



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service**

Jubilee House  
Jubilee Street  
Blackburn  
BB1 1ET

December 2004

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service

**Address**

Jubilee House, Jubilee Street, Blackburn, BB1 1ET

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

Jubilee House, Jubilee Street, Blackburn, BB1 1ET

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**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**

31/3/04

		2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2004 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2004 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 7 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2004 21 <sup>st</sup> December 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>			
		15. 45 - 16.45 14. 45 - 17.45 09. 15 - 17.00 09. 00 - 16.30 11. 00 - 11.30 & 15.45 – 18.15 16. 00 - 17.00 14.00 - 17.15 09.00 – 13.00 10.00 – 16.00 – 17.15 11.00 - 15.30 – 16.15	
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>			
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Mr Graham Robinson	076687
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		John Daly (Head of Service)	

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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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**4. Securing and promoting welfare**

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**9. Fostering panels**

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Blackburn with Darwen Fostering service forms a part of the Boroughs services to children and families. A designated team of staff, the Family Placement Team (Fostering), work exclusively in this area to provide the service. Social workers from the team act as 'link workers' offering support, advice, direction and supervision to foster carers. A Foster Care Support Worker and a Recruitment Officer supplemented the team.

The Head of Service, Family Support & Permanence leads the team with everyday management the responsibility of the Team Manager(s). This post had been designated as a 'job share' post and was held by two people. Along with the managers, the fostering team consisted of (1.5) principal social worker(s), 5 social workers, 1 foster care support co-ordinator and a recruitment officer.

The team was working with 121 foster families, consisting of 74 foster carers, 45 family and friend carers and 2 emergency carers. Between them they were looking after approximately 156 fostered children and young people, a number of whom were located outside the Borough.

## **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.)

Prior to the inspection commencing, questionnaires were sent to every foster carer and fostered child who appeared on the register provided. 22 completed questionnaires were received from foster carers, with 7 received from fostered children. Questionnaires were also sent to the Social Workers of a selected group of fostered children as part of the tracking exercise. Seven visits were undertaken to meet with both foster carers and fostered children within their homes. The Inspector also met with a further 7 foster carers and 6 fostered children at group meetings arranged specifically for that purpose. In addition to this, direct telephone contact with one other foster carer took place.

Discussions with 10 Blackburn with Darwen staff took place. They included the Head of Service, Managers, Principal Social Workers, Social Workers, Foster Care Support Co-ordinator and Recruitment Officer. The Chair of the Fostering Panel and designated Looked after Children's Nurse were also spoken with.

Feedback received from foster carers regarding the levels of support received, opportunities for training and their satisfaction regarding the service in general, was positive. Indeed positive comments far outweighed the negatives, any of which were relatively minor. 'Link workers' were noted as operating pro-actively regarding the supervision and support offered to foster carers. However, the Inspector was made aware of some issues affecting certain individuals, as well as one collective issue of concern that linked into some disquiet, suspicion and apparent confusion around the legal processes and financial implications regarding residence orders. Each issue was fed back to the Head of Service who responded in a positive manner, coupled with an undertaking to resolve them.

Feedback from young people reflected the positive comments of foster carers. No issues of concern or complaint was raised with the Inspector. The young people who returned questionnaires and were spoken with contributed positively to the inspection process. They were well informed on their rights and had information on how and who to complain to, as well as more general information about being 'looked after'.

Feedback from staff with regard to their role and function within the service was positive. Their responses to the Inspector were consistent and they collectively demonstrated a commitment to the service, coupled with a team centred approach. The issues of concern for them remained much the same as noted at the previous inspection undertaken in March 04. They were linked to conditions within their current office environment. Specifically, a lack of IT facilities and dedicated administrative/clerical staff.

### **Conclusion**



The general conclusion of the Inspector was that the service continued to operate in a well organised manner, providing good levels of support to foster carers who in turn, provided well for the young people in need of this service. The service was managed purposely by a management team with a clear sense of direction. All the people spoken with (foster carers and members of the family placement team) demonstrated an enthusiasm and commitment to improve and develop the service further with the purpose of improving positive outcomes for children and young people.

Shortfalls were recognised and plans along with a desire to rectify them were under consideration. For example, the recruitment of new foster carers had not progressed with the rapidity envisaged at the previous inspection. However practical steps had been taken to move this area forward.

The ongoing work within foster families, the levels of support either in place or being engineered to improve their retention, and the plans to increase the range of the services was viewed by the Inspector as good. For example, the retention fees paid in July to foster carers, a proposal to issue foster carers with I.D. cards, the proposed introduction (January 05) of an out of hours helpline and the creation of more emergency foster carers.

The overall management of the service was seen as an area of particular strength.

The Inspector deemed that no regulatory breaches had occurred, therefore the report does not contain any statutory requirements. Four good practice recommendations have been made and these are designed to assist the service and the Borough to work towards its aim to satisfy and go beyond the standards laid out in the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards.

Of the thirty-two standards assessed, the service was deemed to have exceeded one, met twenty-eight and almost met three.

#### Statement of Purpose (St 1)

1 standard met.

#### Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (St 2-3)

2 standards met.

#### Management of Fostering Service (St 4-5)

1 standard exceeded, 1 standard met.

#### Securing & Promoting Welfare (St 6-14)

9 standards met.

#### Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting & Training Staff & Foster Carers (St 15-23)

6 standards met, 3 standards almost met.

#### Records (St 24-25)

2 standards met.

Fitness of Premises for use of Fostering Service (St 26)

1 standard met.

Financial Requirements (St 27-29)

3 standards met.

Fostering Panels (St 30)

1 standard met.

Short Term Breaks (St 31)

1 standard met.

Family & Friends as Carers (St 32)

1 standard met.

## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

No regulatory breaches were deemed to have occurred.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      Graham Robinson      **Signature**      \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      \_\_\_\_\_      **Signature**      \_\_\_\_\_  
**Regulation Manager**      Colin Myers      **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.

### 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	

### 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	FS15	Those charged with the responsibility for ensuring recruitment procedures for staff are taking place appropriately should ensure that evidence of proof of identity, along with a recent photograph is retained on individual staff files (Schedule 1[1]).
2	FS15	The following is strongly recommended. The wording on the current (staff) Application Form should be changed from requesting an applicant for 'Previous Employment' to requiring their Full Employment History (Schedule 1[6]).

3	FS16	The Borough, SSD and/or Capita are advised to review the current system in place regarding clerical/administrative support to the Family Placement Team (Fostering) with a view to supplying the team with dedicated clerical/administrative support (ST 16.11).
4	FS26	The Borough/SSD are advised to take immediate steps to provide IT/Computer facilities for each member of the Family Placement Team (St 26.3).

\* 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	12
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	2/12/04
Time of Inspection	15.45
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	32.5



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?
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A Statement of Purpose last revised in September 2004 was supplied to Commission prior to the inspection. The Statement was felt to reflect the full range of services along with aims and objectives. It covered all the areas laid out in 1.4 of this standard along with statutory requirements. The Childrens Guide was deemed to be appropriate and those young people spoken with confirmed that they had received their copies of this along with other relevant information.	
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## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The overall management of the service was felt to be effective. All staff were found to be appropriately qualified. Both the Head of Service and the two managers demonstrated the good knowledge of the individuals involved within the service. Good leadership and a sense of direction was noted at the previous inspection and this was felt to remain intact. Positive feedback was received from foster carers regarding the general direction and management of the service.

### 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

Those charged with running and managing the service were felt to be suitable to do so. Appropriate recruitment checks appeared to have been followed. It is understood that those charged with ensuring satisfactory CRB checks were in place are aware of the need to and have implemented a system to ensure that CRB checks are carried out for appropriate people on a three yearly cycle.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The different roles and responsibilities for staff operating within the service i.e. head of service, team manager, principle social worker, social worker, foster care support co-ordinator and recruitment officer were clearly laid out and understood by all staff spoken with. The procedures in place for monitoring and controlling the service were felt to be satisfactory. The systems in place for notifying external agencies of any incidents that fell within the remit of Regulation 43 and Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, were found to be satisfactory.

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

4

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.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

### Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

It was the opinion of inspecting officer that the service continued to be managed efficiently and effectively and not only met the standard but exceeded it. This was based on positive feedback received from the social work staff, foster carers and fostered children. Also the "hands on approach" of the management team was felt to be beneficial. Each manager demonstrated a good level of knowledge regarding individuals who made up the service. Examples of creative thinking and responsive management towards issues raised during the inspection by foster carers and fed back to management, were noted.

## 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 homes of seven foster carers were visited during the inspection. Although the inspector on occasions purposely did not visit all parts of each home, the premises were all felt to meet with the standards. Evidence was viewed to show that the physical aspects of each home were reviewed annually and this included a health and safety check. At the previous inspection it was anticipated that the A-Z of Foster Care would be distributed to foster carers during the Summer of 2004. Unfortunately due to difficulties with printing this did not occur. However it is now anticipated they will be distributed to all foster carers during January 2005. The inspector viewed a printed copy. Most foster carers felt that the levels of support received from their link workers was good. Practical examples of material support such as furniture, personal computers, transport etc. were noted.</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?	3
<p>The range and mix of foster carers was felt to be able to meet most of the culture backgrounds likely to be needed within in the borough. The philosophy of the service was seen to value diversity and promote equal opportunities. This was felt to be met in practice. This opinion was based on the positive discussions and general feedback received from staff, foster carers and fostered children. Evidence was viewed on files and by observation of the foster panel which also supported this view.</p>		

<b>Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
It was the opinion of some members of the fostering service that the shortage of foster carers can at times impact on matching considerations. However evidence was viewed to show that the service made every effort to place children and young people into appropriate placements. The foster panel was seen to play an effective role with this. Each of the foster carer files viewed had in place an appropriate foster care agreement which referred to the matching process undertaken. Any decision to place a young person was seen to take account of any assessed racial, ethnic, religious and culture needs while no transracial or transcommunitive placement was evident. Positive discussion took place between the inspector and the head of the service regarding the services response to the above.		

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b>		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
ACPC Multi Agency Child Protection Training was found to be available to foster carers. All foster carers spoken with demonstrated appropriate understanding around safe caring practices. A variety of policies and procedures and written guidelines linked to child protection and anti bullying were in place. The imminent introduction of the A-Z of Fostering which contain a section dedicated to safe caring practices should prove to be beneficial to foster carers. Evidence was viewed to show that any suspicions or incidents that may have been of a child protection nature had been dealt with appropriately.		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	100	%

<b>Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
Promoting and maintaining contacts for fostered children was given a high priority by the foster carers and fostered children spoken with. Individual details of how this occurred were discussed with the inspector. The fostering service provided support and assistance where necessary usually through the link worker or the young person's social worker. Contact arrangements, some of which were complex, appeared to be understood by all parties. Young people confirmed that their views were taken into account when contact arrangements were being considered and put into place.		

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The message received from fostered children was that consultation with them regarding their views on day-to-day matters was not an issue of concern to any of them. Appropriate guidance was provided by the fostering service to young people regarding how they could raise any concerns issues or complaints that they may have. Young people confirmed that they had been issued with this information. Young people also had access to an independent advocacy service.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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A designated nurse employed by the PCT who had specific responsibility for looked after children had been re-located and shared the office with the fostering team. This move was viewed as a positive one by the inspector. No specific areas of concern were raised by either staff, foster carers or fostered children regarding issues around health care. The fostering service appeared to have developed good links into other health agencies within the borough, a move assisted greatly by the designated nurse. The previous inspection report noted a lack of direct access to psychological services for foster carers and supported a move towards this. It is understood that an advert for a psychologist post with a direct remit for looked after children within the borough was due to occur in the New Year. Based on this information, the standard was deemed to have been met.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**  
**The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The role of the Equal Chances Officer (Education for Looked After Children) received positive feedback from foster carers and social workers. Foster carers demonstrated their understanding and responsibilities with regard to accessing if necessary and supporting young people within their educational placements. Young people spoken with were generally positive and able to support those views regarding education. Appropriate personal educational plans were in place for those young people reviewed as part of the tracking exercise.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

A policy linked into preparing young people for adulthood was available. Foster carers spoke sensibly around this area and demonstrated an understanding around their role and responsibilities. One of the young people spoke with was able to speak in some detail about their recent introductory moves undertaken as they moved towards leaving care.



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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Personel services continued to be controlled and operated by Capita who undertake the clearance and recruitment procedures on behalf of the borough. Of the staff files randomly selected for the purpose of evidencing this standard, two did not contain a recent photograph or evidence that checks for proof of identity had taken place. Both staff had previously been employed by the borough and the inspector on this occasion, took the view they were missing rather than never having been completed. However those responsible should be aware of this shortfall and take steps to rectify it. It is also recommended that the wording on the application form completed by applicants applying for a job within the social services department is changed as follows. The section requesting previous employment should be changed to require a full employment history.

Total number of staff of the agency:

11

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

0

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The management structure of the service was clearly defined and understood by those who work within it along with most of the foster carers. Management was generally viewed as effective. No issues of concern around the professional supervision or training opportunities for social workers within the family placement team were received. Following the previous inspection, a recommendation was made to provide the fostering team with dedicated clerical and administrative support. Whilst acknowledging there was a possibility of this occurring when the teams' proposed office move takes place, the situation at the time of the inspection was the same as the one previously noted. Therefore the recommendation is repeated.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
It was felt that the staff in post had the appropriate training and qualifications to fulfil their role effectively. It was noted that caseloads were high due in the main to the transfer of responsibility for family and friends foster carers to the family placement team. However levels of support to foster carers were in the main reported as good. The desire to recruit more foster carers was being pursued with the recruitment officer active in this area. Proposals to recruit future foster carers and the methods being used were discussed with the inspector.		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
No evidence was found to suggest that the service was anything but a fair and competent employer. Out of hours support to foster carers was viewed as an area of weakness at the previous inspection. However this is an area that has received some attention and was being addressed. While yet to become operational a group of staff and foster carers had been identified to offer such a service. The arrangements for implementing this service were being co-ordinated by the foster carers support officer. It was envisaged the service would become operational early in the new year.		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
Feedback from social workers and foster carers confirmed that they felt adequate opportunities for training were available and ongoing. Some foster carers were keen to embark on training whilst others were more muted in their response. NVQ 3 continues to be offered to foster carers and feedback from some on the course was found to be positive. Some feedback received from foster carers suggested that they could not always attend training (during the daytime) due to their commitments as foster carers. The training plans which were felt to reflect the policies of the foster service were noted.		

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

All social work staff spoken with indicated that they felt well supported and demonstrated an awareness with regards to the direction the service was taking. Supervision and appraisal was ongoing and job descriptions and specifications were in place.

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

A clear strategy was in place for working with and supporting foster carers and this was felt to be implemented in practice. All foster carers spoken with appreciated the role and the support received from their link worker. Some minor criticisms were received during feedback and a specific example of perceived difficulties was discussed directly with the inspector. However the general consensus of views were positive and praised the role of link workers. All foster carers were able to distinguish accurately between the role of a link worker and a young persons social worker.

**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**

Supervision of foster carers was undertaken by link workers and evidence was viewed to show that programmes of supervision were ongoing. Foster care agreements checked as part of the tracking exercise were found to be in place and conformed with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Information was available for foster carers regarding dealing with and making complaints and representations. Following the previous inspection the fostering service was deemed not to have met this standard, as the A-Z book of Fostering had not been distributed. As stated previously, printing had taken place and it was envisaged that it would be distributed early in the new year. As a result of this it was felt that the standard has now been met.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

3

Evidence of appropriate induction and ongoing training of foster carers was noted. A recent example of this being undertaken was discussed with staff and foster carers who had participated. The training programme on offer was felt to have been developed to meet the needs of foster carers and feedback received regarding the range and quality of training was good. The previous inspection had recommended that plans should be put in place to provide organised support systems for the birth children of foster carers. It is understood that plans for this were being developed and that a member of staff had specific responsibility for this. .

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A selection of case files for children and young people fostered were reviewed as part of the tracking exercise. The information held on file was found to be up-to-date and properly kept. The foster carers spoken with provided a general feeling of satisfaction with regard to the information they were provided with prior to and shortly after any young person was placed. They were able to demonstrate an awareness linked into the individual needs and background of the young people within their care. Foster carers were found to be holding appropriate records on the young people in their care usually by way of a diary.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All administrative records reviewed were found to be up-to-date and properly kept. Records were held with confidentiality in mind. All aspects of this standard were felt to be satisfactory.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

153

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

142

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

131

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

30

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

21

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

79.28

Maximum £

491.60

## 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?**

2

The previous inspection noted that each member of the family placement team had their own desk but had to share IT equipment. The situation had, if anything, deteriorated since the last inspection with access to IT extremely limited due to the number of computer available and working. The borough are strongly recommended to look into this issue and take steps to provide members of the family placement team with immediate access to IT facilities.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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No evidence was collected to suggest that the fostering service would be unable to meet its obligations due to inadequate financial resources.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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As the fostering service was operated by a local authority it was not registerable with the Commission. Therefore the authority was not requested or were legally bound to provide evidence to prove financial viability. However, based on some evidence provided and discussion with the head of the service the indication was that all was in order.

**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

None of the foster carers either spoken with or via questionnaire suggested there were any problem in receiving payments promptly. They appeared to understand the scales and levels that foster carers were operating on. A little confusion was noted regarding allowances with regard to the range and entitlement allowances that were available. However it is felt the introduction of the A-Z of Fostering coupled with the promotional and supportive values of the carers running the Foster Care Association will go some way to elevating what was a minor sources of confusion.



## 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?
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The minutes from the previous three foster panel meetings were provided prior to the inspection commencing. Observation of the foster panel took place on 15 <sup>th</sup> December as part of the inspection and prior to that the Chair of the panel was spoken with. All elements around the purpose, function and functioning of the fostering panel including its membership was found to be satisfactory.	3
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## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Appropriate policies and procedures were found to be in place for the short term break (family link) service. A social worker from the family placement team had been given specific responsibilities for the family link scheme. Feedback from foster carers involved in this scheme were generally positive.	3
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## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Contained within the range of foster carers spoken with was a representation of family and friends carers. With regard to meeting this standard all areas were felt to be satisfactory. However the inspector received feedback from a number of family and friends foster carers that indicated they were uneasy with regard to the implementation of residence orders. They generally expressed some confusion and suspicion of the system. It is suggested that preparing and explaining fully to foster carers what to some is a confusing legal journey in an area that should be developed and promoted further.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

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

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

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I John Daley of Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service 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 John Daley of Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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