and payment cheques evidenced that the Inland Revenue has been paid within the required timescales. The Finance Director told the inspector that as the current turnover of the company was less than £1.4 million the accounts did not need an independent audit, but an audit would be taking place using a firm of registered auditors.

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 agency had a statement of payments and allowances as part of the information provided to foster carers. The level of payments was recorded in the individual placement agreements held on file.

Foster carers with whom the inspector spoke said they felt information about the payments was clear and that payments were made promptly.

One foster carer said he did not think the rate of payment was sufficient, given the 24-hour nature of the work.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The work of the fostering panel was considered as part of the registration process. The inspector received panel papers, attended a panel meeting, and interviewed the panel chair. There have been two subsequent meetings of the panel. Panel minutes indicated that the meetings had been quorate and chaired appropriately.

The next panel was not due to meet until February 2005, so could not be directly assessed as part of this inspection. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the panel chair. He said he was satisfied that the panel was conducting its business properly, and that Park Foster Care was meeting its responsibilities. The issue of diversity of panel membership and of registered foster carers was raised, and the panel chair said he felt it was something that the panel needed to monitor in the future.

Foster carers to whom the inspector spoke said they had received full information about the panel and that the process had treated them fairly and sensitively.

The panel had not yet received any reviews of foster carers.

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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Park Foster Care does not provide short-term breaks.

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?	0
Park Foster Care does not provide kinship carers.		

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 13-17 December 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

NO

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

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

NO

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I, Mr Telemachus Miltiadous of Park Foster Care, confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted between 13-17 December 2004 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, Mr Telemachus Miltiadous of Park Foster Care, am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted between 13-17 December 2004 for the following reasons:

--

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

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

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