



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Hampshire County Council Fostering Service

Trafalgar House

The Castle

Winchester

Hampshire

SO23 8UQ

28th February 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

Hampshire County Council Fostering Service

Address

Trafalgar House, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire,
SO23 8UQ

Local Authority Manager

Jennie Polyblank

Tel No:

Address

Trafalgar House, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire,
SO23 8UQ

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

19/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		28th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Brian McQuoid	075696
Name of Inspector	2	Wendy Hughes	
Name of Inspector	3	Maureen Webb	
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		Jennie Polyblank	

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 Hampshire County Council 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.

Hampshire County Council foster care service provides a range of family based care for children of all ages in Hampshire who are unable to stay with their own families. Placements are provided for children who need to be cared for in emergency situations, for short or long periods or for a planned series of short breaks. The service is made up of six Family Placement Teams based in the North, South East and South West districts of the county and a Central Fostering Recruitment Team who recruit and carry out the assessments of prospective foster carers. At the time of the inspection the family placement team based in Basingstoke was in the process of re-locating to join the team based in Alton.

The service is managed by a County Strategic and a County Operational Manager based in Winchester and Romsey respectively. Specialist posts within the service include a Marketing Co-ordinator, a Training Development officer and a Panel Advisor. There are six multi-disciplinary Fostering panels in operation across the county.

The District teams work with the social workers of children who need to be placed to see if anyone from within the child's extended family or kinship networks could, with support, look after the child. This would be the first choice solution for any child not able to live at home. Family Placement Teams carry out the assessments of family and kinship carers as well as prospective family-link carers and provide supervision and support to all approved carers. Hampshire also use a number of independent fostering agencies where they are not able to provide a suitable placement within their own resources. At the time of the inspection 744 children had been placed by the 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.)

During this inspection Hampshire's Fostering Services were inspected against 16 key National Minimum Standards and a small number of additional standards where there had been a shortfall identified during the previous inspection.

Hampshire's Fostering provision when considered in a wider national context reflects the position of there being an acknowledged shortage of carers nationally. The authority however have since the previous inspection been pro-active in undertaking a critical evaluation of the fostering service which has resulted in the planned introduction of a number of initiatives which are anticipated to improve the overall service. The service has been particularly successful in significantly increasing the number of children placed with family and friends as carers. Feedback received by the inspectors from young people in placement was overwhelmingly positive about the care they were receiving. The inspectors visited a number of carers homes, attended some support groups and received 105 questionnaires from carers. The response from carers was generally very positive about the support they receive from the family placement teams but there were a number of areas where they felt the service could improve. In particular, out of hours support and the quality of information provided in relation to children at the time of placement. In addition a number of carers and children reported placing social workers not visiting as frequently as they should.

There was a comprehensive training programme in place for carers which was continually updated in response to identified needs and requests from carers. Carers files provided evidence of supervision taking place and of the development needs of carers being addressed.

The service has a coherent strategy for the recruitment of carers, priorities are identified and resources allocated accordingly. The central recruitment team carry out the majority of assessments of prospective foster carers and appear to be doing this to a consistently high standard.

As identified during the previous inspection there was again concern that the ability of the service to match children appropriately with foster carers was compromised by the majority of referrals being received at short notice and having a limited pool of carers. There was subsequently a lack of time to make planned placements. Carers were regularly being requested to operate outside of their approval agreement.

An examination of foster carer files revealed there was good evidence of regular contact between family placement workers and carers but a high number of foster carer annual reviews were overdue.

The contents of children's files were not examined during this inspection.

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	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Regulation Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	7	FS3	Documentary evidence of relevant qualifications is present on staff recruitment files.	30/3/05
2	7	FS3	Telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references for staff appointments and evidenced on recruitment files.	30/3/05
3	34	FS8	The service ensures children are only placed with carers, where the placement is consistent with their terms of approval.	30/6/05
4	34	FS9	That foster carers are provided with sufficient information prior to placement in order to ensure a safe match between children placed and foster care households.	30/4/05
5	35	FS11	The authority ensures that each child is visited and seen individually by their social worker, or other, at the required intervals.	30/5/05
6	29	FS21	Annual reviews of foster carers approval take place in accordance with the Regulations.	30/9/05

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	FS22	Supervision of carers takes place at the agreed frequency.
2	FS22	Family placement social workers make at least one unannounced visit to foster carers each year.
3	FS22	Payments to foster carers are made in a timely way.

* 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	9.5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	48

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?
---------------------------	---------------

The statement of purpose had been revised in September 2004 and approved by elected members of the Council. It meets the standards. The service provides two guides for young people in an age-appropriate format, one for younger and one for older children. Both contain information on how to make a complaint, including how to contact the Commission, and details of how to access an independent advocate. Young people spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they had been provided with such a guide.	3
--	---

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
This standard was not assessed during this inspection.		

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?	2
The service had appointed one new manager since the last inspection. The recruitment records were seen and an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check had been carried out. Appropriate references had been requested and supplied but there was no evidence of telephone enquiries being made to follow up these written references and in addition no evidence of professional qualifications were seen on file. The County has a policy of renewing CRB checks every three years.		

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

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

X

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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

Safe caring is included in the initial training and assessment of foster carers. Household checks are carried out as part of the initial assessment of carers and reviewed annually. Written guidance is provided for all carers on health and safety and safe caring. The inspectors were told that the service was about to introduce a new safe caring policy which included the introduction of safe care plans for each household. Eight foster households were visited during the inspection and all were seen to provide warm and comfortable environments with no noted health and safety hazards.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The county's policy is to place children with families of similar ethnic background where this is possible. All carers have written guidance on caring for children from a different cultural background and valuing diversity is included in their core training programme. The inspectors saw a very good example of a carer working hard to support a young person's culture and language. Carers who look after children with disabilities are helped by the service to adapt their homes appropriately and to provide any equipment needed for their care. Evidence of this was seen during visits to carers. Training for carers on caring for children with disabilities had recently been added to the training calendar.

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?**

1

The inspectors were told that the majority of placements made by the service are at very short notice or in an emergency. There was evidence of discussion between staff and between staff and carers about new placements, which were constrained by the time and resources available. There was clear evidence from records and discussions with staff and carers that the service's ability to make good matches is often compromised by lack of time for planning and a limited pool of carers. Children had been placed outside of carers approval categories. Permission for these placements has to be sought from the service's operational manager but evidence of this approval was not always seen on files. The service has recently introduced a new form, to be completed at the time of referral, aimed at aiding the matching process. It was not yet possible to judge how useful a tool this will be.

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?**

1

All foster carers are provided with the National Fostering Network's safer caring booklet and child protection and safe caring are included in core training for carers. Carers showed an awareness of appropriate sanctions and of child protection as an issue. Written guidance was in place on actions to be taken where a child is missing from home. The operational manager has a system for collating and monitoring any allegations of abuse or neglect of any child in a foster home. A significant number of carers reported not being given sufficient information about a young person at the time of placement. This lack of information contributed to the difficulty of ensuring a safe match between children placed and foster carer households.

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

X

%

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
<p>There was good evidence of foster carers going to great lengths to facilitate contact for young people. Information and guidance on contact with families is contained in the foster carers' handbook and training is provided for carers on working with children and their families.</p> <p>A number of carers expressed concern that contact arrangements were sometimes very difficult to maintain without considerable disruption to the household, and sometimes the foster child's normal routines.</p>		

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?	2
<p>Young people who completed questionnaires for the Commission overwhelmingly said that they were consulted by their carers about day to day aspects of their care. A small number said that they were never seen by their social worker on their own to seek their opinion. The majority of children said that they were asked their opinions about their carers by family placement workers. A number of carers said that some social workers did not visit the children frequently enough to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Children in placements are regularly consulted as part of the process of household reviews for their carers.</p>		

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)		
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Foster carers spoken to were clear about their responsibilities in relation to children's health and there was good evidence during visits to carers of children's routine health needs being met. Carers receive guidance and training on meeting children's health needs, including sexual health. The primary care trusts in Hampshire have dedicated nurses for looked after children and there was evidence in specific cases of specialist healthcare services being maintained during placement.</p>		

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)		
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Carers were aware of their responsibilities to support the education of young people in their care and there was some evidence of carers working well with schools and education support workers. Core training for carers included assisting young people to achieve their full educational potential and contributing to personal education plans. The county has a specialist team to support the education of children in care, which works closely with the fostering service.		

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
<p>This standard was not fully assessed during this inspection. It was a requirement of the previous report that all young people approaching care leaving age should have a pathway plan. One of the inspectors met with the manager of the Care Leaving Team in one region who described good working relationships with the family placement team. The inspector was told that all of the young people in foster care, whom the Care Leaving Team were working with in that region, had pathway plans.</p> <p>A concern was raised with the inspectors that there was the shortage of alternative placements for young people aged 16+ whose foster placement broke down. It was reported that some of these young people were being moved into bed and breakfast or supported lodgings when this was not necessarily the most appropriate placement for them.</p>		

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There were clear procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. Direct contact with referees, in addition to written references needs to be evidenced on recruitment files, as does proof of relevant qualifications.
The majority of foster carer assessments were carried out by professionally qualified staff. Where these were carried out by social services assistants or students, they were seen to be being appropriately supervised.

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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

X

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?

0

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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>Family placement teams were almost fully staffed with experienced and qualified social workers, social services assistants and foster care support workers. Staff reported being busy but felt their workloads were manageable. There were good training opportunities for staff and they were receiving regular supervision.</p> <p>The county has a central recruitment team who carry out the majority of assessments of potential carers. This encourages a high degree of consistency in the assessment process which includes an assessment against relevant competencies.</p> <p>The number of kinship carers and carers who are family and friends, has risen steadily and these assessments are carried out by social workers in area offices.</p> <p>The county has a coherent foster carer recruitment strategy with priorities identified and resources allocated accordingly.</p>		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This standard was not assessed during this inspection.		

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
This standard was not assessed during this inspection.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This standard was not assessed during this inspection.		

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?	1
<p>There was a clear strategy for supporting foster carers. Foster carers were given good written guidance, opportunities for relevant training, including NVQ and were in regular contact with family placement workers. There are a number of foster care support groups in operation throughout the county who meet regularly and are facilitated by foster care support workers. These groups often invite speakers on a variety of relevant topics. A number of carers reported being unhappy with the support available to them out of hours. The service is aware of this and at the time of the inspection was actively looking to improve the service available.</p> <p>It was noted that a high proportion of foster carers annual reviews were overdue. Some by many months.</p> <p>Steps have been taken to improve the working relationships between family placement and other children's social work teams.</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?	2
<p>Foster care agreements were seen to be in place and included provision for the supervision of carers on a six weekly basis. This was not always being achieved. On approval, carers were given a handbook which provided relevant information and guidance on policies and procedures. Some foster carers reported unannounced visits while others reported not having received any.</p> <p>Carers reported that there had been significant problems with receiving payments since changes had been made to the arrangements for payments in the past year.</p> <p>Carers were aware of the procedures for dealing with complaints and investigations into any allegations made against them.</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

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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

Children's case files were kept by the children's social workers and were not available via the county's electronic information system. Their contents were therefore not assessed during this inspection.

Foster carers had guidance on recording and storage of records and this was seen to be reflected in practice. There was evidence of carers helping young people to keep records of significant life events.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This standard was not assessed during this inspection.		

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
--	---

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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
--	---

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed during this inspection.

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
---------------------------	---------------	---

Hampshire has six fostering panels with clear policy and procedures in place for their operation. There is a panel advisor for the county whose role has been to bring greater consistency to the ways in which panels conduct themselves. All panel members are appropriately vetted and receive written guidance and training in respect of their roles and responsibilities. Panels were seen to be appropriately constituted and to include expertise in education and child health. Panel minutes seen were comprehensive and reflected a thorough and rigorous process. First annual reviews of carers were routinely being considered by panels and they also received information about subsequent reviews.

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?
---------------------------	---------------

There was a well established family link scheme for children with disabilities with clear policies and procedures in place that were seen to be implemented in practice. The inspector observed that the family link scheme had become more fully integrated into the family placement service since the last inspection. The inspectors were informed that in addition a small number of carers are approved specifically to provide short-term breaks as a form of family support for children without disabilities.	
--	--

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?	4
---------------------------	---------------	---

There had been continued growth in the number of kinship carers and family and friends as carers since the last inspection. This is a direct result of the increased emphasis placed across the county on looking for carers within the family. At the time of the inspection 161 children were placed with kinship carers or with other family and friends. This is a considerable increase on the previous year. The kinship care team continues to be managed centrally but each region has a kinship support worker based locally.

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 28th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 19th April 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

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 Hampshire County Council 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 _____ of Hampshire County Council 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.

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

S0000061164.V202628.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source