



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Stockton Borough Council Fostering

Council Buildings

Town Centre

Billingham

Stockton-on-Tees

TS23 2LW

7th – 10th March, 15th March and 18th
March 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

Stockton Borough Council Fostering

Address

Council Buildings, Town Centre, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 2LW

Local Authority Manager

Mrs Jackie Ward

Tel No:

01642 397212

Address

Council Buildings, Town Centre, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 2LW

Fax No:

01642 397147

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

01/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Stephen Smith	073899
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		No Lay Assessor	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		No Specialist	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mrs Jackie Ward	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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**
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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 Stockton Borough Council Fostering. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has an integrated fostering and adoption service. The Child Placement Team is located within the authority's department of Children, Education and Social Care. The fostering aspect of the service provides placements in respect of short term/temporary, long term/permanent, bridging, parent and child, short breaks/sharing the caring (children with disabilities), respite care and emergency carers. At the time of the inspection there were 83 foster carers registered with the service, most of whom live within the boundaries of the borough. 12 of these carers are approved as family/friends foster carers or have children placed under Regulation 38 (emergency placements with family/friends). At the time of the inspection there were some 101 children placed in foster carer by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Child Placement 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.)

It is evident from this inspection that Stockton Borough Council Child Placement Team Fostering Service offers an effective and efficient fostering service that delivers positive outcomes for the young people it has placed with foster carers. Particularly commendable is the effectiveness of the management and staff team of the service and the high quality of support and supervision for foster carers.

During the inspection four foster carers were case tracked. These placements were clearly receiving high levels of support from the family placement team and were producing positive outcomes for the majority of the young people fostered. Carers providing shared care fostering support to a child with disabilities expressed some concern about access to necessary equipment and training for carers working in this type of care.

The outcomes for children have been identified in this report are set out below in accordance with the five outcomes in 'Every Child Matters' published in 2004 by the Department for Education and Skills.

Being Safe:

The fostering service undertakes comprehensive assessments of all prospective carers, considering their competencies as well as their attitudes. It was noted that the quality of these assessments and subsequent reviews of foster carers is high and it is positive that young people's views are sought as part of foster carers reviews. The authority has introduced new Looked After Children documentation which is structured to record detailed and comprehensive information though, at the time of the inspection, some children's records examined were insufficiently detailed. Records in staff files did not, at the time of the inspection, all include full employment histories for applicants and some showed gaps in employment that had not been explored. Records of meetings of the fostering panel demonstrated that a very careful consideration is given to the approval of foster carers and it is good practice that all long-term matching plans are taken to the fostering panel to consider recommendations for approval. Foster carers said that, generally, they receive the information necessary about the young people they foster and it is evident that training is provided based on foster carers' individual needs. The service provides child protection training to its carers and all carers having developed a safe caring policy for their own home. Written guidance in the foster carers' handbook provides information on health and safety, health promotion, identification of abuse, drug and alcohol awareness and sex education.

The service has clear systems in place to respond to allegations and complaints against foster carers in order to promote the emotional and physical well-being of the young people concerned. Children and young people consulted during the inspection said that they feel safe in their foster homes and, when asked about sanctions, all reported methods of appropriate behaviour management. The great majority said that they know how to make a complaint about their carer or the service and more than half said they know how to

complain to an inspector. This information is clearly set out in the young person's handbook. One young person stated in the questionnaire returned, "I know that I am safe. I live with people who look after me and care for me properly."

Being Healthy:

An examination of foster carers' and children's files showed that appropriate health information is maintained in respect of children's health needs. Children receive annual health assessments and information about children's health is available to carers. The authority's arrangements to ensure looked after medicals take place is particularly effective and appropriate health information was in place in the children's files examined. The young people spoken to during the inspection were all registered with a GP. Training is provided to foster carers in first aid, food hygiene and health and safety as well as in specific conditions that young people may have. Information on young people's sexuality and sexual health education is included in the foster carers' handbook. Foster carers interviewed said that the service helps them to meet the young people's health needs and the young people consulted, in person or by questionnaire, during the inspection described how their carers help them with their health needs.

Achieving and Enjoying:

Young people whose files were examined had Personal Education Plans (PEP) in place in and foster carers said that, although they do not always get copies of the PEP they are aware of the contents. It was clear that the young people case tracked were supported by their foster carers and their social workers to attend and achieve at school and young people who commented in questionnaires described the assistance they receive with school work. One said "I get lots of help with schoolwork and am provided with good equipment." All of the children with whom the inspectors had contact stated that they were happy within their placements and were engaged in social and leisure activities, a wide range of which were listed in children's comments in questionnaires. Discussion with foster carers, staff and examination of records showed the wide range of activities undertaken by foster children. Young people's comments included, " (The fostering service) got me a good home and carers." "I get to go out to a lot of places." "I meet new people and make new friends." "Foster care gives young people a second chance."

Making a Positive Contribution to Society:

Children interviewed and those who completed questionnaires showed that they are involved in a range of community activities based on their own preferences including attending out of school activities and leisure pursuits. It is noteworthy that all of the sixteen young people who completed questionnaires said that foster carers ask their opinions about their care and 12 said that the fostering service asks their views of their foster carers. Twelve of the young people consulted by questionnaire said they know how to make a complaint and those children interviewed who were able to express a view echoed this. All of the children interviewed commented positively on their fostering experience. Clear information is available about how to work with young people to help them prepare for independence and the work carried out was evident in the files examined. Evidence also showed that positive work takes place to support young people to maintain contact with families, where appropriate.

Social and Economic Well-being:

It is the view of the inspection team that children placed in foster care with Stockton-on-Tees

Borough Council fostering service are generally well supported and provided with care and nurture which will aid their personal and social development. Young people interviewed and those who completed questionnaires expressed positive views of their care. Comments in questionnaires include, "They found me a good home and carers", "Its better than being in a kiddies home and someone cares for you and loves you", "Foster care gives young people a second chance" and "I live in a nice home and am able to talk about my problems." Foster carers are well supported and supervised by an experienced and well-qualified team of social work practitioners. The children's records maintained examined during the inspection contained full Looked After Children Documentation though some of these would benefit from being completed more fully in order to contribute fully to the understanding of the individual's life events. One young person specifically asked for the following comment to be added to this report "The fostering service is good."

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?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions
			There are no requirements outstanding from the last inspection report.

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	
This area is not applicable as Stockton Borough Council Fostering Service is not registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.		
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Stephen Smith	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Val Daly	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Ken Pollard	Signature	_____
Date	7 th June 2005		

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	20	FS15	The fostering service must gain full employment histories in respect of staff members employed, ensure that any gaps are identified and seek satisfactory explanations for any gaps in the record.	Immediate

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	It is suggested that information be developed about the fostering service in alternative formats to make it available to those young people with literacy or learning difficulties.
2	FS2	The manager should continue to work towards completing NVQ Level 5 in Management as identified at the last inspection.
3	FS5	It is recommended that clear arrangements are in place to identify a person in charge from within the fostering team when the manager is absent as identified at the last inspection.
4	FS7 FS31	The authority should ensure that "shared care" foster carers working with children with disabilities receive the necessary special aids or equipment promptly.

5	FS8 FS24	All information recorded on the foster placement agreement form needs to be discussed and the record fully completed before it is signed by the parties concerned.
6	FS15	Further detail in terms of the date and time of the call, the name of the person spoken to and the outcome of the discussion should be included in the record of verbal checks undertaken to follow up written references.
7	FS23 FS31	The fostering service should ensure that “shared care” foster carers are provided with training that is appropriate to their needs.
8	FS23	The fostering service should develop its ability to provide NVQ level 3 training in child care to foster carers.
9	FS24	The authority should ensure that the new Looked After Children documentation is completed in sufficient detail.
10	FS32	It is strongly recommended that the responsibility for assessing and supervising “kinship” carers becomes the responsibility of the Child Placement Team as soon as practicable.

* 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	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
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	07/03/05
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	71

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- **There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.**

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has produced a clear Statement of Purpose, which reflects the service. The Statement of purpose includes the aims and objectives of the services and includes details in respect of the information detailed with Standard 1.4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The local authority's elected members have approved the Statement of Purpose and it is clear that it is updated as necessary. Placing officers asked said that they are aware of the statement of purpose of the fostering service. The local authority has a comprehensive children's guide in place which is given to all children within the care of the local authority. This meets the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and this information contained is presented in a professional manner that aims to be attractive and accessible for mainstream young people. It is suggested that information be developed about the fostering service in alternative formats to make it available to those young people with literacy or learning difficulties.

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?

2

The manager of the service is an experienced practitioner having a great deal of experience of working with children and families within residential childcare and in positions within field social work, education social work and the child protection arena. Foster carers and placing officers within their questionnaires and when interviewed stated that they considered the service to be well managed and it is apparent that the manager of the service is held in high regard by the placement team supervising social workers, foster carers and placing social workers. The manager holds a social work qualification and at the time of the inspection was continuing to undertake NVQ Level 5 in Management. It is recommended that the manager gives a priority to completing this training in order that she meets the requirement to be qualified to NVQ Level 4 in management as set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

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

The manager has been in post for a number of years and examination of recruitment records relating to her showed that the procedure followed was robust and made appropriate checks on her suitability. Clear records are maintained of checks made as part of this recruitment process and a system is in place to ensure that Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures are carried out within the necessary timescales.

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?

4

It was clear from the inspection that the manager has a clear understanding of the operation of the service and gives a priority to monitoring and controlling its activities and the quality of its performance. The manager monitors many of the activities of the fostering service to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the work and record keeping and maintains distinct records of this process. This system includes all the elements of the service set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Staff members spoken to were clear about their roles and accountability and young people's social workers all said that working relationships with supervising social workers are very effective. An established and well-developed staff supervision and appraisal system is operated within the Child Placement Team. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and minutes are taken and retained. The manager is responsible for the budget of the fostering service and clear procedures are in place to monitor financial arrangements. Information is made available in the statement of purpose and in other forms about the bandings and levels of fees paid to foster carers.

At the time of the inspection the fostering service of Stockton Borough Council Child Placement Team had a system in place to monitor significant events including making notifications to the Commission for Social Care Inspection of the events set out in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. All parties spoken to commented very positively on the manager's skill and effectiveness in the management of the service.

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

6

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

6

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?****2**

The manager of the service has a clear job description and clear lines of accountability are defined and in place. As at previous inspections the arrangements in place to cover for the manager in her absence involve oversight of the service being undertaken by a Service Manager or Principal Manager, meaning that no one within the fostering service maintains direct management control in the absence of the manager. The manager said and produced evidence of, a planned restructure of the Child Placement Team that includes, among other developments, the creation of principal practitioners roles that will take this responsibility. The manager said, and provided evidence, that these developments are being consulted on and should take place within a few months of 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

The fostering service carries out in-depth assessments in relation prospective foster carers. The recent Form F assessments viewed as part of the inspection process were noted to be commendably detailed with thorough checks being taken up regarding the applicants. Work to explore their reasons for fostering and their attitudes, feelings and competencies was also well developed. Foster carers spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that they felt the process was thorough. Evidence was available, within the foster carer assessments examined, of a close consideration of the health and safety and environmental issues relating to the foster home and of safe caring issues. Foster carers receive as part of their training, support and training in safe caring practice, child protection and health and safety and information gained during the inspection showed that respondents considered initial foster carer training to be very useful and of good quality

During the inspection process four foster carers who had young people placed with them were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors welcome in their home and cooperated fully with the inspection process. It was evident from these visits and discussions that these foster carers provide warm, comfortably furnished accommodation that reflects the needs of the young people placed with them.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Training offered to prospective foster carers includes a training session on valuing diversity. Information on managing and valuing diversity is available to foster carers within the foster carers handbook. Carers interviewed individually and those spoken to in a group discussion said that they are given appropriate training and equipment. It is evident from the records of prospective and approved foster carers examined that the agency encourages and welcomes diversity amongst the foster carers working for it although the manager said that the service has difficulty in recruiting sufficient foster carers from ethnic minority groups. A development worker for the Asian community works within the child placement team and this person has carried out Asian cookery sessions and other training is planned. Work is taking place following a foster carer recruitment campaign to develop a system to "buddy up" Asian foster carers or to provide support to foster carers and Asian children in placements. The manager said that she hopes that this opportunity will also assist in the recruitment of foster carers from differing ethnic backgrounds. The local authority's Diversity Champion continues to be a member of the child placement panel. Evidence was available during the inspection to show that foster carers receive appropriate equipment and support to care for young people with disabilities and that arrangements are made to ensure that young people receive

the specialist services they require from the appropriate professionals. Two respite foster carers, however, said that they had experienced problems in accessing appropriate equipment and resources. All young people spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that they were happy with their foster placement and their carers and said that the placement met their needs. Evidence was available to demonstrate that young people are encouraged to develop friendships and become involved in clubs and activities based on their interests.

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

Those foster carers visited during the inspection, the majority of those who took part in the foster carers group session with the inspectors and 19 of the 25 carers who returned questionnaire said that generally they receive sufficient information about the young people they take into placement. Foster carers interviewed acknowledged that, in circumstances where full information was not received, this information might not be available to the social workers. The overwhelming majority of foster carers reported that they are kept appropriately informed by their supervising social workers and 17 carers who returned questionnaires said that support and the passing of information from supervising social workers is the fostering service's best point. Placing social workers interviewed said that they have full discussion with the fostering service and everything possible is done to arrange appropriate matching of placements. New Looked After Children Documentation is in place in the authority and this includes a section to specifically set out how the matching considerations were made. It was noted however, that in one instance information had been added to the placement agreement record after the young person's parents and foster carers had signed the record. As such it was not available at the time of the agreement and could not have formed part of the original discussion. It is important that all information is discussed and in place in this record before it is signed by the parties concerned. One foster carer cited matching arrangements as the most positive aspect of the service.

Where children are placed with foster carers outside the terms of their approval these situations are clearly documented in foster carers files and exemption certificates were noted to be in place when foster carers were looking after more children than the usual fostering limit. It is positive to note that careful matching reports are carried out for long-term placements and that these matches are taken to panel and the authority's decision maker for approval. Placing officer's, foster carer's and young people's responses at interview and in questionnaires show that the fostering service works hard to provide positive placements for young people that meet their individual needs. One young person said, in the questionnaire returned, "They (the child placement team) found me a good home and carers."

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

Foster carers interviewed said that they had received information and training in relation to child protection and safe caring practice. Policies and procedures are in place in relation to the management of child protection referrals, and carers interviewed demonstrated an appropriate level of understanding of their role and responsibilities in dealing with child protection issues and referrals. The child protection issues recorded by the fostering service had been appropriately responded to. 12 out of the 16 young people who returned questionnaires said that they know how to make a complaint and 9 of these young people said that they know how to complain to an inspector if necessary. Clear information in this regard is set out in the young person's guide. Arrangements are in place for independent investigations of serious complaints or child protection allegations made against foster carers.

No children spoken to reported instances of bullying but information regarding the percentage of children who report never, or hardly ever bullied is not available for this report, as it was not gathered in sufficient quantity to be valid.

Foster carers are expected to develop a safe-caring statement for their home and these were in place in the files examined. All young people spoken to said that they feel safe in their foster home, one said the best thing about foster care is "I know that I am safe. I live with people who look after me and care for me properly."

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

It was evident from discussions with foster carers of children and young people who are in contact with their families that they work hard to facilitate this contact. This inspection demonstrated that foster carers generally receive comprehensive and complete information about the young people they care for that includes details of contact arrangement and responsibilities. Placement agreements observed during the inspection contained appropriate information about the contact arrangements and foster carers interviewed were well aware of the expectations of them in this area. The placing officers spoken to said that they thought foster carers work well with young people's families. Foster carers spoke positively about how social workers and assistants are able to support the contact of young people and their families.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

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

Carers, placing social workers and supervising social workers spoken to during the inspection said that children's views are sought regarding their care planning. All children who returned questionnaires said that foster carers take their views into account and involve them in decisions about their lives. 12 of the young people who returned questionnaires said that the fostering service seeks their views about their foster carers and documentary evidence was available to show that young people are consulted for foster carers' reviews and at the end of placements. The majority of foster children consulted said that they are aware of how to make a complaint and those spoken to who were able to comment said that they thought their complaints would be treated seriously.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

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

The examination of young people's files showed that the health care needs of young people placed are given appropriate consideration by the fostering service. This was confirmed by interviews with staff members, placing social workers, foster carers and young people. It is apparent that the authority makes significant efforts to ensure that foster carers receive the necessary information about the young people including their health needs. Foster carers spoken described how they ensure doctor and dentist appointments take place and Foster Placement Agreements were observed to contain information about how to obtain the necessary consents for medical treatment though this information was not always recorded in sufficient detail. Minutes of young people's reviews contained information about health needs and treatments though, again, these records were not always sufficiently detailed. The authority operates a particularly effective system to ensure that Looked After Children's medicals within appropriate timescales and that any identified issues are addressed.

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**

The local authority generally has developed extensive and effective arrangements to support and promote the educational achievements of looked after children and evidence was available to show that a great deal of work has taken place to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEP) are in place in respect of each child. Some foster carers interviewed during the inspection, however, said that they do not receive copies of the young persons PEP but said that they are aware of its content and their role in supporting the plan's achievement. Information is available about educational arrangements within the foster carers' handbook and clear guidance is available for foster carers covering situations in which young people are not attending school. Young people interviewed and those who completed questionnaires gave examples of how foster carers help them with their

education, one young person said that he really appreciated the time spent by the foster carer helping with homework and another said “I get lots of help with homework and am provided with good equipment.”

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It is clear from the inspection that information is provided for foster carers regarding the promotion of skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Written information setting out the need to work in this way is contained within different documents and the manager has completed a new guidance document that sets out the importance of helping young people to develop independence skills and provides guidance laid out in the format of the “Five Outcomes” for children set out by the Department of Education and Skills in “Every Child Matters.” Foster carers interviewed spoke knowledgably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood and evidence was available in young people’s files of work being carried out with other professionals and agencies.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

During the inspection the files of three staff members employed by the family placement team since the last inspection were examined. All staff members' files examined contained evidence that Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures had been received in respect of the staff members prior to their taking up appointment and a clear record is retained of the date of these CRB Disclosures in order that a programme of three yearly renewal can operate. All staff members' files examined contained proof of the person's identity and, although one did not include a photograph, it was clear that this had been requested and the person had only been in post for a few weeks. It was noted that, in two of the three staff members' employment history there were gaps in the record of their employment. No evidence was available in the file or in records of interviews to demonstrate that these gaps had been explored and explanations gained and it is essential that action taken to ensure that this occurs. Evidence was available to state that verbal checks had been undertaken to follow up written references, however this evidence did not include the date or time of the call, who was spoken to or the outcome of the discussion and, as such, further detail is needed in this record.

Social work staff members' files examined showed that the staff members concerned are appropriately professionally qualified and those interviewed demonstrated their knowledge of foster care and a sound understanding of their role.

Total number of staff of the agency:

15

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

Interviews with staff members and the manager and examination of policies, procedures and records and showed that staff members are appropriately managed and that the organisation provides an efficient and effective foster care service. Foster carers interviewed spoke highly of the staff and manager of the agency, particularly in terms of the support given to them by supervising social workers, though some carers expressed the view that support from young people's social workers was not as good. A clear management structure is in place and staff members interviewed said that lines of responsibility, accountability and the level of delegation are clear. Evidence of regular, structured and minuted team meetings taking place was available at the inspection, as was evidence of a formal and well documented supervision system. Staff members all receive clear job descriptions and contracts of employment. The service has clerical and administrative support, which is clearly effective and appreciated by the staff team and foster carers said that the duty system is effective and that support it always available even when they cannot speak to their own supervising social worker. The view was expressed by a number of foster carers that the telephone system used by the authority can on occasions, give rise to difficulties in contacting the child placement team.

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**

The service benefits from having an experienced group of children's practitioner staff, a number of who have undertaken post-qualifying training in childcare. Most staff carry a mixed caseload of fostering and adoption carers and in addition carry out training for carers. Each foster carer is allocated a named supervising social worker although carers may contact the service and speak to any placement team worker. The service operates a duty officer system to ensure there is always a member of the placement team on hand to answer queries or deal with emergencies and arrangements are in place for out of hours support for foster carers. Initial training provided to its carers incorporates the areas listed in Standard 17.7 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and foster carers spoken to during the inspection said that they appreciate training provided by the fostering service and external agencies.

Examples of the foster carer assessment reports (Form F) sampled demonstrated that supervising social workers undertake commendably comprehensive assessments on prospective foster carers. A clear process exists in order to ensure that all necessary checks are carried out as part of the assessments process and it was noted that the service is thorough in its exploration of previous addresses and the taking up of references. Records within foster carers' files of this assessment process recorded are comprehensive and were maintained up-to-date. Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures have been undertaken for all foster carers. A clear record is maintained of any changes in the terms of foster carers' approval that have occurred.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

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

Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that the service operates within its own sound employment procedures. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Fostering Service provides regular supervision to all of its carers undertaken by a named supervising social worker and arrangements are in place through a duty system within the fostering service and a system of out of hours contact to ensure that appropriate support is available to foster carers. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection spoke positively about the support they receive from supervising social workers as is the great majority of carers who returned questionnaires. Guidance is produced and available to staff and carers in the form of handbooks, policies and procedures and practice guidance. There are specific policies and procedures dealing with whistleblowing, health and safety and child protection. The local authority has appropriate public and professional indemnity insurance cover for staff and carers.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

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

The fostering service provides a structured induction training programme and training continues based on an individual basis identified by the staff member and the manager during supervision. A clear record is maintained of training undertaken. Team meetings take place on a regular basis. Some training is available jointly to staff members and foster carers if appropriate and all parties spoken to about this said that this is of benefit. Staff members interviewed said that training provided by the organisation is of good quality and that a great commitment is shown towards staff training and staff involvement.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

Evidence available at the inspection showed that a formal, structured supervision system exists for all staff. This takes place regularly, is minuted and records include the agenda and details of the discussion. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members. Staff members interviewed said that they are well managed and supported by the manager. A formal staff appraisal system is in place. Supervising social workers work closely with the childcare social work teams to ensure that communication is effective.

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

Foster carers stated in their questionnaires and when interviewed that they receive good support from supervising social workers within the placement team and it is commendable that 17 of the 25 carers who returned questionnaires said that the level of support is the best thing about the service. Guidance is available to carers in the form of the foster carers handbook, and both carers and staff had a good understanding of the role of the supervising social worker. Foster carers said that communication is good with the placement team and that support or advice is always available from team members through the system of duty employed. Some foster carers said that support is less good from young people's social workers but this view was less common than at the last inspection. Foster carers said that they felt that the training they receive is good listed the various training they had undertaken. It was noticeable that a wide range of topics have been covered in training based on individual needs and circumstances of foster carers rather than on a "blanket" basis and that the service uses a variety of sources to access training. Clear arrangements for the review of foster carers are in place and the quality of foster carers reviews was seen to be very high in the cases examined. The fostering service uses a scrutiny panel as well as the child placement panel. This panel considers the annual reviews of each foster carer after the first one. Placing social workers and supervising social workers described working relationships as good with clear areas of responsibility.

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?****4**

It is evident from feedback from foster carers that the level and quality of support and supervision of carers is good. Very favourable comments were received from the four sets of foster carers interviewed during the inspection and this view was supported by the carers who returned questionnaires who expressed the view that support from supervising social workers is good. Comments made in respect of supervising social workers by carers included the one comment "I am lucky to have a very good link worker, she is always there for me if I need her." Another said "We love being foster carers and have never had any complaints with the fostering service. We have always had everything we need and support for the babies we have looked after."

The quality of guidance available to carers is good. The carers' handbook is presented in an easily accessible format. Carers interviewed demonstrated a sound understanding of their responsibilities and had an appropriate level of awareness in how to make complaints and deal with allegations of abuse. Clear records are maintained of any allegations against foster carers and robust action has been taken by the authority, where necessary, to de-register foster carers where practice has not been appropriate. Records of foster carer supervision sessions are maintained on file and these are generally well recorded although the manager said that the recording of reviews is to be adapted to further improve the situation and it is clear that visits take place frequently and include unannounced visits. Reports of reviews of carers show that these are thorough. Foster Carer Agreements covering all the information in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are in place for all foster carers.

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

Foster carers' pre-approval training that take place as part of the assessment process covers the elements set out in Standard 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Foster carers' supervision records examined contained discussion of carers' training requirements, as do the records of foster carers' reviews, which were noted to be of good quality. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection said that training offered is of a high standard though two "shared care" carers for children with disabilities said that they felt that training is aimed at mainstream carers and does not always reflect their specific needs. Training is offered at differing times of the day with, usually a day and an evening session being offered.

Foster carers said that they felt that the training they receive is good listed the various training they had undertaken. It was noticeable from the questionnaires returned by foster carers that a wide range of topics have been covered in training based on individual needs and circumstances of foster carers rather than on a "blanket" basis. Examples of training undertaken included, mental health, epilepsy, sign language, behaviour management, domestic violence, drugs and drug abuse, drug dependent babies and resuscitation for babies. Additionally carers have received first aid and child protection training. Examination of records and discussion with the manager showed that the department has not succeeded in promoting the achievement of NVQ level 3 qualifications in childcare for foster carers with only a few carers obtaining this award. The manager said that she is aware of this area for development and it is recommended that attention is given to providing this training to foster carers.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Policy and procedural guidance is in place in the organisation regarding the purpose, content and structure of young people's files and files examined contained guidance about how information retained within them is to be structured. Information gained from foster carers showed that generally they feel that they receive appropriate information regarding the young person in their care. The local authority has recently introduced an entire set of new Looked After Children's recording and planning documents and these, though bulky, are commendably thorough and detailed in terms of the information they are structured to contain. It was, however noted, that in some young people's files the detail of the information recorded by social workers was insufficient with sections of documents not being completed and a lack of comments recorded in circumstances in which a "tick-box" suggested that comments would be necessary. The authority should ensure that the new documents are completed in appropriate detail. Additionally, as identified in Standard 8 of this report, it was noted that, in one instance, information had been added to the placement agreement record after the young person's parents and foster carers had signed the record and at a time after the placement had been made. As such this information was not available at the time of the agreement and could not have formed part of the original discussion. It is important that information is not added to records at a later date.

Foster carers interviewed said that they were well aware of the identified needs of the young person in their care and were involved in reviews and case conferences appropriately and the majority of foster carers spoken to said that they receive the majority of information about young people within the established timescales. Evidence from observation and discussion showed that carers work with young people to make a record of their life events and that information in the carers' households is retained confidentially. Files and confidential information are securely and safely stored in line with the organisation's own policy.

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**

At the time of the inspection the fostering service's administrative records were generally well maintained. The children's register and register of foster carers, include all the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and foster carers' records were observed to be generally well maintained. Records of the assessment and approval process are well maintained and clear evidence of the careful supervision and review processes was available. Recording in files is clearly evidence based and records of the approval process showed a clear separation between facts and their interpretation. Evidence was available within the files of foster carers and young people to show that the manager regularly monitors the files to ensure their quality and completeness.

Young people's records held are maintained by the children's social work teams in line with the Looked After Children recording system. These files were observed to be satisfactorily maintained in terms of their structure and contained all the required Looked After Children documentation, although some documents were not completed sufficiently fully. At the time of the inspection visit the authority was beginning to use new Looked After Children documentation and staff spoken to said that they anticipate the quality of recording will improve as people become more familiar with these documents. Foster carers spoken to stated that generally they receive the necessary information about young people within specified timescales. Policy and procedural guidance regarding record keeping and recording are in place as is information about the requirements managing confidential information.

Records of complaints and allegations are clearly recorded on the relevant files and a central record is retained to collate and manage this information.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			101
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			177
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			39
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			9
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			7
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	108.49	Maximum £	341.37

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 service operates from appropriately furnished offices in Billingham. The offices have appropriate storage facilities for the storage and retention of records. There are efficient administrative systems, including Information Technology (IT) systems in place. Foster carers spoken to and many who completed questionnaires commented favourably on the administrative support staff of the service saying that they are always polite, helpful and efficient.

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

At the time of the inspection the manager of the fostering service was able to provide a detailed annual budget for the service that showed that it operates on a secure financial footing. Evidence from interview with the manager and examination of the service's budget statements showed that the financial situation is monitored and reviewed by the organisation regularly.

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

It is clear from the inspection that the financial procedures of Stockton Borough Council are extended to the fostering service and such there is a clear set of principles and standards governing the financial situation and satisfactory management oversight of the services finances to ensure satisfactory operation of the service.

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

Evidence gained during the inspection showed that foster carers receive an allowance relating to the cost of caring based on the age of the young people. Additionally there is a payment scheme that pays an additional allowance based on foster carers skills, competency and experience. Clear systems are in place to ensure that payments are made promptly and effectively. Clear information is provided in the foster carer agreement about foster carer payments.

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

Stockton Borough Council fostering service operates a joint adoption and fostering panel that considers the assessments of foster carers and makes recommendations regarding approval or otherwise to the agency decision maker. This panel also undertakes the first review of all foster carers. The borough council also has in place a second panel that deals with fostering matters; this panel considers all subsequent reviews of foster carers. A procedure is in place to ensure the approving panel receives management information from the review panel and also information regarding the review of foster carers.

The examination of minutes of foster panel meetings and records within foster carers' files demonstrated that panel gives a careful and thorough consideration of the information presented to it and only makes decisions when it is quorate in terms of number and composition. The composition of panel meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and includes expertise in health, education as well as the authority's diversity champion. Evidence was available to show that an ex-looked after child with experience of foster care has been appointed to panel.

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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Stockton Borough Council Child Placement Team operates a respite or 'shared' care service provided to parents of children with disabilities through which young people are placed for short periods on a planned basis with foster carers recruited specifically for this purpose. The service undertakes formal assessments of foster carers and provides support, advice and supervision and review procedures as for mainstream foster carers. This service is fully managed within the fostering service and the worker has well developed links with the children with disabilities social work team. Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that this area of work receives the same level of attention as the work with mainstream carers although two shared care foster carers expressed the view that their training needs are sometimes not fully met as training offered tends to be relevant to mainstream carers. Carers also expressed the view that, at times, it is difficult getting the equipment necessary for the young people who stay with them.	2
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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It is apparent from the inspection that "kinship" carers are not managed by the family placement team but are assessed and supervised by staff from the young people's social work teams. This can lead to inconsistencies and potential conflicts of interest for staff attempting to meet the needs of young people and "kinship" carers. Additionally, workload and training issues for children's social workers can, when combined with the need to complete assessments within a six-week time period, lead to assessments being of a less good quality than the work undertaken with mainstream foster carers. The manager said that it is planned to bring the work undertaken with family and friends carers fully within the remit of the child placement team and it is strongly recommended that this take place as soon as possible.	
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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 7th, 10th, 15th and 18th March 2005, and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Providers comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 3rd June 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of Stockton Borough Council Fostering 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 Stockton Borough Council Fostering 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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