



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

WCC Fostering

Adoption Services

Faraday Hall

Lower Hillmorton Road

Rugby

Warwickshire

CV21 3TU

24th 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

WCC Fostering

Address

Fostering and Adoption Deveopment Team, Faraday Hall,
Lower Hillmorton Road, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 3TU

Local Authority Manager

Brenda Vincent

Tel No:

01926 451911

Address

Fostering and Adoption Development Team , Faraday
Hall, Lower Hillmorton Road, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21
3TU

Fax No:

Email Address

Brenda
Vincent@warwickshire.gov.uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

02/03/04

| | | | |
|--|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Date of Inspection Visit | | 24th January 2005 | ID Code |
| Time of Inspection Visit | | 10:00 am | |
| Name of Inspector | 1 | Christy Wannop | 073698 |
| Name of Inspector | 2 | | |
| Name of Inspector | 3 | | |
| Name of Inspector | 4 | | |
| Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process. | | | |
| Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable) | | | |
| Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection | | Brenda Vincent | |

Introduction to Report and Inspection
Inspection visits
Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings
Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection
Statutory Requirements from this Inspection
Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings
(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

- D.1. Provider's comments**
- D.2. Action Plan**
- D.3. Provider's agreement**

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Warwickshire Fostering Service provides accommodation and care for children and young people who are being looked after, either temporarily or on a long-term basis, by the local authority. The service caters for children and young people aged 0 – 18 years of either gender. It makes available a wide range of foster carers in order to respond to the varying needs of those requiring a service.

Within Warwickshire County Council Social Services Department, the Principal Operations Manager, Brenda Vincent, has strategic lead responsibility for the Fostering Service. She is based in the Fostering and Adoption Development Team in Rugby.

There are five district fostering teams operating in each of the geographical areas of Warwickshire. There is a sixth Central Fostering Services Team, based in Rugby, responsible for the marketing, recruitment, preparation and training of foster carers. There is a Foster Care NVQ Centre offering the NVQ 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The Emergency Duty Team maintains specific carers who can provide emergency out of hours very short-term placements. These teams support the recruitment and preparation of foster carers, assess prospective foster carers, make placement matches and provide ongoing support.

The service is supported by a Fostering Development Officer.

There is a Fostering Panel that meets twice a month, once in the north and once in the south of the county. The Head of Children's Services chairs this panel.

Warwickshire has developed partnership arrangements with Barnardo's for a remand and short intensive crisis fostering service. Warwickshire also has a "preferred provider" arrangement with Pathways Care Ltd and offers a joint panel for this organisation. Warwickshire provides a fostering service to all looked after children within Warwickshire's boundaries.

For recruitment purpose, foster carers are defined, as family and friends, permanency, family link or mainstream, in addition there are special emergency duty foster carers. The fostering service provides a designated social worker to foster carers, access to complaints and representations and access to the Children's Rights Service. It recruits, assesses, approves, trains, reviews and supports its carers. There is a Payment for Skills Scheme, respite, and sessional support for carers and a sitting service.

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.)

The focus of inspections undertaken by The Commission for Social Care Inspection is upon outcomes for service users and progress on meeting National Minimum Standards. The inspection will also focus on aspects of service provision that need further development or that pose the most significant potential risk to service users.

Linked to the Commission's focus on service user experience and proportionate inspection, this inspection will focus on requirements outstanding from the last inspection of this service in March 2004 and core National Minimum Standards that have the greatest direct impact on the health, well being and opportunities of service users. For a full picture this report should be read in conjunction with the March 2004 inspection report.

Throughout this report scores are given to indicate the extent to which this service complies with each National Minimum Standard. The current performance of the service is summarised under the headings outlined below. Progress has been made on all the matters of concern raised in the last inspection, and developments are planned to improve the service further.

Warwickshire Social Services is well placed to promote good inter agency links and works to ensure co-ordinated support for children in placement, in relation to their health, education, emotional and practical needs. Warwickshire provides a well managed and resourced service that includes children and young people and works with carers at all levels of decision making to promote quality care.

Statement of Purpose

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

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service

A skilled and experienced manager manages the fostering service. It's organisation is efficient and effective. Management systems take account of the partnership working with children and family fieldwork teams to enable accountability. Warwickshire Foster Carer Group members expressed their appreciation of the committed management involvement and support at their meetings.

Management of the Fostering Service

The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding conflicts and confusion of role. The service is aiming for consistency with on line systems for managing duty, carer and referral information. The fostering development officer continues to be a valuable resource for both practical and developmental issues, valued as responsive and helpful by fostering social workers. Fostering social workers, placement support workers and senior foster carers are involved on working parties considering finance and allowance issues and training strategy. One

carer reported she had “real input” on projects.

Warwickshire employs staff that are also foster carers under transitional arrangements. The Principal Operations Manager is aware of the need to maintain the excellent features of the placement support / senior carer function and reduce the impression of depletion in the service from carers. Carers expressed anxiety about this potential loss.

Carers said they enjoyed the increasing professionalism and said children’s social workers needed more training in working with carers to realise the impact of arrangements for contact and education. In Rugby the inspector noted good practice in meeting as a district social work team to discuss common practice issues at worker level. Teams housed together also appeared to have constructive working relationships and people felt the advantages of mutual respect and value. There were tensions between some fostering and children’s teams, though this was not a universal problem.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

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

It is a continuing challenge for the service to manage the volume of child referrals with a scarcity of the right placements, particularly for adolescent and hard to place young people displaying sexually inappropriate behaviour.

There have been improvements in the quality of “ safe care” documentation to guide carers in supporting young people. The health and safety checklists and safe care plans seen were relevant and had been updated at the time of the annual foster carer performance review. There was improved practice in obtaining supporting documentation such as placement agreements, all files seen had a safe care plan and up to date health and safety checklist. There has been an audit of 56 fostering files and a survey looking at the quality of supervision, support, information and advice for foster carers.

Children’s Services Group considered the report of this survey and the report states that local issues will be picked up and addressed by the district teams. Feedback to carers and further working groups looking at specific issues are planned.

The Annual Performance Review is the logical place to audit the actual support and arrangements for practical care are in place and are satisfactory. Further work is needed to make sure that accurate placement agreements are supported by other plans such as Placement Plan part two, behaviour agreements and spending plans. Young people commented that they needed better practical support to manage their finances when they were still “in care” before they had to face the reality of life without fostering allowances.

The Social Services Department has a range of excellent resources in TELAC and HELAC schemes to promote the education and health of Looked after Children.

The Fostering Network advice and medication worker was spoken with, as were the head of the TELAC service (The Education of Looked After Children) and the Primary Care Trust nurse for the HELAC project (The health of Looked After Children).

Fostering social workers were clear and focussed on the practical arrangements that are so essential to the successful working of any placement: money, clothes and equipment, contact and education. Carers appreciated this.

There was evidence of sensitive, balanced gate keeping and matching at a very early stage, particularly where children posed risks through behaviour and impact on other children in the

home.

Some social workers reported that forward planning was still not happening for many children in foster care. Some social workers reported frustration that “permanency” for children in foster care had not had the government steer and departmental priority that adoption has had. Some felt fatigue from raising this with managers and expressed professional concern. Some teams seemed completely unaware that the department was already acting to prioritise this and that an Operations Manager had completed work analysing this issue.

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

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. Social workers reported that induction was protected and a mentoring between experienced and newly appointed staff was encouraged. Carers reported and the Inspector observed the good service by the Senior Foster carers in supporting and inducting new carers. Production of Induction files, newsletters produced by Placement Support worker and management of local care groups is another area of good practice.

North Warks plans for an Independent Quality Assurance post and use of that person to carry out the Foster Carer annual review meetings. Social workers welcomed this idea. The service is to consider how respite for carers working with children with complex or challenging needs can be developed and improved.

Social workers identified that support and guidance was needed for older carer children in foster families for their feelings of loss and disruption when foster children moved on.

Records

All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering service and the individual foster carers and foster children. Whilst there was improved practice in this area and evidence of fostering social workers pursuing the information and documentation from children’s social workers it was not always accurate and relevant to the current situation of the child.

The service has systems to manage data and performance.

Foster Placement Agreements must be in place and be relevant to the current placement. Carer agreements must clearly show the terms of approval and category of placement, ages and number of children who can be cared for.

Quality of placement agreement information and accuracy of up to date placement plan part two should be further improved. Information is often sketchy and insufficient to give carers a holistic picture of a child. The Principal Operations Manager should consider a common form of description for approval in foster carer agreements. The wording in some letters of approval is not clear, particularly where approval category changes in order to take account of age differentials between foster child and carers own child where bedrooms are necessarily shared.

The inspector notes that some Warwickshire’s Looked after Children documentation refers to Fostering Regulations 1991, now superseded by the Fostering Regulations 2002. The inspector acknowledges that the Looked after Children review often supersedes initial placement plans and that developments are recorded here.

Fostering Panels

The Fostering panel is 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. It manages extensions to approval in order that foster carers may care for 4 or more children if not a sibling group. It produces an annual report.

Short Term Breaks

Warwickshire operates a Family Link Scheme for children living with their own families but needing short break care. This service has had the steer of a development officer and updated policies and procedures are now in place. The scheme is managed differently in each of the five geographical fostering teams.

Family and Friends as Carers.

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. Staff at all levels are aware of the current issues about family and friends assessments and conflict between court requirements and a child centred assessment of need which considers matching and skills of family members to offer care for a specific child.

Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service.

The premises used as offices by the fostering provider are suitable for the purpose. Ground floor accommodation has replaced one inaccessible first floor office. Social workers reported that there were not enough computers for their use.

The service is committed to extending the ownership of IT and data collection systems for managing referrals and placement information. Social workers had not yet had the benefit of seeing the first production of data arising from the information supplied by the districts and wanted to see an analysis of the actual use of the Care First system around the districts.

The service has a challenge to get all social workers fully on board with the approach to IT and "data". Social workers suggested a countywide review of operation of duty and job swaps between districts.

Financial Requirements

The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate. A recommendation was made last year to establish reliable and workable systems for making timely, accurate payments to carers. These systems must work in support of the often unplanned and flexible nature of the fostering task and the priorities within both fostering and children's teams.

Some carers reported continued frustration and disbelief at the level of error and unreliability of payments. Whilst they reported better detail in actual pay slip, the inspector heard of one recent over payment of £4000 and an amount of £200 being reclaimed for a two-week period in early 2003.

There has been an audit of foster carer payments and the Children's Services Group (CSG) is to consider a further report on care pay and related issues. There is a working group looking at how carers can be enabled to manage the various child allowances effectively. Carers want to have access to the right money at the right time eg. Clothes for children who arrive with little and need things by the next morning. Foster carers think that carers should be supplied in advance with the equipment suggested by their approval category, i.e. car seats, buggies, stair gates should be given to the carer by the department as basic tools of the trade. They said this would save the "to and fro" and energy expended in getting equipment

as needed for the children.

The Inspector interviewed a group of young people who have left the care of the local authority but still meet as a “Forum” with the assistance of the leaving care team. Carers were spoken to in Warwick at the Skills Sharing session and at their local association meeting. The inspector was an observer at the County Foster Carer group and also observed the panel and talked with panel members after the formal business.

The inspection focussed on five foster carers chosen at random from four of the districts and the EDT team. The inspector interviewed social workers for these carers, read files of foster carers and visited carers in their homes. Children and young people in placement were invited to talk with the inspector to give their views.

The inspector spent a day with each of the five district fostering teams, observed duty and regular team meetings, had lunch and talked to groups of fostering social workers. These days ran to a schedule put together by the Fostering Team leaders.

Social workers spoke of the quality of Warwickshire’s basic service and “ feel proud to be part of it.”

Questionnaires were sent to 10% of Warwickshire’s foster carers. All children and young people over the age of 8 were also sent questionnaires. Professionals associated with the service were either interviewed during the inspection or consulted by letter. Warwickshire and Coventry Children’s Rights Project responded positively.

The following comments are taken from the four carers’ questionnaires that were returned.

- Needs of a placement can sometimes override matching
- Get more social workers
- Child social workers don’t know the children and don’t have enough time to do this. Simple issues can be held up by failure to reach social worker.
- Too much paperwork.
- Want separate finances - so worried about taking money from child’s allowances.
- Stick to plans so as not to distress the child.
- Appreciate the hard work done by social workers
- Good accessibility to fostering team
- Pay more attention to moving children from placement to placement with ALL belongings.
- Poor communication

Placing officer questionnaires.

One response was received from the social workers of children from out of county, placed in Warwickshire. This response was very positive

North Warwickshire placing social workers responded positively about the outcomes for children.

Forty five children’s questionnaires were returned.

In questionnaires young people identified the following :

Good things about foster care

- More freedom.
- Don't get in trouble as often.
- " She is funny, kind, polite, thoughtful, respects things, loving" (about carer)
- "just right, nice, right for me"
- Don't get smacked any more"
- Best thing is being in home town.
- " my carers are the best in Warwickshire for me"
- One articulate 16 year old said " The amazing job foster carers and social workers do. They always remain professional, volunteer advice and respect you no matter what your decisions. They maintain individuality and listen to you, acting upon your opinions."
- Clothing allowance
- Get to do lots of things never done before.
- Feeling safe
- Meeting new people, spending time with new family feeling loved and safe
- Not being moved around anymore and persuading carers to let them stay till 18.
- Better fed and made to be clean
- Having a house where there is no trouble
- "it is perfect and has encouraged me greatly"
- being with aunty and uncle or grandma
- out of a difficult family situation.
- Safe and getting education
- "I don't get hurt"
- social services have helped through a difficult time

Not so good about foster care

- Adapting to new rules
- Miss mum
- Don't get to see dad and step mum and half sister.
- Not being allowed to stop at mate's house overnight.
- The meetings
- Not being able to live with mum and leaving family behind.
- "I would sooner have a smack bum than be grounded."
- Being teased at school
- Want a regular social worker.
- Coming in early
- Want to know who the social worker is and to have regular visits.
- "Discipline has increased but that's probably good in the long term"
- Should not be pushed around by Social Services Department from one placement to another.
- Have been hit and verbally abused in the past, gone without dinner but not now.
- Getting moved
- Don't want to be fostered, just want to be part of the family.
- "Missing my people"

Below are comments from young people in the Forum Group consultation who had previously been fostered but are now independent young adults. None are currently living in foster care and their views reflect past experience; for some, several years ago, for others fairly recent.

They said:

- Houses should be safe and foster carers should have the right equipment like stair gates and socket covers and that electrical equipment should be safe. Children needed the right equipment in their bedrooms, whether they were very young or older. Some of them were frustrated by safety restrictions about numbers of plugs that could be used at socket extensions.
- It is important that carers welcome children to the house and especially to the area. It is difficult settling into a new place and not knowing where the park was or places and things to do; being unfamiliar in the area and children being left to find out for yourselves.
- Always moving from place to place was difficult and that new placements should be as close to the old one, where children had got to know people and places.
- It wasn't always necessary to match people exactly if they had mixed heritage. It was very important for carers to have an understanding of the needs of the child's background, about religious festivals and about needing halal meat.
-
- Carers should be assessed more and some young people described strange and bizarre behaviour from carers that social workers didn't know about. It took time and courage for some children to tell other people about this.
- It was important to "have confidence in one person" and they talked about having many changes of social worker.
- Social workers should make sure to take children out to somewhere like a park to talk and that it was sometimes difficult to talk in the foster home, feeling that people were listening.
- Carers should be able to discipline foster children with time out. Some in the group remembered being abused and having a bad time being disciplined by carers with very strict rules about where they could go in the house at particular times.
- Carers should make more effort to buy food liked by the children they looked after, rather than just their own children.
- It was important to be treated equally by carers. Some described how differently they had been made to feel in some foster placements when carers own children were treated better and got more attention. They understood that carers sometimes may need time with their family and especially a couple may need time alone together, but that this shouldn't; make foster children feel left out. It was important to go on family holidays and be considered as part of the family. They said that carers should "treat us as their own".
- Some described how lonely it had felt in a strange house when they felt scared or not confident that there was any adult they could tell about strange rules or happenings in the foster home.
- One said that it was not good to come home from school and find "an awful brigade of people" in the foster home after school for a meeting when they didn't want to see

all those people.

- Fostering gave some children structure and stability. Being fully included in the foster family was good.
- Many of them said how important it was when there were pets in the house. That animals and dogs could make children feel better in foster care. Some of them said that when they couldn't talk to adults, that animals could give some comfort.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Regulation | Standard | Required actions | |
|-----|------------|----------|---|---------|
| 1 | 34 | FS24 | The local authority must ensure that the foster carer holds a current, accurate and full Placement Agreement and for Family Link placements that a placement agreement is in place that meets the requirements of the fostering regulations 2002. | 1/12/04 |

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.

| | | |
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| Condition | Compliance | |
| | | |
| Comments | | |
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| Condition | Compliance | |
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| Comments | | |
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| Condition | Compliance | |
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| Condition | Compliance | |
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| Comments | | |
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|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------|
| Lead Inspector | Christy Wannop | Signature | _____ |
| Second Inspector | _____ | Signature | _____ |
| Regulation Manager | John Sawyer | Signature | _____ |
| Date | _____ | | |

| |
|---|
| STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION |
|---|

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

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|-------------------------------|
| 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 | 34 | FS24 | The local authority must ensure that the foster carer holds a current, accurate and full Placement Agreement and for Family Link placements that a placement agreement is in place that meets the requirements of the fostering regulations 2002. | (Old timescale 1/12/04) |
| 2 | 28 | FS25 | Foster Carer Agreements made under Regulation 28 must state the category of approval and numbers. | 1/10/05 |

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

| No. | Refer to Standard * | Recommendation Action |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1 | FS6 | The local authority should establish the actual bedroom sharing arrangements of children living in foster care within the service and include this indicator in the Review of the Quality of Care under Regulation 42. |
| 2 | FS9 | Ensure that CSCI are notified of CP strategy meetings |
| 3 | FS15 | The Local Authority should follow up references as required by Regulation 20 with a telephone call to seek verification from each referee and this should be evidenced on the staff file. |
| 4 | FS15 | Reference requests by the local authority should seek confirmation of suitability to work with children/vulnerable people. |
| 5 | FS16 | The local authority should ensure that every fostering social worker has ease of access to a computer and confidence in using the organisation's IT systems for managing duty, referrals and placement availability. |
| 6 | FS24 | The local authority should consider a record for daily or weekly recording for carers to prompt information in relation to Schedule 7 responsibilities that will allow the manager to lift essential information clearly. |
| 7 | FS24 | The local authority should reinforce status of the placement agreement as the legal basis and "working" document to direct and define the scope of work in relation to any placement. This document should be supported with risk assessments, safe care plans, specific management plans for health, contact, behaviour, education, leaving care, independence and spending where identified and should be accessible to foster carers. |
| 8 | FS24 | The local authority should put in place placement plan, general information and placement agreement audits for carers at the time of the annual review. |
| 9 | FS25 | The date of the unannounced inspection should be noted on the performance review. |
| 10 | FS25 | The Fostering service should give some consideration to the clear unambiguous wording of approval categories in order that extensions to variation category can be clearly understood. |

| | | |
|----|------|--|
| 11 | FS29 | The local authority should continue its efforts to refine systems for making timely, accurate payments to carers. These systems must work in support of the often unplanned and flexible nature of the fostering task and the priorities within both fostering and children's teams. |
| 12 | FS30 | The local authority should include as independent members of the panel, people with experience of having their child, or being themselves in foster care. |
| 13 | FS25 | The Manager of the service should give consideration to the requirement of a report for the Reg 42 Review of Quality and Schedule 7 monitoring function. |
| 14 | | Each Fostering Duty Base should have an up to date copy of the carer Induction manual/ carer handbook. |
| 15 | | Consider concrete guidance and precedent based legal training around Kinship care/ family and friends assessments, jointly with children's teams, looking at the experience of other Local Authorities who have developed different working practice. |

* 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 | 6 |
| Survey of placing authorities | YES |
| Foster carer survey | YES |
| Foster children survey | YES |
| Checks with other organisations and Individuals | YES |
| • Directors of Social services | YES |
| • Child protection officer | YES |
| • Specialist advisor (s) | YES |
| • Local Foster Care Association | YES |
| Tracking Individual welfare arrangements | YES |
| • Interview with children | YES |
| • Interview with foster carers | YES |
| • Interview with agency staff | YES |
| • Contact with parents | NO |
| • Contact with supervising social workers | YES |
| • Examination of files | YES |
| Individual interview with manager | YES |
| Information from provider | YES |
| Individual interviews with key staff | YES |
| Group discussion with staff | YES |
| Interview with panel chair | NO |
| Observation of foster carer training | NO |
| Observation of foster panel | YES |
| Inspection of policy/practice documents | YES |
| Inspection of records | YES |
| Interview with individual child | YES |
| Date of Inspection | 24/1/05 |
| Time of Inspection | 9.30 |
| Duration Of Inspection (hrs) | 67 |

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 service has a Statement of Purpose, which sets out services that are provided for children, health, educational and therapeutic.

The registered provider has approved, reviewed and updated the Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose includes all information required. It covers status and constitution, management structure, services provided, the principle of care/aims and objectives, numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff, numbers of foster carers, numbers of children placed, numbers of complaints and their outcomes and procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training and reviewing carers. It has been widely distributed to carers and stakeholders and is available on the departmental website.

A children's guide is currently being produced. This has followed consultation and is intended to be accessible to meet the needs of the children. The Social Services Department has subscribed to CAREZONE a safe online website for young people in care, operated by WHOCARES? All children have access and information about the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service that is active, well publicised and effective in Warwickshire.

Policies, procedures and written guidance are consistent with the Statement of Purpose.

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? | 0 |
|---|---------------|---|
| Warwickshire exceeded the standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and the standard was not inspected on this occasion. The inspection process showed that the service continues to be organised, managed and staffed by people who are interested, motivated and resourceful. | | |

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 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
| | | |

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?

0

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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

24

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.

4

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

1

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.

4

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

8

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

8

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?

0

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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 |
|---|---------------|---|
| <p>The suitability of the foster home, its size, and number of bedrooms is addressed during the recruitment and selection of foster carers. It is inspected annually by the Fostering social worker as part of the annual performance review process. One district is considering that this review be carried out by someone other than the fostering social worker to allow for an element of independent review. There is an annual unannounced visit a recommendation has been made to include the date of this visit on the annual performance review.</p> <p>The Foster Carer Annual Performance review format has been amended to include clearer information about bedroom sharing arrangements. The temporary extension form, which raises the number of children cared for, should also clearly state where children sleep. Foster homes visited were warm, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene.</p> <p>Each child had their own bed. There was sufficient privacy and space. Children with specific needs arising from disability had equipment and adaptations required, though this was not evident from any placement agreement or review of care under Looked after Children procedures for one child.</p> <p>Each foster carer completes and updates a Safe Care Plan. Children who had been abused or were abusers had a written SIBS (Sexually Inappropriate behaviour) plan in place in place. This also addressed the needs of other children in placement. A requirement made last year has been met.</p> <p>The home environment is free from avoidable hazards. The service uses a checklist to ensure that basic areas of risk are prevented. This is updated annually. Child safety barriers and equipment are fitted.</p> <p>Foster carer preparation and training covers health and safety issues. Carers are provided with written guidelines about their health and safety responsibilities.</p> <p>The service ensures that foster carers' vehicles are safe.</p> <p>Foster care agreements require that carers may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.</p> | | |
| <p>A recommendation was made last year that the local authority should establish the actual bedroom sharing arrangements of children living in foster care within the service and include this indicator in the review of the quality of care under Regulation 42. The new Foster carer Performance Review will establish this information and Fostering Panel reviews the arrangements. The Panel annual report could also report on this indicator.</p> | | |

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?**

4

The fostering service arranges care that meets children's gender, religious, ethnic origin, linguistic, cultural, disability and sexuality needs. Excellent practice has been recognised in this area.

Foster carer and social worker training covers promotion of children's self worth and confidence, respecting ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. Anti discriminatory practice is encouraged.

Support and services for children with disabilities are provided in the form of physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, community nursing support, education, leisure and health. Equipment is provided and the home is adapted and appropriate transport.

Talents, interests and hobbies are encouraged.

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

The matching process takes account of the child's care plan and recent assessments of the child, family and carers. This information is available to people making the match. The match involves discussions, meetings of all relevant people including the child. A matching matrix is ready for use. Observations showed that social workers were highly alert and sensitive to matching considerations.

Foster placement agreements refer to elements taken into account when matching and identifying support needed to compensate for gaps in the match between the child and carers. Placement decisions consider ethnic, religious, cultural, religious and linguistic needs.

The placing authority supports trans-racial or trans-community placements by providing additional training, support and information to foster carers.

Introductions take place where practicable so that the child can make informed decisions about the placement.

Of five foster carers tracked, two had profiles available on files. One other carer was specifically approved as a family and friends carer and so the profile was not needed. The internal audit of files has a section to address this. The Fostering Development Officer in conjunction with the Children's Planning section conducted a tracking exercise over a six month period on all newly looked after children aged 10 years to find out whether children have received the profile.

NCH Children's Rights and Advocacy service reported some inconsistencies in relation to the quality of information received by children whilst moving into a placement. Children have also raised issues of placement security and choice.

A recommendation was made last year to analyse the use of temporary extensions to registration approval as part of Reg 42 quality review. This district-by-district analysis was included in the Fostering Panel's annual report.

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**

There was evidence of training for carers in working with children who have been abused, safe caring skills, managing behaviour, recognising abuse and boosting self-esteem. There is a written policy on safe caring. Each home has safe caring guidelines. These have been cleared with placing social worker and are understandable to the child. Foster carers are informed through the foster care agreement that corporal punishment is forbidden along with other forms of humiliating treatment and punishment. This is also contained in the carers' handbook and in policy. The manager monitors and coordinates information on the circumstances, number and outcome of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care as part of responsibilities under Schedule 7. Cross-border Area Child Protection Committee guidelines were not implemented on one occasion. There is a policy and procedure in relation to bullying. Instances of bullying are recorded. Foster carers receive training in managing bullying behaviour and its results. Children did not report bullying in questionnaires. Foster carers have full information about the foster child and his/her family in order to protect the child and any other people for whom they have responsibility. There is a clear procedure for use if the foster child is missing from home. The manager monitors this as part of Schedule 7 responsibilities. The local authority has policy and procedure to monitor when and why children go missing. This part of a wider Social Services Department policy and is the responsibility of Children's Social workers and is monitored by CSG (Children's Services Group). A recommendation was made last year to ensure that Child Protection is notified of Child Protection strategy meetings. This has happened on two of the 8 occasions. It is hoped that new systems for making notifications will enable Fostering Team managers to ensure this happens routinely.

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

0

%

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**

The Social Services Department has procedures to ensure that contact arrangements are established, monitored and reviewed. Carers requested that greater consideration be given to contact times and school transport when suggesting an appropriate carer and family for a child. The service seeks the views of young people and children in determining contact arrangements. This is done at the time of placement agreement by the child's social worker. The Inspector heard carers speak of their frustration that the child's needs were felt to be less important than the natural parents' when arranging contact times. Foster carers are trained in issues and have skills relating to maintaining contact. Arrangements for supporting and supervising contact are detailed in the foster placement agreement. Foster carers are supported in their work in this area by training provided by the

Central Fostering Services Team.

Carers are reimbursed for any additional costs incurred in supporting contact arrangements where these exceed allowance payments.

Carers record outcomes and impact of contact on child. This is fed directly to the child's social worker and the inspector heard of one carer who had been praised by the court for the quality of her recording and observations as part of care proceedings.

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

Foster carers receive training and information about the importance of listening and responding to the views of children.

The service, through the wider Social Services consultation with children and young people asks for their views about matters that affect them on a regular basis. The NCH Children's Rights and Advocacy service reported greater inroads into user participation via the SIGMA groups which meet with children and young people in foster care $\frac{3}{4}$ times a year. It was reported that this had led to direct influence and changes within the Looked After system.

The service has suitable means in place that are used with children with communication or linguistic difficulties. Information is accessible to children.

Children are informed about their right and routes of complaint to placing authority, Fostering agency, Commission for Social Care Inspection and independent advocate. This information is contained in the Children's Guide. The Children's rights and Advocacy Service is to provide training for carers in march about the role of advocacy and young people's participation. This service commented that carers actively contact them on behalf of young people in their care.

Care Zone.

Fostering social workers and child's social workers report on behalf of children and young people in placement for the Foster Carer Performance Review. The principal operations manager reported that disruption procedures and end of placement procedures enable looked after children to present their views.

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?**

4

The fostering service has links with and is knowledgeable about specialist health services in its area. Placements take into account how a child will continue to access specialist health services.

Before a placement begins, the service has secured a full description of health needs for each child and arrangements for governing the consent to medical treatment are in place. This is in the form of Looked After Children documentation. Quality and quantity of information is variable. If this has not been possible before placement, high importance is placed on obtaining this information and delivering it to carers.

The carer has a written health record for each child. This is updated and moves with the child. Children have access to their own records dependent on age and understanding. Training in health and hygiene and first aid is given, this includes health promotion and communicable diseases.

Children are supported by carers to be registered with a GP or dentist, taken to health, dental and optical, appointments, able to access services required, given dietary, personal hygiene, health promotion support and advocated on behalf of.

Foster carers report on the child's health needs for the planning and review process. The HELAC nurse for the north of the county was interviewed as part of the inspection. There is another HELAC nurse for the South of Warwickshire. The local authority has worked with the HELAC nurses and a paper was presented to CSG in August 2004, which focussed on the promotion of the health of "looked after" children. There is an implementation plan in place. A Looked after Children Consultant Paediatrician has recently been appointed to coordinate medical matters for all Looked after children in the county.

Children with complex health needs have this addressed and carers are to be trained appropriately by Primary Care Trust professionals prior to placement. This is particularly relevant to the family Link Scheme used by children with physical and learning disabilities.

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?**

4

The service prioritises education.

The TELAC team within the education department is now well established as an effective support for children within the care system. The Head of this service was interviewed during the inspection. Professionals and carers alike spoke highly of their work to support and maintain children in education.

Carers report on educational needs and progress for the planning and review process. They actively support Personal Education Plans, where these are in their possession.

Arrangements for birth parent and foster carer responsibilities for attending school meetings, parents' evenings etc are detailed in placement agreement and care plan.

Carers encourage attendance at school, provide uniform and equipment, support homework, and finance for attending school trips and after school activities.

The service collates information about educational attainment and exclusion for children in their care. The Rob Barradell Fund has been established to promote all achievements of children in care, educational and otherwise.

Where children are not in full time education, the service makes sure that children have structured occupation during school hours.

Foster placement agreements identify financial responsibilities for all school and educational costs. Carers expressed frustration with placing social workers who did not fully consider the needs of all children in the foster family to get to school on time where children attend different schools and additional transport is not arranged.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 0 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion. | | |
|--|--|--|

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? |
|--|---------------|
| <p>There is a written recruitment and selection process for appointing staff. This should be based on good practice as defined the National Foster Care Association Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval training, management and support of foster carers. Managers have had training in procedures used by the service.</p> <p>There is a revision of recruitment standards planned within the department and the manager reported that this would incorporate necessary action to meet the recommendations made last year. Satisfactory recruitment information for Independent Panel Members is reported to be held by the Panel manager.</p> <p>The Manager reported that prospective employees are interviewed, references are checked and referees spoken to either on the phone or are interviewed as recommended by NFCA code of practice. This was not consistently evident on staff files that were sampled. Records of checks and references are kept. CRB checks are renewed every 3 years. Social work staff have appropriate professional qualifications, DIPSW/CQSW or are obtaining one and have a good understanding of foster care.</p> <p>Interviews and observations during the inspection evidenced knowledge and skills in understanding of child care law and good practice, child development, communication, complaints procedure, promoting equality and diversity, inter agency working, particularly health and education.</p> <p>Staff have experience of family placement work and foster care and have been trained in assessment. Foster carers suggested that job swaps would assist in foster carers and children's social workers understanding mutual the roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Educationalist, psychologists, therapists and other professional staff have relevant professional qualifications and training to work with children and young people. Unqualified social work staff are directly supervised by qualified staff who are accountable for their work.</p> <p>It is still recommended that the Local Authority should follow up references as required by Regulation 20 with a telephone call to seek verification from each referee.</p> <p>Reference requests by the local authority should seek confirmation of suitability to work with children/vulnerable people.</p> | 3 |

| | | | |
|---|----|--|---|
| | | | |
| Total number of staff of the agency: | 58 | Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months: | 1 |

| | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16) | | |
| Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
| Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not fully inspected on this occasion. | | |
| <p>A recommendation was made last year to ensure that every fostering social worker has ease of access to a computer. Managers reported that there had been an audit of word processors. Social work staff were not aware of any plans to increase the provision of computers but supported that more were still needed. The Principal operations Manager reported that more computers were due. New systems have been introduced to organise a county wide electronic duty and referral system. Some staff raised concerns about confidence in using this system and consistency between teams.</p> <p>Workload management has been established for fostering social workers, though not their managers. Social workers appreciated the clarity this tool gave to the task of prioritising work.</p> <p>The Foster Care Reference Group and Fostering Service Manager has made formal links with the Primary Care Trust LAC nurses and Primary Care Trust staff with strategic responsibility for the health of looked after children.</p> | | |

| | | |
|--|----------------------|---|
| 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 are sufficient full time and part time staff with appropriate qualifications This is in line with the Statement of Purpose and supported by district fostering teams.</p> <p>There is not a current staffing shortfall. Agency staff are used in two areas. The use of agency staff is managed effectively. Consistent, experienced agency staff are used. Staff confirmed that retention is encouraged through good training, supervision, study leave, clear workloads and terms and conditions. Staff turnover is low and recruitment has been good this year.</p> <p>The service employs staff that also work as carers. These existing staff are covered by transitional arrangements but as posts become vacant the Operational Managers in each of the five districts have some scope to use the posts flexibly. Carers expressed concern that</p> | | |

the value of these unique posts would be lost. The Principal Operations Manager was clear the role would be developed but would sit within the fostering service.

The retention of carers is encouraged through support and training.

There is a recruitment policy aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of the children for whom it provides a service.

There is a clear assessment process.

Qualities and competencies are assessed against a range of indices as defined in the A10 format.

The service has enabled fostering social workers to become part of the level 4-accreditation scheme, which recognises competency at a higher level and rewards them financially as experienced social workers. A requirement made last year to ensure an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and improve the recruitment and retention of fostering social workers has been met.

The specialist EDT (Emergency Duty Team) currently has only two of the four carers it needs to operate an out of hours emergency “24 hour” placement service. Support is offered from mainstream carers in the districts. Teams expressed a willingness to assist and support and were interested in the different ways of working between the five teams.

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? | 0 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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? | 0 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

The Principal operations Manager reported that there were opportunities for Team leaders and Operations Manager to pursue DMC and CMS qualifications.

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----------|
| Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) | | |
| All staff are properly accountable and supported. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 0 |
| Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion. | | |

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| 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? | 4 |
| <p>The service has in place a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. These include arrangements for training and development, encouragement for self-help groups, supervision, and support services. The service also provides information and advice, assistance in dealing with other services, health and education and out of hours support. Respite care and arrangements for reviews are also included in this strategy. The foster carer support line involves 18 social workers providing support from 6.30 pm till midnight and weekends.</p> <p>The role of the supervising social worker is clearly understood. Annual reviews reports are prepared and available to the fostering panel</p> <p>Carers raised communication between children's social workers and carers as an issue. Many cited examples of excellent practice by children's social workers but there were also negative expressions about lack of communication and frequent changes in personnel that led to disruption of relationships and poor communication. Some carers were confidently using e-mail and found this a better route to get a message across than relying on telephone messages. All carers spoken to reported good contact and support from fostering social workers. The Fostering Network advisor is actively involved, both procedurally and practically in how Warwickshire improves its support to carers.</p> <p>Suggestions made by carers to the inspector included: more support workers to assist with emergency placements when children may spend long uncertain hours waiting to be picked up and moved whilst their social workers are busy making the arrangements.</p> | | |

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----------|
| Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10) | | |
| The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills. | | |
| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 3 |
| Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and so it was not fully inspected on this occasion. | | |
| <p>During the inspection training was happening about working with complaints and allegations about carers. Carers who had been subject to allegations reported that they were well supported by the fostering service though one expressed disagreement with this in a questionnaire.</p> | | |

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?

0

Warwickshire exceeded the standard in this area at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

A case record is maintained for each child by the child's social worker. This details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of life events. The fostering service ensures that carers know why they children in foster care and the current placement, how long it will last and the child's legal status. This information is contained in the foster placement agreement and supplemented by Looked After Children documentation or additional reports. This information is kept within a section of the carers' file.

Carers reported that they felt they had usually been told sufficient information, though some had not had Looked after Children documentation until just prior to the inspection.

Life story work is in place and carried out by the child's direct worker. Carers support this work. Foster carers are trained and have skills in helping children to understand and to keep reminders of their history. They are provided with equipment to record significant life events. Carers have sufficient information about the child to help them do this.

Copies of written requests made by the fostering team for Looked after Children information were seen on the carer's file.

Carers store information securely in lockable boxes provided by the Social Services Department.

The Inspector did not find a clear picture of reports or records kept by carers about the children in their care. All kept financial accounting sheets. Carers reported that they wrote in books, diaries and sent emails to social workers about significant matters.

Not all staff were familiar with Schedule 8 notification information (Stratford) There is no system of daily reports/ monthly summaries to provide the service with the information it needs to ensure quality of care. i.e. Daily reports detail medication, accidents, and contact with family/ placing social workers visits under reg. 35. Carers reported that they sent information on to the child's social worker when placements were ended. Training in recording for carers was being held during the inspection and the service working to put workable practical systems in place through consultation.

Communication channels and responsibilities are clearly identified and monitored at regular supervision. Communication gaps were a feature of the survey done by the Fostering Development Officer of support to carers.

A requirement was made last year to ensure that the foster carer holds a current, accurate

placement agreement and for Family Link placements that a placement agreement is in place that meets the requirements of the fostering regulations 2002. The inspector looked at the information about five foster carers and found that this was not the case for three children. Whilst most files seen had a placement agreement, these were not always up to date, accurate or full. One carer had a permanency placement and the placement agreement was for a 10-day respite period. Another had an old placement agreement for Family Link that did not meet the requirements of the Fostering Regulations 2002. This child had not had a Looked after Child review despite the length of placement, although one was planned for the week of the inspection. There was minimal information from the placing social worker and no safe care plan in relation to her personal care. The carers over the years and in conjunction with parents, had established good communication and shared information as necessary between them.

Placement plan part one and two should be updated as children's needs alter and all people working to support the child should be clear of the current plan for each child. This responsibility lies with the placing social worker. There was evidence on some files of fostering social workers chasing the outstanding documents.

There is a new Foster Care Agreement. None of the five sampled detailed the terms of the foster carers' approval or category. All referred to information being "attached" and none had. Information about category could be gained from the Annual Performance Review, routinely carried out with all carers and not just at the first anniversary of approval. A requirement and recommendation is made under standard 25.

Warwickshire Social Services Department has adopted a system of routine file auditing by managers at all levels. The annual performance review had not prompted an audit of information by fostering social workers as suggested in a recommendation last year. The new Performance Review format for foster carers should prompt this and enable the Social Services Department through the chair of the panel to pursue action needed to ensure well defined placements are agreed formally.

The inspector acknowledges that there appeared to be no identified impact on the actual children in placement of the lack of this information. The Principal Operations Manager identifies that action in relation to recommendations made last year is a work in progress.

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?

2

The Manager keeps records of staff employed, carers, children, complaints, allegations, and accidents.

The size and nature of the social services department means that the responsibility to monitor the quality and adequacy of records under Schedule 7 may be developed and carried out by other branches of the Children's Services not under the immediate control of the Fostering Service. In discussion and through observations of practice and scrutiny of minutes of CSG, it was clear that these matters were already the subject of quality monitoring within the department.

Confidential records are stored securely. There is a policy on access and retention of files. Records are in a form that can be passed on if child moves placement, leaves care or if references are requested about a foster carer or member of staff.

Records of children and foster carers are permanent, private and secure and can be seen in compliance with legal requirements by the child, parents or carers.

There is a policy on managing confidential information that is known to panel members, specialist advisors and staff.

Records are clear, legible, non-stigmatising and factual. They are kept in congruence with the Looked After Children/Integrated Children's System.

Children and carers are encouraged to access their records, make changes, record dissent and personal statements.

Records are kept on carer, child and staff files of allegations and complaints. Separate records are also kept which bring together data on allegations and complaints.

The local authority must ensure that all complaints and Child Protection allegations are promptly collated and passed on by team leaders/operations managers in districts to Commission for Social Care Inspection and Brenda Vincent, to enable the fulfilment of responsibilities under Fostering Regulations for Schedule 7 review and Schedule 8 notifications. Fostering Team Leaders reported that they now understood procedures for making timely notifications were with them and that notifications would be made to CSCI and to Brenda at the same time. Notifications over the last year have come in bundles; usually well past any relevant timescales. Notably there have been no notifications from one district. Fostering social workers in this district were unaware of the need to report under schedule 8, incidents of child abuse and complaints.

The principal operations manager meets monthly with fostering team leaders and Schedule 8 matters are a standing item on the agenda.

The information below is taken from the information supplied in December 2004 to The Commission for Social Care Inspection and from the report of the Fostering Panel for the year 2003/2004. Payments are in line with Fostering network recommended rates.

| | | | |
|---|--|--------|-------------------------|
| | | | |
| Number of current foster placements supported by the agency: | | | 314 |
| Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months: | | | 746 |
| Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months: | | | 703 |
| Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months: | | | 64 |
| Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months: | | | 53 |
| Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £ | | 112.07 | Maximum £ 258.30 |

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?

0

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| | 0 |
|--|---|

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not fully inspected on this occasion. The fostering service is part of Warwickshire County Council which is bound by publicly accountable financial management and reporting systems.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| | 0 |
|--|---|

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004 and it was not inspected on this occasion.

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

Warwickshire fully met this standard at the last inspection in March 2004. Carers continue to express frustration with inaccurate and late payments. The Inspector found that managers were committed to entering correct information to enable timely payments to be made. Carers reported that they preferred previous systems, which placed the responsibility for approving payments within the fostering team, who they felt understood the importance of this task, and enabled direct liaison between carers and the finance section. The Principal Operations Manager reported that CSG had considered her practical suggestions to improve contact between foster carers and team administrators and that these would be implemented.

Warwickshire has adopted a payment for Skills Scheme which bands carers "pay" (1-3) according to their skills rather than the level of difficulty presented by any child. There are 2 level three carers across the county and 139 existing carers have opted not to transfer to this scheme. This figure includes 50 Family Link carers who are better off within the old scheme. The principal Operations manager reports that payments to family Link carers have been reviewed and raised by the addition of a disability supplement that ensures that in future carers are not better off under the "old scheme". Other carers have to develop a portfolio of work to support their move from level 1 up to Level 3.

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 inspector observed the work of the Fostering Panel and talked after the main business with Panel members, including the Chair and Head of Children's Services for Warwickshire, Chris Hallett.

Policies and procedures are in place.

These cover decision making in cases of disagreement, CRB checks and suitability for panel members, access to medical advice and Quality Assurance function in relation to assessment, consistency, feedback, problems, thoroughness and rigour.

Panels receive management information about outcome of foster carers annual reviews.

Local authority panels monitor the range and type of carers available in comparison to the needs of children. The panel produces a report and analysis of its activity and the inspector suggests that this could be extended to incorporate the requirement under Regulation 42 to report on the Review of the Quality of Care under Regulation 42.

The panel has recruited an independent member with experience in child health and one who is a nursery teacher with experience in education. It is recommended that this knowledge base amongst the panel be further strengthened by recruitment of members with experience of having their child, or being themselves in foster care.

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? |
|---------------------------|---------------|
|---------------------------|---------------|

Birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs. Requirements reflect the short-term nature of the placement and differ from those expected of long-term placements. New procedures are ready to be implemented for the Family Link Scheme. Warwick and Stratford manage their Family Link responsibilities jointly whilst the other three areas make different arrangements. The previous development officer responsible for working with this area has left and the Principal Operations Manager is considering how best to use this post to further the work begun.

Not all family Link placements have placement agreements that meet the requirements of regulation 34 of the Fostering Regulations 2002. This is addressed under standard 24.

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 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
|---------------------------|---------------|---|

LA Services are sensitive and pro active to pre existing relationships when assessing and approving carers who are family or friends of the child.
Support and training opportunities are the same as for other foster carers. The service is considering the best way to assess and address the matching considerations of placements, particularly when court proceedings are happening. There is a recognition that the current assessment format A10, does not always address the unique situation of many carers and that a more child centred assessment may better and more effectively address the parenting skills and matching considerations. Some fostering social workers reported a sharp rise in the number of family and friends assessments.
The inspector visited one family and friends carer who expressed her complete satisfaction with the service she had received from the fostering team. The consistency of having the same fostering social worker was much appreciated from the assessment process to the support offered throughout the placement.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| Comments were received from the provider | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> 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 which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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