



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Gateshead Council Fostering Service**

Council Offices

Prince Consort Road

Gateshead

Tyne and Wear

NE8 4HJ

10th November to the 10th 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**

Gateshead Council Fostering Service

**Address**

Community Based Services, Civic Centre, Regent Street,  
Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1HH

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

0191 4333000

**Address**

Community Based Services, Civic Centre, Regent Street,  
Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1HH

**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 ?**

**Date of last inspection**

6/10/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		10th November – 10 December 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Stephen Graham	133310
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Trevor Jarvis	
<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>		Christine Pearce (Manager)	

**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 Gateshead 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.

The Fostering Service is part of the Community Based Services of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council. The service continues to provide a number of different types of placements to meet the assessed needs of the young people requiring care and accommodation.

Mainstream carers provide care to:

- Pre-adoption children mainly infants
- Emergency placements for younger children
- Short, medium and long term placements.

The service also have a number of carer's who are paid a fee and are known as contract carers. Contract carers provide care to:

- Emergency placements
- Remand placements
- Task focused placements that aim to return the young person home or prepare them for independent living
- Mother and baby placements
- Long term and shared care for disabled children

The service also provides respite care with Respite and Home from Home carers. The council have obtained funding to develop Treatment Foster Care, which will improve placement choice for young people.

At the time of the inspection the service were supporting 182 placements.

## **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.)

This was the third inspection of Gateshead Social Service Department's fostering service under the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. As with previous inspections the service was seen to have been pro-active in working to meet previous requirements and good practice recommendations and continues to work to further improve the overall quality of the services provided.

### **Statement of Purpose (standard 1)**

#### **Standard met**

The Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose (SoP) and children's guide that detail all required information and are subject to annual review. The manager confirmed that current arrangements to ensure that children continue to have access to the children's guide will continue to be reviewed.

### **Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (standards 2-3)**

#### **Both of the assessed standards were met**

The manager of the fostering service has the necessary professional qualifications and experience to manage this service and has commenced training to obtain a managerial qualification as detailed in the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. The content of the personnel records examined as part of the inspection were satisfactory. Although files examined did not include copies of qualifications, there was evidence to support that the documents had been checked at interview. It was agreed that proof of identity for staff should include a recent photograph as required by Schedule 1.

### **Management of the fostering service (standards 4-5)**

#### **Both of the assessed standards were met**

The manager demonstrated a clear understanding of the activities of the service. Arrangements for senior staff to deputise for the manager in her absence are in place. Responsibilities and processes for communication within the service are clearly outlined and discussion with staff and carers confirmed that they are aware of these.

### **Securing and promoting welfare (standards 6-14)**

#### **Seven of the nine assessed standards were met**

The service continues to work to improve the recruitment rate of carers from ethnic minority groups. A continued shortage of carers has led to some placements being made outside the carer's approval status. However the number of these has further reduced since the previous inspection to a relatively low number. These continue to be closely monitored.

Visits to foster carers and discussion with children in their care indicated that they provide a good service. Additional post approval training for carers aimed at providing "Safer Care" to children has been introduced as planned. Safe caring guidelines are agreed with each foster carer, as are agreements on acceptable sanctions.



The agency continues to maintain an anti-bullying policy. This has been further revised and updated to provide additional guidance to carers where children face difficulties at school. None of the children interviewed or who responded by questionnaire indicated that they were being bullied. The manager has a system in place to monitor any allegations of neglect or abuse. Child protection procedures are in place and are utilised appropriately.

Consultation with young people continues to be given key importance. There is a full time Children's Rights Officer and a support officer. The agency works to ensure that children continue to have access to extensive essential information, however a number of responses from children highlighted their concerns regarding the effectiveness of direct consultation with them.

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (standards 15-23)**

#### **Eight of the nine standards assessed were met**

The agency has a number of very experienced staff, with support provided by the administrative team. In discussions, staff demonstrated a good understanding of foster care and the needs of young people. This experience and understanding was reflected in the number of very positive comments of carers regarding the support received from the agency. Recruitment process for carers and staff are thorough.

There is a clear management structure in place with clear lines of accountability. A standard format is in place to record the supervision of carers. Support visits take place regularly and on the whole are appropriately recorded. There is a good level of retention of experienced staff and carers within the service. Efforts to increase the number of carers available to the service generally have continued. The staff team can participate in joint training with carers and have similar access to appropriate training opportunities. Since the previous inspection the Social Services Departments appraisal system has been fully implemented. The staff team now receive regular planned appraisals as well as ongoing supervision.

The manager was able to confirm that previous delays in the annual review system have now been overcome and that the reviews of individual carers are regularly scheduled and completed, with a monitoring system in place. The fostering service has clear information and procedures to deal with allegations received and policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster care register. Carer files examined contained good evidence of the range of training provided. Attendance at training is encouraged through the timing of courses to make them more accessible to carers and the use of appropriate venues with access to crèche facilities.

### **Records (standards 24-25)**

#### **Both of the assessed standards were met**

All carers visited during the inspection confirmed that they are provided with sufficient written information about each child to ensure that their care needs can be met. Foster carers spoken to demonstrated an awareness of children's legal status, understood care plans and were aware of the need to record significant life events in partnership with children. Additional training in record keeping and safe storage has been introduced. Some gaps in LAC documentation continue to be evident and were raised with the Manager for review. The information kept by the agency meets the requirements of Schedule 2 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

**Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service (standard 26)**

**This standard was met**

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

**Financial requirements(standards 27-29)**

**All three assessed standards met**

The service is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. There are systems to ensure that accounts are appropriately maintained and audited. There is a written policy on fostering allowances, and information on payments is distributed to carers and purchasers each year.

**Fostering Panel (standard 30)**

**Standard met**

Plans to increase the degree of independence of the chair of the fostering panel are ongoing. Observation of the panel confirmed that members had a good understanding of their task and that the panel as a whole operates efficiently and effectively.

**Short-term breaks (standard 31)**

**Standard met**

The agency continues to develop and expand this service.

**Family and friends as carers (standard 32)**

**Standard met**

There are policies and procedures in place to support family and friends as carers.

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

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

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**      **Stephen Graham**      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      \_\_\_\_\_      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Regulation Manager**      **Gerard Morris**      **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	FS1	Ensure that each child has a copy of the children's guide.
2	FS3	A recent photograph should be kept on individual staff files
3	FS7	The agency should continue to improve the recruitment of carers from a broader range of ethnic communities.
4	FS8	Children should be placed within normal fostering limits and the agreed terms of approval of foster carers.
5	FS11	Ensure that the processes to consult with children and young people are effective.
6	FS21	Reports from carer reviews should be maintained on file.
7	FS30	Plans in place to increase the degree of independence of the chair of the panel should be progressed.

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

**PART B****INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	10/11/04
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	50

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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The fostering service has a Statement of Purpose (SoP) in place. This has been subject to annual review. A children's guide is also available for foster carers and young people. A copy of this guide is given out to children and young people in an information pack they receive when a placement is made. Questionnaire responses from some young people indicated that they had not received a children's guide. This was raised with manager who indicated that the process of distribution would be reviewed to ensure that all young people continue to receive it, and that those who may have misplaced it would receive a replacement.

## 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
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The manager of the service is social work qualified and experienced. They have recently commenced training leading to an appropriate management qualification. It was confirmed that this should be completed by July 2005. In discussions throughout the inspection, the manager demonstrated a sound understanding of her role and responsibilities.

### 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
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The content of information contained in the personnel records examined included evidence demonstrating that CRB checks had been obtained and that two references which specifically asked for concerns about working with children were in place. There was also evidence that documentary proof of qualifications had been checked at interview. Following review of previous guidance, it was confirmed that proof of identity for staff should include a recent photograph as required by Schedule 1.

## 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 manager has systems in place enabling them to monitor and control the activities of the service and to monitor the budget. Responsibilities and processes for communication within the service are clearly outlined and discussion with staff and carers confirmed that they are aware of these. Carers have access to an effective duty system.

Since the previous inspection, the agency has provided carers with additional information regarding personal taxation. The management of external placements has been improved through the use of clear placement agreements, monitored by the placements panel.

Issues relating to conflicts of interest continue to be detailed within staff guidance. A record of notifications is maintained and was available for inspection.

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

3

**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.**

3

**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.**

5

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

1

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

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The manager has a clear job description outlining the duties and responsibilities of the job and in discussions showed a clear understanding of the role, including areas of delegated responsibility.

The arrangements for an experienced senior practitioner to deputise for the manager in her absence remain in place.

## 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
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All of the foster homes visited as part of this inspection were warm and well furnished. Each was decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Health and Safety assessments are completed as part of the carer's initial assessment. These are re-assessed during un-announced visits and annual reviews, which are now occurring regularly. Health and safety issues are also covered within the training and induction for carers, with additional guidance available in the foster carers handbook. During the examination of carer's files, one example of a missing "home safety checklist" was noted and highlighted to the manager for action.

### 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
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Discussion with the manager confirmed that the previously recognised shortfall in anti-discriminatory practice training offered to carers has begun to be addressed through the additional training opportunities now provided.

Children with disabilities continue to be provided with appropriate placements and equipment and are supported in accessing activities in the community.

The staff team continue to work with the Northern Consortium of Local Authority Fostering Services. Through this they aim to further develop recruitment strategies and improve the recruitment of carers from a broader range of ethnic communities.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

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

2

The agency continues to utilise the processes in place to appropriately match children and carers. However the ongoing shortage of foster carers continues to cause difficulties in this area. The manager confirmed that this has continued to lead to occasional exemptions outside normal fostering limits and terms of approval being made. External placements can be and are arranged to ensure that children continue to be placed safely. The manager confirmed that the number of carers who had children placed outside their initial approval status in terms of age and maximum numbers had reduced since the previous inspection. The manager closely monitors these situations. The agency continues to work to address these issues through their recruitment programme.

Examination of files raised some issues regarding recorded details of placing Social Workers and the presentation of essential information in a consistent manner. These were raised with the manager for review and action.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

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

3

Additional post approval training for carers aimed at providing "Safer Care" to children has been introduced as planned. Safe caring guidelines are agreed with each foster carer, as are agreements on acceptable sanctions.

The agency continue to maintain an anti-bullying policy. This has been further revised and updated to provide additional guidance to carers where children face difficulties at school. The manager has a system in place to monitor any allegations of neglect or abuse. Child protection procedures are in place and are utilised appropriately.

Carers are provided with sufficient information about each child and their circumstances to ensure that they can care for them safely. Where delays occur, particularly with emergency placements, the agency staff team are pro-active in ensuring that essential information is provided to carers. Examination of a sample of children's files identified occasional gaps in LAC documentation; these were highlighted to the manager.

Supervision monitoring sheets are in use and include a record of what documentation carer's have in place. Foster carers receive support and guidance on diary keeping and recording. From the sample of care files examined, two examples were highlighted to the manager where the normally used notifiable incident monitoring sheets were not in place.

Guidance and procedures are provided to Foster Carers to ensure appropriate action is taken where children are missing from care.

Eighteen young people completed questionnaires and six were spoken to during the inspection. None reported that they were being bullied.

<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	100	%
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**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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
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The agency has a policy on contact, which is provided to carers. Carers spoken to had a clear understanding of the contact arrangements in place for each child. Contact is positively promoted where appropriate. Contact issues continue to be discussed during pre approval training, maintaining contact is promoted in the carer's handbook.

**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>	2
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The agency has a policy on consultation and the manager confirmed that regular steps are taken to ensure that the views of young people, their carers and families are sought. Children continue to have access to the department's Children's Rights Officer and a Children's Rights Support Officer. The agency provides a variety of informative literature to children cared for as well as contact cards to enhance direct communication. A parent's guide giving information from the Statement of Purpose has been developed.

Despite the steps taken, a number of responses from young people through pre-inspection questionnaires, as well as direct discussion during visits, highlighted their views that they are not asked for their opinion regarding the care received or the service overall. A number also highlighted a lack of information regarding complaints procedures and contact information for the CSCl. As with the responses regarding the children's guide (standard 1), these were raised with the manager for their ongoing review.

**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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Interviews with carers and responses through pre-inspection questionnaires confirmed that carers felt able to meet the health care needs of the children and young people they cared for. Files examined confirmed that young people are registered with G. P.'s and dentists. Health issues continue to be covered during induction and post-approval training for carers.

The manager reported that the agency utilise dedicated psychological services for looked after children, the social work therapy team, a dedicated consultant paediatrician and nurse for life service. The sexual health co-ordinator for looked after children works directly with the children in foster care.

**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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All of the children seen during the inspection were in education, all were positive regarding the support received from carers. Discussion with carers confirmed their commitment and steps taken to support the educational needs of each child.

The fostering service continues to work closely with colleagues in the RELAC Team, who have responsibility for the educational achievement of looked after children. The annual "Celebrating Achievement" event, organised by the agency continues to be used to encourage educational involvement and achievement by young people.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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Due to the age of the children involved, only limited evidence was available from the example files case tracked. The evidence seen was positive and indicated that children are being supported in their development toward adult living.

Appropriate guidance is provided to carers. The manager highlighted agency access to the full time co-ordinator of the "Teenagers to Work" scheme" to maximise employment and training opportunities for young people. Young people also receive support from the leaving care team with pathway planning reported to be in place.



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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering team are all appropriately qualified, trained and have been CRB checked. Recruitment procedures are in place. The agency has a number of very experienced staff, with support provided by the administrative team. In discussions staff demonstrated a good understanding of foster care and the needs of young people. This experience and understanding was reflected in the number of very positive comments of carers regarding the support received from the agency.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

0

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear management structure in place with clear lines of accountability. The manager monitors individual workloads.

A standard format is in place to record the supervision of carers, this includes monitoring of training suggested to and completed by carers. One example of an incomplete training record was highlighted to the manager for action.

Examination of carer's files indicated that support visits take place regularly and on the whole are appropriately recorded. One example where notes failed to indicate whether contact had been by telephone or direct visit was highlighted to the manager for review, as was an example of a recently scheduled visit where the file had not been updated to confirm that this had taken place.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b> <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>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There is a good level of retention of experienced staff and carers within the service. Efforts to increase the number of carers available to the service generally have continued.</p> <p>Staff at the agency utilise the comprehensive assessment process in place to assess the qualities, competences and aptitude of prospective carers. Within the foster carer files examined all information relevant to approval were in place, however, one example was seen to be poorly organised and filed. There were also examples of CRB monitoring sheets being used inconsistently. These issues were highlighted to the manager for review.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b> <b>The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Carers continue to benefit from individual support from their fostering social worker and additional out of hours support from the Emergency Duty Team. The service continues to support peer contact for carers. The 'telephone tree' of contact telephone numbers remains available to them. As in previous inspections, carers spoken to continue to be very positive about the level of support they receive from the fostering team. There is a whistle-blowing policy, provided to staff and carers.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b> <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>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The fostering team work closely with the training section to promote and effectively monitor carers attendance at training. A training directory is provided to carers. The fostering team continue to monitor the contents of the directory to ensure that it offers training identified in the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards 2002.</p> <p>The staff team can participate in joint training with carers and have similar access to appropriate training opportunities. The manager monitors individual induction into post and the ongoing training and developmental needs of each staff member. This is reviewed through individual supervision and appraisal. A record of this is maintained within staff files.</p>		

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

Policies and procedures for the agency are well organised and presented and readily available to the staff team.

The manager provides regular supervision to each staff member and maintains a record of these. Individual supervision contracts are in use, although appropriately detailed, occasional examples of these being unsigned were highlighted to the manager for action. Regular team meetings take place with the content of discussions and decisions recorded. All staff spoken to were very positive regarding the service overall and the support received from colleagues and the manager.

Since the previous inspection the Social Services Departments appraisal system has been fully implemented. The staff team now receive regular planned appraisals. A record of these is maintained and was made available for 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?****2**

The agency has clear policies and procedures which outline how carers will be supported. This covers all the points outlined in National Minimum Standard 21.2.

The role of the supervising social worker was clear to all foster carers interviewed as well as the workers themselves. Carers spoken to knew how to access support, including outside office hours.

Annual review reports are prepared in partnership with carers with copies maintained on file. The manager was able to confirm that previous delays in the annual review system have now been overcome and that individual carer reviews are regularly scheduled and completed, with a monitoring system in place. Evidence from the selection of carer files examined highlighted delays in the administrative process, with some reports not yet on file. These examples were confirmed to the manager for review and action.

There was evidence of appropriate communication between the fostering service and placing social workers with regard to the welfare of children placed.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**

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

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

Foster Care Agreements are maintained on file and are compliant with Regulation 28 (Schedule 5 checklist); one example where the terms of approval had not been fully completed was highlighted to the manager for review. Foster carers receive a handbook covering all the points outlined in Standard 22.5. Practical support is provided and includes all areas outlined in standard 22.7.

Supervising social workers maintain frequent telephone contact with carers and undertake regular home visits. Occasional un-announced visits are also completed. A record of all contact is maintained on each individual file. Carers spoke very positively about the quality of support provided by agency staff.

Informal networking takes place between foster carers and is supported by the agency.

Complaints policy and an appropriate complaints procedure are in place.

The fostering service has clear information about procedures to deal with allegations received and policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster care register.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

Carer files examined contained good evidence of the range of induction training provided. Subsequent training attended is recorded on individual monitoring sheets and maintained on file. Foster carer review reports also include detail of training attended.

As in previous inspections, the records available on each file examined indicated variations in the amount of training undertaken by individual carers. However, discussion with the manager and the evidence on file confirmed that the agency continue to work to reinforce the importance of ongoing training and development with each carer.

Attendance at training is further encouraged through the timing of courses to make them more accessible to carers and the use of appropriate venues with access to crèche facilities.

## 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
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Carers visited during the inspection confirmed that they are provided with sufficient written information about each child to ensure that their care needs could be met. Foster carers spoken to demonstrated an awareness of children's legal status, understood care plans and were aware of the need to record significant life events in partnership with children.

All foster carers visited were found to be storing information in a secure manner, and were aware of what they should record and share with the fostering service.

Since the previous inspection, guidance and training on how to establish and maintain filing systems have been introduced and is being provided. Carers confirmed that they receive ongoing guidance and support with regard to record keeping.

### 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
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The information kept by the agency meets the requirements of Schedule 2 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

As in previous inspections, case files for children and carers continue to be securely stored and are well maintained.

The figures below include planned short break and respite arrangements.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>		182
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>		293
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>		275
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>		25
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>		15
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	72.33	<b>Maximum £</b> 392.00

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The premises used by the fostering service are suitable for their purpose. There is sufficient space, secure lockable storage and appropriate measures in place to safeguard IT systems.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Local Authority maintains management of the fostering services finances at a strategic level. Information provided during the inspection confirmed that the service is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The pre-inspection information showed that there are systems for ensuring the services accounts are appropriately maintained and audited.



**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances, and information on payments is distributed to carers and purchasers each year. Carers are made aware of allowances and expenses payable in advance of children being placed.

## 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
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The inspector met with the chair of panel, and observed a panel meeting. The chair was very clear with regard to the overall role and function of the panel. Current plans to increase the degree of independence of the chair were reviewed, with negotiations to facilitate this confirmed to be currently ongoing. Through review of panel papers and observation of the panel itself, it was clear that members had a good understanding of each assessment presented, and put forward appropriate questions on each case. The meeting was seen to be quorate.

Panel members are provided with written policies and procedures, including guidance when the panel may not be in agreement. Members hold a broad range of appropriate skills and knowledge and have undergone appropriate checks and clearances prior to commencing their duties. The service manager confirmed that these checks were currently in process for one recently appointed panel member. The agency is continuing to review the provision of ongoing training opportunities for panel members.

## 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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	3
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The service continues to offer short breaks and has appropriate policies and procedures in place.

## 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?
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The agency has a number of relatives and friends approved as foster carers. There are policies and procedures in place both to assess and support them.
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**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 10<sup>th</sup> November – 10 December 2004 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 10<sup>th</sup> May 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 Keith Moore of Gateshead 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 Keith Moore of Gateshead 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.



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