



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Bournemouth Family Placement Team

North Bournemouth Local Office
27 Slades Farm Road
Ensbury Park
Bournemouth
BH10 4ES

8th/9th/10th/11th/23rd February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Bournemouth Family Placement Team

Address

North Bournemouth Local Office, 27 Slades Farm Road,
Ensbury Park, Bournemouth, BH10 4ES

Local Authority Manager

Valerie King

Tel No:

01202 458700

Address

North Bournemouth Local Office, 27 Slades Farm Road,
Ensbury Park, Bournemouth, BH10 4ES

Fax No:

01202 456719

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

N/A

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

26/09/03

Date of Inspection Visit		9th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Delia Amos	096257
Name of Inspector	2	Rosie Brown	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Valerie King	

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 Bournemouth Family Placement Team. 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.

Bournemouth Borough Council's Placements team provides a fostering service to Looked After Children from within the Borough. At the time of this inspection the manager of the Placement Team had responsibility for a service staffed by a full-time senior practitioner, 4 full time fostering social workers, one part-time fostering social worker, one part-time social worker dealing primarily with the short breaks placements for children with disabilities, and a family support worker. There was also a temporary worker seconded as placement development worker, who had a specific role in identifying suitable vacancies. An agency social worker was specialising in assessments. The team was supported by two permanent clerk/typists, only one of whom was full-time. The team also had the support of one full time agency clerk; this had been in place for some months.

The fostering service had a daily duty system in which workers dealt with requests from social workers in the Bournemouth Borough seeking to place a child in a foster placement. If no placement was available or suitable from within the fostering team's own resources, the fostering service also had responsibility for seeking out of borough placements with other local authorities or, more usually, with Independent Fostering Agencies. The task of identifying residential placements was also undertaken by the placement development officer if required.

Placements made with carers approved by Bournemouth Borough were supervised and supported by social workers from the fostering team. Training programmes were held on a rolling programme. The fostering service offered sessional support and respite to carers, sometimes using workers from within the team, and sometimes providing respite breaks using other approved carers.

There were specialist fostering schemes, including assessment, remand and Project. Carers were identified who had specialist skills for dealing with certain types of placements and received enhanced payment and support. The various schemes were being reviewed at the time of this inspection, with proposals to move towards a competency based payment for skills approach to be introduced later in 2005. Bournemouth also has a partnership with neighbouring authorities to offer Treatment Foster Care, the Turnaround scheme.

The fostering service had access to a clinical psychologist who had time allocated for direct work with children in foster care or for use in a consultation role with carers. The Education Department employed a teacher and an Education Welfare Officer with special responsibility for Looked After Children who linked closely with the fostering service. The Borough also employed two nurses to oversee the health needs of Looked After Children.

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 is the third inspection of Bournemouth fostering services since the introduction of the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The previous inspection in September 2003 identified 11 statutory requirements and 33 good practice recommendations which would need to be addressed for the service to evidence it was meeting minimum standards. This inspection is able to report considerable positive progress by the fostering services in actions which have been taken in respect of the previous recommendations and requirements.

At the time of the previous inspection there was about to be a reorganisation of the service with the fostering team becoming separately managed from the adoption team. The team manager for fostering commenced in November 2003. Inspectors were told that the split in functions and management of the teams has been experienced as a positive change.

This inspection saw evidence of some considerable progress in some areas of the fostering service. In particular there has been an increase in training opportunities undertaken by staff, regular supervision was evidenced, more regular file auditing was taking place and clearer processes for matching were being established.

Monitoring and controlling of the service has been considerably increased. Scrutiny of the fostering service has been evidenced in some significant reviews throughout the year, both internally and externally commissioned. The Borough has recognised the need for an effective overall placement strategy. Reorganisation and refocusing of the work of the fostering service has been a central area for development.

A Placement Services Strategic Development Plan (September 2004) outlined objectives for the service, including strengthening commissioning strategies, and to increase the range, number and quality of family placements. Concerns included an extreme shortage of black and minority ethnic carers, the unwieldy, ineffective and unfair system of reward to carers, and the need to reduce the number of placement moves (15.3% Looked After Children with 3 or more moves). The report pointed to the need for a clear set of aims and objectives for accommodation services, which 'need to be assimilated into the values and practices of family placement staff and foster carers, so that there is a clear sense of shared purpose and priorities and most importantly, the high value placed on the service by the Authority is recognised and acknowledged.' (p.13)

Inspectors identified a number of areas for development. The more focused attention on the key role of the fostering service in the overall strategy for provision for children has not been paralleled by a clear plan of how these strategies are going to be delivered. Inspectors were not confident that aspects of the current management ethos were going to be effective in implementing the changes that have been envisaged.

Inspectors spoke with carers and staff in groups and on an individual basis. There was a commitment to developing a more focussed service and an emphasis on improving the quality of service received by the children. Carers and staff raised a number of areas of concern. The disquiet heard by the inspectors indicated that there had been insufficient recognition of the need for meaningful consultation and preparation for the changes that were to be introduced. The failure to win the hearts and minds of some carers and some staff could be a significant obstacle to improved service delivery.

There was evidence that some significant shortfalls in practice had occurred in relation to the investigation of concerns and/or allegations. Work was necessary to ensure that child protection procedures were consistently followed.

Staffing shortages, in some cases had resulted in periods of time when young people were without an allocated worker and carers had not always had a link worker. Some foster carers reported that they felt unsafe and isolated in the system and that they had no confidence in the management of the service.

It was reported that the Borough was doing much to address the staffing shortages, and inspectors saw that a number of strategies had been implemented to attract and retain staff.

Information provided for this inspection indicated there were 74 approved sets of foster carers. Of these 18 were approved for specific known children, and 16 were approved to care for children referred to the short breaks scheme. 110 children were placed with foster carers.

The impetus to progress a more effective placement strategy had been driven in part by the increasing use of Independent Fostering Agency placements and it is positive that the council is developing more structured partnership arrangements with the independent sector.

In the course of this inspection three foster homes were visited. Inspectors met with a group of foster carers. Questionnaires were sent to all foster carers and thirty responses were received. Children over eight years old who were placed with foster carers were also sent questionnaires and twelve responses were received. Thirty childcare social workers with children placed in foster care returned surveys in respect of fifty children.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard is partially met

The service has a comprehensive statement of purpose. There is a children's guide. There has been a review of policies and procedures although there is continuing work required to ensure that these are completed and that guidance is clear to staff.

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

Both standards were met

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

One of these was met and one not met.

There had been a considerable degree of scrutiny given to the placement provision within the Borough and outside, and there was evidence of a more strategic approach to planning for the needs of Looked After Children. Inspectors had concern about how proposals for improvement of the service could be effectively implemented. Measures to improve communication need to be in place. It was positive to note that the fostering team now has its own manager; lines of accountability were clear within the team.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Three of these nine standards was met, three partially met and three not met.

Foster homes visited were safe and healthy environments. There continued to be little evidence of an effective approach to documenting risk assessments. Safe care guidelines were given in training and a system was being introduced for carers to have a written policy for their home. A previously made requirement is repeated, that a broader range of foster carers needs to be recruited. Inspectors acknowledge that there was evidence of a commitment from the Directorate to address this. Improved processes were established around the matching procedures. There was a continuing need to ensure more effective information sharing. There was a need to ensure that appropriate child protection procedures were consistently implemented when concerns or allegations arose. Foster carers reported very positive approaches to supporting children's contact arrangements. Bournemouth had links with independent advocacy. There was also a system of support for the health needs of looked after children, and additional hours available to the placement service from a clinical psychologist. Information about health needs was lacking in some cases. The education needs of Looked After Children were being supported. A weaker area was the support available for young people moving into independence.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster carers (Standards 15-23)

Two of these nine standards were met, four partially met, and three not met.

Appropriate checks were undertaken in relation to staff appointed to the service although there was no expectation of probationary periods for staff moving from another local authority. The organisation of staff was reported to be a concern because of staff shortages, and because of some continuing problems in communication between the childcare teams and the fostering team. The Borough had a range of staff recruitment and retention strategies, but inspectors heard that individual workers in the fostering service had felt unfairly treated. A particular concern was the description from some staff and foster carers of being criticised if they raised issues during the inspection. There was evidence that staff had been given more opportunities for training and this was welcomed. A regular pattern of supervision and appraisal had been established. The Borough was considering some major

changes in the way that foster carers were trained and supported. The role of support

groups needed to be reviewed. A significant number of foster carer reviews were recorded as overdue. Staff shortages had contributed to less support being available to foster carers and the children placed with them. Some carers did not feel that they were adequately supported when concerns arose.

Records (Standards 24-25)

One of these standards was partially met and the other not assessed.

Some of the records examined were insufficiently comprehensive.

Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard was not specifically assessed.

Financial Requirements (Standard 27- 29)

Two of these three standards do not apply and Standard 29 was partially met

There was a continuing need for more clarity about some aspects of payments made to carers. Proposals were being considered to introduce a payment for skills approach.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was partially met

The quality assurance role of panel was more enhanced. Panel members were regularly receiving management information.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was met

The service provided met the standard but inspectors hoped there would be opportunity for further developments

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was met

Systems were in place to ensure that this standard was more robustly met. Clear guidelines had been given to childcare teams.

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:

N/A

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	33	FS7	The local authority must provide a broader range of foster care which more closely reflects the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the looked after children.	26.03.04
2	17(3)	FS9	Foster carers must be provided with appropriate, up to date information to enable them to provide appropriate care for the child.	26.12.03
3	17(1)	FS14	The fostering service must ensure young people receive appropriate support when preparing for adulthood, and that foster parents are provided with relevant training and support to help meet the needs of those young people.	26.03.04
4	19	FS16	To ensure there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for purposes of the fostering service (<i>This requirement was made in regard to Standard 17 following the inspection of 20/09/02</i>): This must include a sufficient number of administrative staff for the purposes of the fostering service.	26.03.04

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector **Delia Amos** **Signature** *D. Amos*
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager _____ **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	
1	8	FS16 FS4	The fostering service must be managed with sufficient care, competence and skill to ensure effective communication with staff and carers and quality delivery of the service.	01.07.05
2	33	FS7	The local authority must provide a broader range of foster care which more closely reflects the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the looked after children.	01.10.05
3	17(3)	FS9	Foster carers must be provided with appropriate, up to date information to enable them to provide appropriate care for the child.	01.07.05
4	12	FS22 FS9	The arrangements for the protection of children procedures must be reviewed and implemented appropriately when any allegation of abuse or neglect is made.	01.06.05
5	17(1)	FS14	The fostering service must ensure young people receive appropriate support when preparing for adulthood, and that foster parents are provided with relevant training and support to help meet the needs of those young people.	01.07.05
6	19	FS16	To ensure there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for purposes of the fostering service. This must include a sufficient number of administrative staff for the purposes of the fostering service.	01.07.05

7	29(2)	FS22	There must be a review of the approval of each foster carer at intervals of not more than a year.	01.06.05
8	12(2)(f)(ii)	FS18	The fostering service must ensure that staff and carers are enabled to contact the Commission regarding any issue about child welfare or safety.	01.05.05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The format of the children's guide should be suitable for all children fostered, if necessary produced in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.
2	FS6	The fostering service should develop a more rigorous approach to the recording of risk assessments, in regard to specific placements.
3	FS8	Matches should be achieved by means of information sharing.
4	FS8	Foster carer's files should include evidence about the matching process.
5	FS8	Fostering placement agreements should contain specific reference to elements of matching.
6	FS9	Safe care practice guidelines should be in place for each foster home, devised in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household.
7	FS12	Written health records should be made available for children which are updated and move with the child.
8	FS15	The fostering service should review procedures to ensure all permanent appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation.
9	FS17	The assessment process for carers should set out clearly the qualities and competencies to be achieved and the timescales involved, and management monitoring should be evidenced.
10	FS19	The effectiveness of training programmes for the staff should be routinely evaluated and training programmes should be reviewed and updated at least annually.
11	FS21	The fostering service should have a clear strategy for working with carers which includes encouraging group attendance.
12	FS22	The handbook for foster carers should be reviewed and updated regularly.
13	FS22	Complaints and concerns raised by foster carers should be more systematically collated and addressed.

14	FS23	The fostering service should evaluate and review the training available to carers.
15	FS24	Adopters' case records should contain panel minutes and other required information.
16	FS29	The fostering service should ensure there is clear information about, and prompt payment of expenses to foster carers.
17	FS30	The fostering panel should have clear written policies and procedures, implemented in practice.

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	8
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• 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	NO
Date of Inspection	08/02/04
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	65

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?

2

The fostering service has produced a revised statement of purpose which clearly states the aims and objectives.

There is a children's guide, 'What is Foster Care?'. It was previously recommended that it would be good practice to produce a revised children's guide which could be available in varied formats and this remains an area for development.

Revised policies and procedures are being produced and inspectors can see that there has been a considerable effort to achieve this. The council commissioned external consultancy to revise childcare policies. Fostering staff reported that the availability of childcare procedures on the intranet has been a welcome development and they can refer to these when they are linking with the children's social workers.

The senior practitioner in the fostering team has been undertaking a lead role in ensuring that fostering policies and procedures are updated or modified. This is an ongoing task and inspectors were concerned that the senior practitioner may not be in the best position to develop policy statements.

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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At the previous inspection the decision had been made to have separate managers for adoption and fostering. This was implemented shortly after that inspection. The manager appointed to the fostering service in November 2004 has relevant experience in childcare management and in fostering.

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 present manager of the fostering service has had long experience of working for the local authority. An updated CRB check was confirmed.

The appointment of this particular manager to the fostering team has only been intended as a 'caretaking', short-term measure in view of the impending retirement of that particular person. At the time of this inspection interviews were scheduled for a replacement for the permanent management post.

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?

1

There was evidence that the service has had a significant degree of scrutiny since the last inspection. There was an externally commissioned review of the specialist fostering schemes (August 2004), and an internal review of the service against the previous recommendations and requirements (June –August 2004).

A Placement Services Strategic Plan (September 2004) has been prepared, focusing on 'improving placement options in terms of quality, range and cost for children and young people'. A key aim of the strategy was to 're-invest in family placement services'.

Inspectors acknowledge that the fostering service is aiming at more effective quality assurance and the improvement of services is a central theme in these documents.

Despite the evident focus on reviewing the service there were a number of areas identified in this inspection which raised doubts about the effectiveness of proposals for improvement. It was positive to note that senior management evidenced a prompt and concerned response to issues raised during this inspection and showed a commitment to addressing the problematic dynamics. Issues highlighted in the inspection include:

- Communication between staff and senior managers was described as difficult and stressful for some staff.
- A culture of bullying and blame was described by some staff and some carers, to the extent that it was the perceived reason for the departure of staff over the last year. (See Standard 18)
- A lack of consultation about significant developments was described by staff, specifically the proposals which would impact on carer contracts.
- The panel chair and panel members were not consulted about the possible move towards a payment for skills scheme, or the plan to meet with the foster carers about this.
- Communication between fostering workers and children's social workers was reported to be poor in some instances.
- There was confusion about roles for staff with specialist functions.
- Carers were well aware of the dissatisfaction of staff and this was seen in several examples to have caused carers to have doubts about the safe management of the service.

Carers' lack of confidence in the management was widespread, and inspectors heard frequent reference to them 'not recommending the service'. One said 'if it was a business it wouldn't last five minutes'.

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

0

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.	9
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	2
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
<p>At the time of the previous inspection there was a change in the management arrangements that was about to be implemented, specifically that there were to be separate managers of fostering team and the adoption team. This structure was reported to be more effective by staff, and the manager had more capacity for ensuring staff supervision and monitoring of the team's activity.</p> <p>The practical benefits in the respective fostering team manager and the adoption team manager being physically situated within their own teams had been identified, although this move had not been achieved. Both teams were in the same building but the adoption manager was much closer to the fostering workers and vice versa, an arrangement that was a source of some irritation. Inspectors were advised that this arrangement was shortly to be rectified.</p> <p>Inspectors considered that within the team the lines of accountability were clear and that it was clear to staff who was in charge when the manager was absent. This standard is reported as met although the requirement made at Standard 4 is relevant.</p>		

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?
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Carers seen during this inspection were providing safe and nurturing environments for young people.

It was previously recommended that a risk assessment approach should be developed. Risk assessment forms were to be introduced. In one of the cases visited, young people were sharing a bedroom but no evidence of a risk assessment was on file. In this particular case inspectors had concern about the limited consultation with young people about this issue although the young people were very happy with the current arrangements.

Survey responses indicated that there were continuing examples of placements being made with insufficient information (see Standard 8).

Health and safety assessments are revisited in the annual reviews. Staff had developed a process for documenting safe care policies, although at this point inspectors saw little evidence that safe care guidelines for each foster home had been consistently introduced (see Standard 9.3).

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?**

1

It was required that a broader range of foster carers should be available which more closely reflected the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the looked after children. The service has acknowledged that this requirement remains unmet. The council reported a disproportionate number (13%) of Looked After Children from black and minority ethnic groups. In September 2004 the number of non-white British children and young people in the Looked After system was 15 out of 127. The number of carers with a black or ethnic minority background was two at the time of this inspection. There is evidence of commitment from the Directorate to address this issue as stated in the Placement Services Strategic Development Plan (September 2004) although there had been limited progress to date.

A specific worker has been appointed to concentrate on recruitment, and to develop links with minority groups. Inspectors heard there was some uncertainty about the remit given to this worker. Some focussed work had been undertaken on identifying relevant recruitment strategies in regard to minority groups.

Several carers have been approved for some time under a specific salaried scheme to provide placements for children with a disability or complex needs. Inspectors were told that supporting this scheme has been difficult because of the agreement to provide holidays to the carers without a clear strategy about how this was going to be managed. Young people may go to several different carers as a consequence of this.

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

It was evident that there has been a more managed approach to ensuring better matching practice. The fostering team described some improvement over recent months. A more rigorous gatekeeping policy has been introduced, with emphasis on planned preventative interventions with families. There was more senior management oversight of referrals. There was clearer practice about not placing children outside the terms of approval of carers, although in January 2005 the number was reported as five children placed outside the approval status. The number of carers with exemptions for placements above the normal fostering limit was much reduced. There remained some concerns in the matching process. It was identified (Service's Pre-Inspection report June/Aug 2004) that this was largely due to the number of unplanned requests for placements with insufficient referral information. Several foster carers reported to inspectors that they had been asked to take emergency placements which were inappropriate in relation to the rest of their household. One spoke of 'children placed by desperation, not by design'.

The introduction of the role of the Placement Development Officer was partly to ensure more consistency in information gathering at the referral stage. The worker currently undertaking this role was seconded on a temporary basis, and was shortly to be finishing in the role.

It was evident that matching decisions continue to need more oversight and more effective information sharing. A social worker reported that they had found out 'by accident' that a child had been placed alongside the current placement. As stated at Standards 12 and 9, foster carers reported that they did not have sufficient information, and in some cases believed that information had been 'withheld'. A carer reported that a child placed for respite from another carer had come with no information, no medical consent and no details about the current carer. At the same time several carers referred specifically to the good matching decisions in the placements that they had experienced.

Placement agreements for children placed were not seen on all the files. The childcare files were not seen in the course of this inspection but the expectation would be that the fostering service has a copy of this documentation. Previous recommendations made about the matching process have been retained.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

Inspectors were concerned that the fostering service had not followed appropriate child protection procedures in two cases in which there had been concerns. This was confirmed by the Children's Review and Quality Assurance Unit in a letter dated 18th February. In view of the shortfalls in practice that were identified, the relevant service manager is to discuss the need for the development of specific protocols/procedures that must be followed in such cases. A requirement is made that arrangements for the protection of children must be reviewed to ensure adequate procedures are in place and appropriately implemented by all staff.

Inspectors saw insufficient evidence that the practice was established that each foster home should have a safe care policy as recommended at Standard 9.3. It was understood that this has been introduced and is a developing practice. Carers spoken with confirmed they were aware of policy and procedures in relation to any incidents where physical intervention had been used to manage behaviour.

The previous inspection report recommended that bullying should be more specifically addressed in the policies and procedures and an Anti-Bullying policy dated December 2004 has now been produced.

Foster carers reported in nine cases that they considered they had not been given sufficient information about children placed with them. A previously made requirement about this is repeated.

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

Inspectors were struck with the very warm and positive comments made by foster carers about supporting contact arrangements. The vast majority of the survey responses indicated that foster carers worked positively to support contact. These included examples of carers welcoming family members to their home, encouraging visits, phone contacts, letters and cards. Comments included 'We facilitate contact in any way asked', 'we encourage as much as possible', 'we work with the social worker and parents', 'we keep them up to date', 'we work to the care plan'.

Responses from placing social workers also made a number of very positive references to carers' being 'responsive' 'welcoming', 'sensitive with birth parents', that the child's parents were 'pleased' with the placement. In only one of the responses was there a more negative comment about the carer's willingness to engage with contact.

In an example chosen for tracking the file indicated that there had been some tension and misunderstanding in respect of contact arrangements which arose from a carer's lack of understanding about payment arrangements. The problem illustrated the importance of clearer guidelines (see Standard 29) and improved communication between fostering and childcare teams.

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

Bournemouth has, since the last inspection, established links with independent advocacy (National Youth Advocacy Service). It is positive that this service is now available to support any child on the threshold of being looked after, and in child protection investigations. The Borough had also made available an on line programme, Viewpoint, for young people to access to facilitate consultation.

Information about the advocacy service was made available to foster carers. The senior practitioner in fostering is on the advocacy consultative group. Several social workers referred to carers being good advocates for the children in their care. Inspectors heard of a number of examples where carers were concerned that children and young people were not having sufficient contact with an allocated social worker. Carers felt that the changes in social worker meant that the children were not able to develop effective relationships with their social workers. (This concern is highlighted in requirement made at Standard 16). Carers referred to children having to 'tell their story all over again' to different workers, and that they themselves also found that difficult. In one case the carer wrote that they 'feel [...] has been forgotten by the service.' Some of the responses from children also indicated that contact with the social worker was infrequent.

There were few examples of children being consulted in regard to foster carer reviews and this is an area of development for the service.

There was a complaints procedure with information available to children in various ways including the children's guide.

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?**

2

The internal survey undertaken for pre-inspection purposes (June/August 2004) indicated that placements were still being made with insufficient health information. A requirement has been made at Standard 9 in regard to the need to provide adequate information to carers. Survey responses collected for this inspection also gave a number of examples where full information had not been given. It may be that in some case these reports refer to the same episodes. Health factors were specifically mentioned in some of these examples, including significant omissions such as not informing about asthma, and no medical consent. It is recommended that written health records are made available for children which are updated and move with the child.

A positive development was the work undertaken by the shared care fostering social workers in progressing a clearer protocol in regard to the placement of children who may require invasive medical techniques.

Nurses were available to help promote the health needs of Looked After Children. A clinical psychologist also worked with the placement teams and additional hours had been made available.

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 Borough employs specialist teachers to support the educational needs of Looked After Children. Educational psychologists also support carers through training about behaviour management and the council has increased the time available for this input. Examples were seen of effective interdisciplinary working to support young people in education.

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?

1

It was reported in the service's own review that this standard continued to be unmet due to staff vacancies in the Pathway team (report July Aug).

Inspectors were told that the local authority's Pathway team had suffered from major staffing shortages. The arrangements for supporting young people moving into independence were described by carers as very weak at times.

Several case files read confirmed that there was a lack of support or consistent advice for the young people making the transition to adult living. This included an example of a young person stating their concern to senior management

Some carers had attended a group meeting about pathway planning (June 2004).

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

The internal pre-inspection report indicated that all members of the fostering team had CRB checks and there is a system to monitor when the three yearly check is due.

Inspectors noted that the local authority was not operating a probationary period for staff moving to the team who had previously been employed in another local authority. This was not consistent with Regulation 21(1) (a) and it is recommended that this is reviewed.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

3

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?

1

Please also see Standard 4 for an overall discussion of the management of the service.

Since the last inspection the fostering team has had its own dedicated manager. It was reported that this was helpful to support the daily duty system.

Inspectors heard that there was insufficient administrative support to the fostering team. (Standard 16.11). A previous requirement made about this is repeated. On occasions fostering social workers were the only staff available to answer the phone. Carers commented on this and some reported that they considered the system was not adequately supported. An agency worker had been employed to address some of the backlog of work, particularly filing and answering the phone. There were proposals to reorganise the space available to the teams but lack of space and access to desks had been an issue for the fostering staff. Some concern was also expressed about the computer system with some recent experiences of material being lost, although this was in the context of new systems being implemented. In general staff reported an improving IT system.

Survey responses from carers indicated a considerable concern about the impact of staff shortages. A number of carers reported that there had been some considerable periods when the children in their care did not have an allocated childcare social worker, and several said they had not themselves had an allocated link worker from the fostering service. One wrote “it seems there is always someone leaving.” Several referred to “language barriers” with some of the childcare staff. Many referred to staff being ‘overstretched’ or ‘stretched to the limit’.

Inspectors were informed that positive efforts have been made by the fostering team manager to improve understanding between the childcare social work teams and the fostering team (in accordance with Standard 16.15). The fostering manager has visited childcare team meetings. Despite this there was evidence that this is a continuing problem and the previously made recommendation is repeated. Some responses from carers indicated that they were aware of instances of poor communication between fostering workers and the children’s social workers. One specifically referred to excessive concern regarding confidentiality which was hindering information sharing. A placing social worker reported not being told when a child had an accident. Several others referred to not being told about respite arrangements, or about new placements.

To balance this, inspectors also heard examples of good working relationships, and foster carers saying that they were supported well. They valued the efforts made on their behalf by the fostering workers and referred to a ‘flurry of activity’ from the childcare team, triggered by a visit from their fostering link worker. Several singled out particular fostering workers for especial praise: ‘brilliant’, ‘friendly and helpful’, and ‘team do excellent job given the shortage of staff’.

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?****2**

Many carers made positive comments about the support they received from the fostering staff. However, as stated at Standard 16, inspectors heard a great deal of concern expressed by foster carers about the turnover of staff in the fostering team and especially in the childcare teams of the local authority. Twenty-three of the surveys received made reference to concerns about lack of staff and staff turnover. Carers referred to the lack of experience of some social workers as a considerable concern. Panel minutes indicated that panel members had concerns about children not having an allocated worker.

Various strategies had been introduced to address the staffing problem, including re-location packages, mortgage subsidies, and flexible working conditions. There was also a strategy for seconding staff for training and formal links had been established with the universities.

Private fostering was to be included within the remit of the fostering team and three assessments were being undertaken. Some concern was heard that staffing levels needed to take this into account.

Attention had been given to broadening the strategies used to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of the children and young people. A member of staff had been given specific responsibility for recruitment and was undertaking initial visits in response to enquiries. Inspectors were informed that work is being done to update the information pack. The service had also commissioned an external company to develop recruitment strategies. At the time of this inspection there were no outstanding enquirers waiting for assessments; an experienced agency worker was undertaking a number of assessments.

The fostering service was planning to introduce a competency based, payment for skills, approach. Reports read indicated that the assessment of foster carers was variable. Some files read included a high quality of assessment work. In other cases there were omissions and limited analysis. In particular there were concerns about the following:

- Insufficient checks made when prospective carers had lived overseas.
- Not pursuing checks when carers had previously offered student accommodation, or were employed with children.
- An example was seen in which it was not evidenced that the male applicant had been seen alone.
- There was inconsistency in how health and safety factors were addressed.
- Simplistic discussion of racial/cultural/linguistic issues.
- Impact on children already living in the household.
- Policy and practice when applicant is a registered childminder.
- Reports presented to panel with insufficient detail of significant issues.

A previous recommendation about the assessment process is repeated.

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?**

1

Inspectors heard mixed reports in relation to this standard. They were informed by staff of examples in which staff considered they had been treated very unfairly in terms of conditions of service or in terms of expectations in their particular role. These issues had contributed to low morale in the team, and to individual distress and /or role uncertainty. It was also reported that at the time of the inspection morale was improving with new appointments to the team and an atmosphere of some enthusiasm.

The council does provide a counselling service for staff. The occupational health service is also accessed where required. Despite this inspectors were told that a staff member with identified support needs had not been provided with the items required to assist their working practice, although had been in post for over a year.

Inspectors were advised that staff experienced some significant degree of criticism and discomfort following the previous inspection when it was clear that some had spoken frankly about shortfalls in the service. This is unacceptable.

A previous recommendation made was that the whistleblowing policy should be made known to carers (as at Standard 18.7). The manager confirmed the policy was available to both staff and carers. On two occasions inspectors were told by carers that they believed they should 'not be seen talking to inspectors', or that they would be 'in trouble'. This lack of openness is a concern and the local authority must strive to change the culture in which such perceptions are occurring.

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

Staff identified that there had been marked improvements in the level of training available to them. This was welcomed. There was evidence of a range of training opportunities that had been made available and taken up by staff, including external events.

There is a proposal for a dedicated trainer from the council's Staff Development Unit to work with the team and foster carers for 18 ½ hours per week from April 2005.

A recommendation is made (as per Standard 19.5) that the effectiveness of training programmes for the staff is routinely evaluated and training programmes are reviewed and updated at least annually.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Evidence was seen that staff were receiving regular supervision. A sample of staff files seen indicated that annual appraisals were taking place.</p> <p>Staff and team meetings were held on a regular basis.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
<p>There were a number of proposals about changes to the support and training of foster carers. A payment for skills scheme was to be introduced. These changes had not been implemented at the time of the inspection. The statement of purpose states: (p.15) 'Monthly support group meetings have been suspended due to a decline in attendance. There are plans for it to be reintroduced in a different format using the Total Respect Group to facilitate it.' It was being proposed that carers would be encouraged to attend a rolling programme of training within the Total Respect framework. The emphasis on promoting positive communication with young people was commendable. Despite this, inspectors considered that there was insufficient consideration given to the role of support groups.</p> <p>A number of carers informed the inspectors that the lack of groups was seen as a loss. It was evident at the group meeting specifically arranged for the purposes of this inspection that foster carers very much welcomed the opportunity to meet with each other and regretted that there were no regular opportunities.</p> <p>Some work was being done by a team member and a foster carer to develop a self-help forum for foster carers but this remained in its early stages. It was noted that the foster carers spoken to were not familiar with this proposal nor did they know who was representing them on the consultative group with management looking at fostering issues.</p> <p>Data (updated 9th February 2005) indicated that there were fifteen foster carer reviews which were overdue, some for a substantial period, and a requirement is made that these must be completed at intervals of no more than a year. There is no system yet in place for foster carers to be reviewed by someone independently of their own link worker. If the service is to have an agenda for improvement there will need to be capacity for working towards best practice.</p> <p>As previously stated, (see Standard 4 and Standard 16) there was a variable quality about the effectiveness of communication between the child's social worker and the fostering social workers. A number of examples were described in which the fostering worker was undertaking the statutory visiting role of the childcare social worker. Fostering team staff were also, on occasion, supervising contacts.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service aims to provide supervision and support to carers on a six weekly visiting basis, recorded with a copy being returned to the carers. Several examples were seen where this was being achieved, but other files indicated a much less frequent pattern.

Foster care agreements contain the relevant information and other policies and guidance are provided in a handbook. The handbook was still in need of substantial updating and reviewing; the work being done on this was seen by inspectors. It is recommended that this should be progressed.

The fostering service had struggled to maintain an appropriate level of support and supervision of carers. Survey responses from carers indicated that some had been without a fostering worker for some time. The lack of support in these cases was a concern. Some responses indicated that carers had been upset by the lack of support, and these feelings were also evidenced in the group meeting with foster carers. One questionnaire stated that the carers had "become stressed through lack of support". This was echoed in the discussions with carers.

Several spoke about arrangements for respite being left to the last minute. Other forms of practical support were identified as an issue for some carers. Nine questionnaires referred to dissatisfaction about finances, including delays in payments for respite arrangements, support for childcare in training, day care.

Since the last inspection the service available to carers no longer includes regular support group meetings. (See Standard 21). The group for male carers has also lapsed. Bournemouth Borough carers do not have a formal link with any local foster care association. Staff in the fostering team have considered ways of encouraging a self-help foster carer forum. Efforts have been piecemeal and staff acknowledged that plans were in their infancy.

Managers informed inspectors that there is a proposal to re-instate regular group meetings for carers which would combine a training element. There was no specific timescale for this. It was planned that a ten week programme involving the Total Respect team would be available.

The majority of responses indicated that carers were very aware of the fostering team being 'overstretched'. Many comments were made about how hard the staff worked to give a good service, despite difficult circumstances. Several workers were singled out for individual praise and the role played by the link workers was clearly valued by the carers.

At the time of the inspection an agency worker and a newly appointed staff member were available and the service was offering a more comprehensive pattern of support.

There was a separate record kept of complaints and allegations. As reported following the previous inspection, it was not a very systematic recording and no improvement has been seen.

In some cases, as discussed in Standard 9, the response made to allegations and potential child protection issues was not appropriate. This was confirmed by the Borough's child protection co-ordinator. A small number of foster carers referred to the unsatisfactory process they experienced when allegations or concerns had arisen, and a particularly long delay was noted in one case when the foster carers had not received any indication of the authority's concern. There were also examples of foster carers who were not confident that complaints they had raised had been satisfactorily or promptly dealt with.

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?

2

Inspectors were told that the local authority plans to make a dedicated trainer available to work with carers from April 2005. Significant changes are being proposed for the assessment and training of carers involving the introduction of a payment for skills strategy. No definite timescale has been decided for this at this point. As stated at Standard 22 there was a plan to provide a ten-week programme to carers involving the Total Respect group, which would consider communication and anti-discriminatory practice issues.

A number of foster carers indicated that they had been provided with helpful training opportunities. Inspectors acknowledge the positive steps being made by the service in regard to the training of foster carers. There continues to be a need to ensure that safe care practice is promoted (Standard 23.6), that specific support is given to any help or support needed by sons and daughters of foster carers (Standard 23.7), and that the effectiveness of training received is evaluated and reviewed annually.

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

The records held by the fostering service in respect of the children placed with foster carers were variable. The primary case records for the children were maintained by the childcare social workers and were not inspected. In some cases the information held at the fostering service was insufficient, for example no copy of a placement agreement or other Looked After Children documentation. In most cases there was evidence that the fostering service aimed to ensure that adequate information from the childcare teams was available, although as stated elsewhere carers did report that they did not always get given full information (see Standard 9).

Foster carer files in general held the required information, although some omissions indicate that regular audit with Fostering Services Regulations in mind should be undertaken. The audit tool evidenced on some files was not very helpful. Examples were seen of misfiling, case notes not signed or dated, significant gaps in case recording, and information not being comprehensively presented in reviews. The panel minutes were not available on some foster carer files (Regulation 30(2)).

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

148

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

x

UNABLE TO PROVIDE

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

x

UNABLE TO PROVIDE

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

21

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

9

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

0.00

Maximum £

0.00

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?

0

This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This standard is not applicable.

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?

9

This standard is not applicable.

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?

2

Carers did not report any concerns about the payment of regular allowances. There were however a number of comments, (ten survey responses) about late payments of respite allowances, inconsistencies about day care payments and other more miscellaneous expenses. Several carers referred to frustrations about the lack of a retainer, especially having given up a job. Others referred to the differences between what carers were paid, for what they thought was the same job. The recommendation, previously made is repeated. The inspectors were informed about proposals to introduce a competency based, payment for skills approach which would replace the various schemes that have evolved in a more piecemeal way over time. Timescales for this were still uncertain.

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?

2

Inspectors were told that the operation of panel has not been without problems. The administrator has found the independent panel chair sometimes difficult to contact. The quality of minutes has caused some concern and changes in the minute taking arrangements have been introduced. The venue for panel has also changed and it now takes place in the same building as the fostering service. This is seen as a positive change. At this point there has been no move to having foster care applicants attend panel, although proposals to implement this were being discussed.

An inspector observed fostering panel on 23rd February 2005. Panel identified that some items presented contained insufficient information. In a number of cases panel recommended approval but with further actions or information required. It was not clear how these issues were to be followed up.

Panel members' commitment to the quality assurance function of the panel was being enhanced by regular opportunities to consider management information. Business meetings were established which met on a regular basis. Minutes of these meetings were seen by inspectors.

The panel chair acknowledged that there is outstanding work to be done to ensure policies and procedures are compliant with the National Minimum Standards.

Panel membership had broadened and contained an appropriate number of independent members. The panel included members with expertise in education and child health.

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?

3

There had been no new carers approved within the short breaks scheme during the previous twelve months. Several assessments were ongoing. There was a waiting list of thirteen referrals where no service had yet been provided. Training to prospective carers was provided through the Skills to Foster programme available to all prospective carers.

As stated at Standard 12, the social workers had made progress in developing clearer guidelines in supporting carers where placements were being considered in which the child required invasive medical techniques.

There were close working relationships with the childcare team responsible for children with a disability, who shared office premises with the fostering team.

There were significant changes in the staffing of the short breaks provision. This standard is reported as met, but inspectors identified that there will need to be clear and effective management of this service to ensure continuing development.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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It was reported that there has been improved, more consistent practice in the service in relation to the assessment and approval of family and friend carers. Since the last inspection a Policies and Procedures document has been issued. Senior management has given clear expectations about practice across the fieldwork teams.

The panel chair confirmed that there was some improvement in information that was being presented to panel. Files examined evidenced that assessments were being more consistently completed in accordance with Regulation 27. This remains an area for careful monitoring.

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 9th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The Council is heartened to see the progress made to date, acknowledged by inspectors, while accepting there is more work to do. We concur with the requirements and recommendations, and will be addressing them all over the coming months

The real concerns expressed about senior management have been taken very seriously and work has begun already to address the issues raised positively with staff. With their honesty and senior management commitment to improving communication / consultation systems, we are confident real improvement will be achieved.

Concerns raised by foster carers during this inspection will be given immediate attention. The Council has a commitment to our fostering service and is intent upon achieving excellence.

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

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

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 16th 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"/> NO
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 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 Valerie King (Manager) of Bournemouth Family Placement Team 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:

Decline to confirm accuracy prior to the amendment. (Amendment made as requested)

Print Name	<u>KEVIN JONES</u>
Signature	<u><i>Kevin Jones</i></u>
Designation	<u>Head of Childrens Services</u>
Date	<u>8/5/2005</u>

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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