



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

City of York Fostering Service

10/12 George Hudson Street

York

YO1 6JL

31st January 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

City of York Fostering Service

Address

10/12 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6JL

Local Authority Manager

Mary McKelvey

Tel No:

01904 613161

Address

10/12 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6JL

Fax No:

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 ?

Date of last inspection

05/01/04

Date of Inspection Visit		31st January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Monica Hargreaves	137644
Name of Inspector	2	Michael McCleave	
Name of Inspector	3	Marcia Mackey	
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms. Mary McKelvey	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

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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

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

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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 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 City of York Fostering Service. 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.

The City of York Council operates its fostering services through two teams that are part of the Community Services Department. The Family Placement Team recruits families to work with children who are looked after by the local authority and the Sharing Care Team recruits families who offer short term breaks for children with disabilities. All the carers who are recruited, approved and supported by these two teams are approved to act as foster carers.

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 (Standard 1)

This standard is met.

The local authority has developed a document that gives clear information about the nature of its services and how they will be delivered. This is made available to staff, parents, carers and young people using the service. It is reviewed annually.

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

Both of these standards are met.

There are sound recruitment and selection policies in place with clear procedural guidance for staff. There was evidence that these are followed in practice. Both the manager of the Fostering Service and the Sharing Care Practice co-ordinator are appropriately qualified and experienced for the posts they hold.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4 – 5)

Both of these standards are met.

The local authority has a clear scheme of delegation in place that describes the lines of communication and accountability between managers, staff and carers. All staff have job descriptions that accurately reflect the work they do and there are arrangements in place that identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

All 9 of these 9 standards are met.

Family Placement workers and Sharing care workers visit foster homes regularly and annual checks are completed. All carers are required to complete a safe caring policy that is specific to their situation and the service undertakes training in child protection with all its carers at the initial stage of approval and at regular intervals thereafter. The fostering service and workers in the child care teams, ensure that regular consultation takes place, with young people, carers and parents. There are sound systems in place to ensure that young people are offered the appropriate advice and support in relation to preparation for independence.

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

All 9 of these 9 standards are met.

The local authority employs sound recruitment and selection procedures in relation to all staff and carers. Carers and staff are offered regular training opportunities and carers are given financial incentives to complete an annual training schedule. Staff and carers alike feel that the level of support and supervision within the service is good and that managers are knowledgeable and approachable. All staff working within the service are appropriately qualified and experienced and have job descriptions that they feel accurately reflect the work they do. Staff display a sound knowledge of the relevant legislation and of the authority's

policies and procedures. Both teams within the fostering service have produced excellent carer handbooks that are clear and informative.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Both of these standards are met.

The local authority has developed comprehensive case recording procedures to which the fostering service works. The service keeps clear records that are easily accessible. Management systems in both fostering teams are thorough.

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard is met.

The two fostering teams work from separate buildings, both of which also house teams of social workers. Both buildings have facilities for the secure retention of records and the authority has provided the service with appropriate IT systems and ongoing training.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 – 29)

All 3 of these standards were met.

This a local authority fostering service that is governed by the authority's financial policies and procedures. The authority has developed a scheme of enhanced payments to carers to reflect their skill level and offers financial incentives for attendance at training events. The newly developed specialist scheme has enabled the authority to offer additional payments to carers working with older children with emotional or behavioural difficulties or who are severely disabled.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard is met.

The Foster Panel is properly constituted and chaired by a professional who is independent of the authority. There are clear written policies and procedures that govern its functions and the service has developed a handbook for Panel members. The manager of the fostering service ensures that the Panel receives management information and the Panel is well organised and efficiently run, with full participation from all its members.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard is met.

The sharing care team recruits, assesses and approves foster carers to provide short term breaks for children with disabilities. It operates as a distinct team within the fostering service, is separately managed and has its own procedures. The team has been successful in narrowing the gap between children waiting for a placement and available carers.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard is met.

The local authority is committed to placing children, wherever possible, with family or familiar adults. The fostering service appreciates its responsibilities in relation to the preparation, training and support of family and friend carers and of how their needs might differ from those of mainstream carers.

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:

YES

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?

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Regulation Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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	
			NONE	

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	FS8	The service should ensure that there is always communication between the Sharing Care team and the Family Placement team over any placements that are made with carers who offer care for both teams.
2	FS18	The local authority should ensure that an appropriate level of support is available to carers out of normal working hours.
3	FS19	A specific training budget should be identified for the Sharing Care Team to meet the needs of carers.
4	FS15	The Service Co-ordinator for the Sharing Care Team should have sight of all references for staff being appointed to the Sharing Care Team.

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• 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	YES
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	NO
Date of Inspection	31/01/05
Time of Inspection	9.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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

There is a clear statement of purpose that covers the work of both teams within the fostering service. This has been approved by elected members and was last reviewed in December 2004. It is made available to staff within the authority and to parents, carers and young people using the service, as required.

Both teams provide a written guide for children about fostering . At the time of the inspection, the Family placement team had recently developed a guide that is specific to their service. This document is comprehensive and is written in a language that is accessible to the users of its service. It has yet to be printed and given to all young people placed in foster care and the BAAF booklet (referred to in the previous inspection report) is given to young people at present.

The Sharing Care Team have produced a guide to their service that presents information about sharing care in a format that is relevant to the needs of the young people using the service.

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 manager of the fostering service possesses a qualification in childcare and has significant experience of work that is relevant to her post. At the time of this inspection she had just completed a Diploma in management.

The Sharing Care Practice co-ordinator holds relevant qualifications in child care and management and is appropriately experienced for her post.

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

This standard is met. The local authority has proper procedures in place to ensure that all relevant checks are made on staff and carers working within the service. Documentation is retained on files to confirm that checks have been undertaken as required by this standard.

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 local authority has in place a scheme of delegation with clear lines of communication and accountability between managers, staff and carers. There is a policy concerning conflict of interest.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI 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 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

The manager and staff working within the service have job descriptions that accurately reflect the work they do. The scheme of delegation referred to in Standard 4 clearly defines the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and the lines of accountability. There are arrangements in place that identify the person in charge when the manager is absent. These are known to the staff within the fostering teams.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

An annual safety check is undertaken on all foster homes. Family placement workers and shared care support workers visit homes regularly. A number of homes were visited as part of the inspection and were found to be warm, comfortable and clean. Foster carer preparation and training covers issues of health and safety. Any decision to place a child in a home where they might need to share a bedroom is made as part of the matching process and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken.

Foster carers confirmed that they had been made aware that they might be interviewed as part of the Commission's inspection process.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The training that is undertaken by both the task centred carers and sharing care carers emphasises the value of diversity and stresses the need to promote equality. Inspectors found evidence of close working between carers, social workers and family placement and sharing care workers.

Questionnaires received from children and discussions with young people during the inspection, confirmed that carers offer support to young people to enable them to pursue chosen activities and personal interests and generally show encouragement to the children in their care.

The Sharing care team recruits, trains and supports carers specifically for children with disabilities. Carers and staff within the team work closely with parents to ensure that children are provided with the equipment that is needed to enable carers to support appropriately young people using the service.

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

Social workers interviewed during the inspection spoke positively about the efforts made by the Family placement workers to match the needs of young people with the skills of carers. Referrals for placements are discussed at team meetings and the Family placement team ensures that information about young people needing placements is kept up to date. The service also endeavours to provide additional support to carers and children, if this is necessary to ensure the viability of any placement.

All links made by staff within the Sharing care team are carefully matched. Parents and carers between them have the final say over whether or not a link is established and on occasion, this can mean that a family might wait for some time to find a link with a sharing care family that they feel is appropriate for their child.

A small number of carers offer sharing care links in addition to having children placed through the Family placement team. Inspectors were told that there have been occasions when a placement was made by the Family placement team without the involvement of the sharing care link worker who was also involved with the foster carer. Whilst this was not seen as a major difficulty, inspectors advised that the service should ensure that when such placements are made there is the full involvement of all the parties working with the carer household.

See recommendation No. 1

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

Both the Family Placement Team and the Sharing Care Team ensure that all carer households have an individual safe caring policy that is specific to their situation. Examples of these were seen on file and written guidelines on safe caring are provided for all carers. Carers undertake training in child protection during the approval process and this is followed up at regular intervals. The carers' handbook that has recently been developed for task centred carers contains information about bullying and states very clearly what sanctions are permissible and what are not. The Sharing care handbook that is given to all sharing care carers is also very clear about these issues.

The questionnaires received from young people as part of the inspection did not report that bullying was an issue.

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?**

3

Young people who are offered care through Sharing care, live with parents or main carers and family contact whilst they are away from parents, is not generally an issue. However, carers are encouraged to develop and maintain good links with parents and families.

Task centred carers are encouraged to facilitate and support contact and preparation courses and ongoing training ensure that they are made aware of the importance to young people of maintaining family links. The authority ensures that resources are made available to enable young people to maintain links with families and friends and inspectors found many examples of good practice in relation to this aspect of their care.

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?**

4

Inspectors found that the authority's practice in relation to consultation was good. Both fostering teams have produced a children's guide to fostering. That developed by the Sharing care team is already in place and that prepared by the Family placement team has been written and is about to be given to young people. Both guides describe the services accurately and give advice to young people about how to make their views known. Both guides are written in a style that is appropriate to young people who will use the services. An examination of a number of files showed that young people are consulted about their reviews, which are independently chaired. Files contained records of consultation with foster carers and parents. The Sharing Care team has recently completed a quality assurance survey with all of its carers, the results of which were made available to inspectors. The authority works closely with a voluntary agency to provide an independent advocacy service for young people. This worker has completed a consultation exercise, the results of which have been taken to the Looked After Children Steering group. This is a multi agency group that meets regularly to consider the services that are in place for looked after children and to plan for future need.

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 Sharing Care Team has a nurse as one of its members, working part time. She is able to deliver training to carers and prospective carers in relation to young people with complex health needs. The team has also established links with other health professionals to ensure that carers are properly equipped and supported to care for children with significant disabilities.

All carers in both teams are given as full a description as possible of the health needs of any child that is placed with them. Files contained evidence of health plans and there was evidence that health needs are addressed during the reviewing process. Carers who were part of this inspection understood the need to promote the well being of any child in their care and were proactive in securing appropriate appointments with health professionals.

The authority has secured the services of a nurse who works with looked after children throughout the authority. She attends the Looked After Steering Group and has oversight of all the services available to young people within the city. She works to identify (and rectify) any gaps in provision.

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

Since the last inspection, the authority has continued to work hard to ensure that all the young people who are looked after are receiving an appropriate education. All foster care agreements address this issue and there was evidence on files that children had personal education plans. Foster carers confirmed that they are involved in school meetings and reviews of education. The Looked After Children Steering Group has representation from a number of groups, including a teacher, an educational psychologist, and staff from the Education social work team, the Leisure and Library services Education to Employment and other services working to support young people in education, training and employment. The Right to Read scheme continues to work well in the city, aiming to provide material to encourage and support learning. The local authority has also made computers available to older children studying for GCSE.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors were told that there was some evidence that the educational needs of a small minority of teenagers were not always able to be met through the current systems. The authority has continued to work to secure appropriate provision for this small number of young people, and inspectors were advised that the situation was improving. Staff in the fostering service work with colleagues in the social work teams to support any foster placement that may be placed under strain if a young person becomes excluded from school and some schools have striven to support young people within their establishments. Comments were made to inspectors however, that some foster placements can be put at risk when young people are permanently excluded from school

and that the picture with regard to permanent exclusion is a mixed one across the city.

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?

4

Social workers, Family Placement workers and carers spoke highly of the work of the Pathways team who pick up referrals for all young people preparing for independence and leaving care. Carers confirmed that they were fully involved in the plans and there was evidence that workers strive to engage young people in the planning process for leaving care. Carers are offered training on all aspects of preparation for independence and the authority has recently secured a single person flat where young people can spend up to a month to try independence whilst a placement is kept open for them. Carers commented that at times young people are too keen to move into independence, perhaps before they are ready and it is hoped that this flat will help young people to identify the areas of work they have to complete before they are ready to move on.

The Sharing Care team staff are part of the transition planning process for all young people with a disability and work with other parts of the authority with regard to securing appropriate provision for young people when they reach 18 years.

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 local authority has a sound recruitment and selection procedure in place that is followed in practice. All staff working within the Sharing Care Team and the Family Placement Team are appropriately qualified and experienced. Staff in both teams display a sound knowledge of the necessary legislation and corporate policies and procedures. The Sharing Care Team has an appropriately qualified nurse who works as part of the team.

The authority requires that all prospective employees supply two references. An examination of files revealed that these are taken up, but inspectors were made aware that the Sharing Care Practice Co-ordinator has not been given sight of the actual references as these are verified by staff within the Human Resources Team. Inspectors advised that as a matter of good practice these references should be made available to the Co-ordinator prior to staff being appointed.

See recommendation no. 4

Total number of staff of the agency:

12

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service is well structured and the management sound. All staff are given a staff induction handbook at the start of their employment. Staff commented that they were given appropriate support by managers who they felt were knowledgeable and approachable. Supervision takes place regularly and annual staff appraisals are undertaken. Comments made by the family placement team, the sharing care team and social work team, confirmed that working relationships within the service are sound. Carers undertake basic training during their approval and are offered and encouraged to take up, a range of training throughout the year. Carers said that they feel well supported by link workers from both teams.

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
<p>There has been some recent turnover of staff within the family placement team and the service has made new appointments of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Since the last inspection, a new post of Senior Practitioner has been created within the Family placement team. This was welcomed by the family placement workers. At the time of the inspection, the postholder was due to leave the team to cover another post within the authority, for a limited period of time. Arrangements had been made within the team to cover for her absence by increasing the hours of some members of staff who work part time. The authority has recently completed a regrading of salaries to support a strategy of staff retention and has been considering the structure of payments to carers, again to encourage retention of experienced foster carers within the service.</p> <p>The authority has a recruitment policy that is aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people and the assessment and approval process is thorough across both teams.</p>		

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
<p>The authority has in place sound employment policies and procedures that cover both staff and carers. These include supervision and appraisal systems for all staff. The authority's health and safety policy covers carers, young people and staff and there is a whistle blowing policy that is known to all staff and carers.</p> <p>Managers of the service offer out of hours consultation in relation to fostering issues and the emergency duty team is also able to respond to queries, although some carers felt that this service could be improved. The Family placement team has recently completed a consultation exercise with carers, although the response to questionnaires was disappointing in terms of numbers. Inspectors were told that the service is continuing to explore ways of enhancing the out of hours response that is made available to carers.</p> <p>See recommendation no. 2</p>		

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
<p>The local authority's induction plan for social workers covers basic training and workers in the family placement team and the sharing care team confirmed that this aspect of their training is good. There was evidence that social work staff across the authority are encouraged to complete their post qualifying training in social work and the fostering service encourages staff to identify appropriate additional training.</p> <p>Carers across both teams are offered a good training programme that takes place at regular intervals throughout the year. This is aimed at developing the skills they need for their work. The service offers financial incentives to carers to attend training.</p> <p>At the time of the inspection, inspectors were made aware that although training is arranged and delivered, there is no specific budget identified for training within the Sharing Care</p>		

Team.

See recommendation no. 3.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Staff across both teams confirmed that they have job descriptions that accurately reflect the work they do. The authority's policies and procedures are made available to all staff. These documents are clear. Both teams are able to attend regular staff meetings and staff and managers confirmed that supervision sessions are planned and recorded. Annual appraisals take place.

Foster carer files contained evidence that managers read and sign files in accordance with the authority's policy on recording. Staff said that they feel well supported by managers within the authority. One member of staff commented 'when you're stuck you're never alone'.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)

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

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Annual reviews of foster care households take place and feedback to inform these reviews is requested from placing social workers. Carers said that they felt properly supported and that a link worker is always contactable if there is an issue. Staff across the services confirmed that they enjoy good working relationships and that any difficulties that may arise are speedily resolved.

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

All carers are required to sign a foster care agreement that clearly identifies the expectations of the service and what they in turn can expect from the service. All carers across both teams are supervised by a named, appropriately qualified and experienced social worker. Both teams have produced a carer handbook that is specific to their part of the service. These handbooks are well written, clear and informative. Carer files provided evidence of regular meetings between supervising workers and carers and information about the local authority's complaints process is made available to all carers. The manager of the service has systems to ensure that any allegation of abuse is recorded and there is a clear policy that outlines the circumstances in which a carer would be removed from the foster carer register.

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

Carers across both parts of the fostering service are required to attend for training during the approval and assessment process. All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice. Carers are encouraged to take up the ongoing training that is offered by workers within both teams and receive financial incentives to do so. As stated earlier in this report, all carers are required to develop a safe caring policy that is specific to their circumstances and carers are offered training in safe caring. Annual carer reviews include an appraisal of training undertaken and further training needs.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service maintains clear records on foster carers in both of the fostering teams. Files sampled were well structured, comprehensive and showed evidence of management monitoring. The local authority has a written policy on recording that is made available to all staff and children's case files were found to be kept in accordance with the policy, with care plans detailing health and education needs of the young person and relevant contact arrangements in place. Files also contained the full Looked after children documentation – essential information, placement plans and assessment and action records. All files are kept securely.

Carers confirmed that they keep records of significant life events for any child for whom they care. They also confirmed that they are given full information about any child placed and are involved in all reviews.

The local authority's procedure on case file recording states that each child's file should have an up to date chronology. These were not evident on all the files that were sampled.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The authority has a policy on the retention of files and how these should be ordered. Both teams within the fostering service keep clear records in line with this policy. Case records were sampled in both fostering teams. These were found to be well structured and contained confirmation of all the required checks that had been made.

Young people placed with task centred carers said that they understood that records were kept about them and that they could see what had been written, although they had not chosen to do so. Foster carers are aware that they may see their files.

The manager of the fostering service has a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints and the service keeps a register of all carers and young people who are placed.

All staff personnel files are kept in the Human Resources department of the local authority.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			80
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			66
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			63
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			21
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			10
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	62.58	Maximum £	525.16

*includes both task centred carers and sharing care carers

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

The fostering teams work from two different buildings that also house teams of social workers. This encourages good communication between staff within the fostering teams and social workers placing children. Although space is at a premium in both offices, they are appropriate for their purpose with good systems for securing the premises and the records that are kept. The authority has continued to invest in IT systems and staff benefit from regular training. Both teams enjoy the support of enthusiastic clerical support staff.

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
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This is a local authority fostering service that works within the authority's financial procedures. The service manager and the sharing care practice co-ordinator have first line responsibility for the management of certain budgets for expenditure within their teams.

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
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As indicated in the previous standard, this is a local authority fostering service that is governed by the authority's financial policies and procedures. The service manager and practice co-ordinator have individual responsibility for a limited budget within the authority's scheme of delegation.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are financial incentives for carers to pursue training and additional payments are made to carers who are assessed as having reached certain skill levels. The criteria for these payments are made known to all carers. In addition, the authority has developed a specialist scheme for older children with emotional or behavioural difficulties or children who are severely disabled that attracts an enhanced payment. Again, the structure of allowances is made clear to all carers. Apart from one carer who said that there had been some delay in her payments, those carers who were interviewed as part of the inspection and those who returned questionnaires, said that fostering allowances and payments to cover expenses were received on time. Inspectors did not form the view that this was a major issue for carers, although the local authority continues to review its system of payments as part of the drive to recruit and retain carers.

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

In all respects, the work of the Foster Panel makes a positive contribution to the work of the fostering service as a whole. The service has developed a handbook for Foster Panel members that clearly defines the functions of the Panel and its composition. The Panel is chaired by a professional who is independent of the authority and it includes representatives from other agencies as required by the Regulations. The Panel Chair confirmed that the work of the Panel is planned and that all reports are received in good time. The Panel is able to monitor the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children and receives management information about the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews.

The Foster Panel is shortly to invite prospective carers to attend their meeting and be part of the discussion regarding their approval. Panel members have completed training in anticipation of this new way of working and welcome the participation of carers in the Panel meetings.

A Foster Panel meeting was attended as part of the inspection and a sample of assessments and presentations made to the Panel was seen.

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 Sharing Care Scheme exists as a separate team within the fostering service. The authority has developed specific procedures for its work and the first line of management for the team and the sharing care practice co-ordinator is provided by the manager working within the sector that provides services for children with disabilities. The sharing care team work particularly closely with social workers in this team.

Staff in the sharing care team are clear that the service their carers provide is very different from that provided by carers within the Family Placement Team. However, the work of this part of the fostering service is governed by these regulations and standards and reference to the Sharing Care Team has been made throughout this report.

Inspectors formed the view that the team works enthusiastically to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of disabled children and has continued to successfully narrow the gap between the number of children waiting for links and the number of foster carers who are available.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The authority has continued to demonstrate its commitment to placing children within extended family or with familiar adults, if this possible and in the best interests of the child. Policy guidance is given to all social work staff about this area of their work. All prospective family and friend carers are assessed in accordance with these standards, by workers in the family placement team and are approved at Foster Panel in the same way as other carers. Their support and training needs are individually assessed. Family and friend carers who were interviewed as part of this inspection, or who returned questionnaires, commented that they had not felt the assessment process was intrusive and inspectors formed the view that carers had valued the support offered to them by the family placement team.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Not 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 31st January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

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.

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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