



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service

Lincolnshire County Council
Social Services Directorate, Orchard House
Orchard Street
Lincoln
LN1 1BA

2nd 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

Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service

Address

Lincolnshire County Council, Social Services Directorate,
Orchard House, Orchard Street, Lincoln, LN1 1BA

Local Authority Manager

Mr Philip Hunt

Tel No:

01522 554464

Address

Sleaford Area Office, Council Offices, Eastgate, Sleaford,
NG34 7EB

Fax No:

01529 307728

Email Address

Philip.hunt@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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

03/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		2nd February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jane Barton	134550
Name of Inspector	2	Mark Ryder	
Name of Inspector	3	Bridget Betts (CSCI consultant)	
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		Philip Hunt – County Manager CLA	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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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

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Lincolnshire Local Authority Fostering Service sets out within its Statement of Purpose the aim to 'provide a range of foster carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, religious and ethnicity needs of all the children looked after by the local authority'.

These placements include the following types of carers:

Task centred, Respite Care, Permanent, Specialist Carers for children with disabilities, Placement Plus Carers for children with challenging behaviour, and Kinship Carers. It has recently developed specialist provision to provide emergency placements.

The number of Approved Foster Carers provided by the service was 246 and the number of placements being provided was 299 at the time of inspection.

The service operates within Lincolnshire County Council, Social Services Directorate. This is split into three geographical areas, South, West and East. The County Manager for Children Looked After and Regulated Services has specific responsibility for the Family Placement Services and is the Local Authorities nominated manager for this service.

The Family Placement Staff are based in a number of Social Service Area Offices throughout Lincolnshire. The service has a dedicated duty system, based in the Lincoln Area Office to deal with enquiries. The family placement staff are responsible for undertaking the foster carer's assessments and taking these to the Fostering Panel.

The Fostering Service also employs a number of Placement Support Workers who provide direct support, including some respite day care, to carers.

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.)

Inspectors received completed questionnaires from 33 young people, 17 foster carers and 3 placing officers. Due to administrative difficulties immediately prior to the inspection it was not possible to obtain names of placing officers to send questionnaires to, with the exception of the four placements which were case tracked. Five placements were visited and inspectors spoke with children and young people in placement, in addition to which inspectors met with a group of foster carers at a support group meeting, and a group of carers and 13 children and young people brought together specifically to meet with inspectors and share their views about the fostering service. Interviews were carried out with all relevant service and practice managers and five family placement officers. Fostering and children's records were examined within the case tracking process. 1 parent contacted the inspector via their solicitor and stated that overall they were happy with the quality of care received from the foster carers looking after their children.

Typical quotes from young people from the questionnaires in respect of the best thing about fostering included 'my carers are the best', 'I live in a good foster home', 'I am really happy with the people I'm with', 'the best thing is hugs', 'and I feel safe'.

Overall positives in respect of the service include experienced and skilled staff, offering robust support to carers, experienced carers, who are involved in preparation courses for new carers, improved data collection and collation systems, children feel safe and consulted in respect of their care. Inspectors found that family placement workers carried out effective assessment and support of family and friends carers.

Areas for development in respect of the service include timeliness of payments to carers, clarification in respect of measures of control within placements to be agreed at placement planning stage, a need to increase some carers proactive participation in training, improvements in maintenance of recruitment files, formalisation of the out of ours support system for carers, and development of a policy and training for carers in respect of young people preparing to leave care.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met

A Statement of Purpose was in place, which addressed the aims and objectives of the service. The service has devised and produced a children's guide which clearly summarises the aims of the service in two formats, for younger and older children.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

1 of the 1 standards assessed were met

The nominated manager has all required relevant qualifications and experience, and all required checks and references had been carried out.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

2 of the 2 standards assessed were met

Data collection systems were in place, and centralised records were available in respect of complaints and allegations. Managers and staff described clear lines of communication and accountability. Processes to monitor quality assurance have been put in place.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

6 of the 9 standards assessed were met, 2 standards were exceeded, 1 was not met

Annual reviews, health and safety checks, unannounced visits and risk assessments were being carried out appropriately. Children and young people were observed to be provided with caring, supportive and stimulating placements, although file records did not evidence planning and communication in respect of one placement visited. Young people spoke highly of support and encouragement offered by carers. A robust introductory process was in place, with children being supported to move into placements at an appropriate pace, where possible. Systems are in place for collating all child protection referrals, allegations and complaints for monitoring by the manager. Young people spoke positively about the arrangements and support they receive in respect of contact. They said they felt consulted effectively about their placements and were aware of the complaints process. The service made a positive contribution towards meeting the educational needs of children in foster placements. The NCH leaving care team provides a service to young people preparing to leave care.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)

7 of the 8 standards assessed were met

The nominated manager provided evidence that appropriate checks had been carried out and documentary evidence within the staff recruitment processes was seen. Qualified workers undertake all assessments. 2 unqualified workers are currently undertaking qualifying training. Staff feel well supported by the line management process. Supervision is regular, thorough and appropriate to the role. A training strategy is in place which addresses the needs of staff and carers. Carers described receiving an accessible and supportive response from family placement officers, particularly in a crisis. A formal supervision process for carers is in the process of being piloted. Experienced carers are involved in preparation training for new carers.

Records (Standards 24-25)

1 of the 2 standards assessed were met, 1 was exceeded

A written policy on recording was in place. File records contained comprehensive and relevant information and were well organised. Effective systems were in place for data collection and collation.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was exceeded

Premises in Louth, Sleaford and Lincoln were inspected and found to provide a high standard of accommodation and administrative support.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

These standards were not inspected as the service is a Local Authority provision

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was met

The fostering panel sits jointly with NCH Action for Children, an independent fostering agency, who form part of the membership. The panel was quorate, all members contributed appropriately to the discussions and were observed to identify relevant issues from assessments for clarification and deliberation.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not inspected

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was exceeded.

Assessment and support of family and friends carers was found to be of a high standard.

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	

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 Jane Barton Signature _____
Second Inspector Mark Ryder Signature _____
Regulation Manager Rachel Cook 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	13 (2) (b)	FS6	The fostering service provider to ensure that all measures of control or surveillance used in the placement be agreed between relevant professionals during the placement planning process and recorded as such.	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	FS9	The fostering service provider to ensure that a safer caring policy for each individual foster home is drawn up in consultation with the child, carer and every other member of the household.
2	FS12	The fostering service provider to ensure that all foster carers are provided with a written health record for all children which they can update throughout the placement.
3	FS14	The fostering service to develop written guidance for carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living. The fostering service to ensure that foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person preparing to move into independent or semi-independent living.

4	FS18	The fostering service to develop a formalised system for providing out of hours management and support to foster carers.
5	FS22	The fostering service to develop a supervision policy for inclusion in the foster carers handbook.
6	FS23	The fostering service to develop a system to monitor participation in training modules and events by foster carers.
7	FS30	The fostering service shall formalise the policy for decision-making at fostering panel when members are not in agreement. The fostering service shall identify and provide training to enhance the development of the Performance Manager role as advisor to panel.

* 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	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	02/02/05
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	64

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

The Statement of Purpose was examined and found to clearly identify the aims and objectives of the fostering service, having been updated in January 2005. The document contained information required of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, including details of complaints received by the Fostering Service and numbers of approved foster carers and children placed.

2 Children's guides have been produced which clearly summarise what the service sets out to do for children. The guide for younger children is intended for carers to read to the child, and the guide for older children is attractively laid out and accessible.

The majority of respondents to the young people's questionnaires stated they had received written information about being fostered at the time they were placed in foster care.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This standard was not inspected.		

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 of the service has been assessed by the Commission to be suitable to manage. The Manager's personnel file was examined during a previous inspection and it was stated that no changes have taken place in respect of these since the last inspection. Records evidence that CRB checks are carried out on a 3-year rolling programme for all fostering service staff.		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service had clear lines of management and accountability. Regular management meetings take place which ensure established lines of communication.

The service has established a new Performance Manager role for fostering and adoption. This represents a lead on the development of the service, to organise and implement performance and quality standards. The Performance Manager described ongoing project work which is gathering information to inform the future direction of the service on a countywide basis.

The area offices record data which is collated and made available countywide.

Information in respect of complaints received by the service was provided. This information was well recorded with clear outcomes. 6 complaints were received, 3 were not substantiated, 2 were partially substantiated and 1 was substantiated.

24 respondents to the young people's questionnaire stated they were familiar with the process for making a complaint.

The service have instigated a Fostering Inspection Group which meets regularly to address issues arising from the requirements of the last inspection. This group is attended by the fostering management team, agenda items include monitoring the action plan arising from the previous inspection.

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

NA

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

5

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**

Inspection of records and discussion with managers evidenced clear job descriptions in place setting out duties and responsibilities of managers. Interviews with managers revealed that monitoring of assessments produced for panel takes place at Service Manager level. There are clear arrangements in place for deputising in the absence of the Fostering Manager.

Departmental policies procedure and guidance ensure carers, staff and management are clear about individual accountability.

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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	2
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Inspectors visited five foster homes during the inspection. Overall these were found to be of a high standard, offering warm clean and comfortably furnished accommodation and well maintained.

Files evidenced that health and safety checks are carried out during the approval process, and updated at annual reviews. At least one unannounced visit is carried out to the foster home each year. The preparation for carers includes completion of a health and safety questionnaire, and written guidance is available within the Foster Carers Handbook.

One foster home visited during the inspection contained measures of surveillance and control which did not appear to have been agreed during the care planning process. File records did not evidence this planning.

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?
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	3
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Interviews with family placement staff highlight that Lincolnshire has predominantly white European carers and children requiring placements, however file records reveal that issues arising from specific ethnic religious or cultural needs of a child are given consideration when making placements. Care Plans and supervision records reflect measures taken to address these.

A series of training workbooks have been devised for carers to work through, and No 4 addresses issues of diversity and ethnicity. Managers stated that this workbook will be available for carers shortly following the inspection.

Carers stated that they had been provided with specialist equipment and adaptations to facilitate their care of children with a disability.

Discussion with young people evidenced that they had received support and encouragement to nurture their self esteem and confidence.

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?	3
All young people spoken with stated they were happy in their placements and get on well with their carers. Young people said, however, they had not been given any choice of placement.		
Discussion with carers evidenced a robust planning and introductory process, involving visits to the child in their previous placement. This was confirmed by inspection of records.		
Discussion with managers evidenced more difficulties in matching young people aged over 11, for whom there are insufficient placements. Placements are requested through a central duty desk, and the duty officer liaises with family placement officers and social workers prior to a placement being made.		

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
Inspection of records and discussion with the Manager evidences that systems are in place for centrally collating all child protection referrals, allegations and complaints for monitoring by the Manager.		
The Lincolnshire County Council Child Protection Manager stated there have been 5 child protection enquiries in respect of children and young people placed in foster care, and that appropriate procedures were followed and staff co-operated satisfactorily. Inspection of these records revealed that outcomes of investigations were clearly recorded.		
Safe caring guidelines are provided to carers during the preparation course. Discussion with carers revealed they were familiar with the policy, however it was not evidenced that individual written household policies had been drawn up. Clear guidance is available in respect of appropriate and permissible sanctions. The fostering training strategy includes planned session on safe caring, and files evidence that module 3 of the training workbooks have been issued to all carers. Interviews with family placement officers evidence this module is being given high priority for completion by carers. Several carers told inspectors they were booked on safe caring training due to take place shortly following this inspection.		
Children and young people did not raise any concerns in respect of bullying. Children described being supported by their carers to address bullying incidents at home. The foster carers handbook contains a robust bullying policy.		
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

Carers described a variety of ways they support and encourage contact, respondents to the questionnaires describe contact in the foster home, transporting children to relatives houses, assisting them to write letters, make phone calls, and buying presents. Carers expressed concern that mileage rates for transportation have been reduced recently, however the Manager stated that there are plans to review mileage rates in the near future.

Some young people responding to questionnaires described asking for changes in contact arrangements which were responded to positively. Interviews with young people evidenced regular contact and file records revealed clear recording of arrangements for contact.

File records evidenced some recording by carers of supervised contact. Some carers expressed the view that the levels of contact imposed by the court during care proceedings were not realistic in terms of the needs of the child.

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?**

4

The Manager stated that all young people in foster care have received a NYAS pack which includes information about the service and contact numbers to access an independent and confidential service for young people needing advocacy advice and representation. Discussion with the coordinator revealed that he is planning to attend foster carer support group meetings to promote advocacy and children's rights. Young people spoken with during the inspection were aware of this service. Young people said they felt consulted about their placements. Respondents to the questionnaires all gave examples of areas in which they were consulted by their foster carers and social workers.

Files evidenced consultation with young people and foster carers, as part of the LAC documentation and reviewing process.

Young people said they were aware of how to make a complaint about the service if they needed to. New complaints leaflets had been produced, which were accessible to young people and signposted them to appropriate telephone numbers including the CSCI. These leaflets were not specific to fostered children.

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**

A Designated Doctor is provided in conjunction with Lincolnshire Health Trust to address the health needs of Looked after Children. Foster carers described receiving support from CAMHS workers who advise on behaviour management strategies and attachment disorders.

All respondents to the young people's questionnaire gave examples of how they were supported to look after their health, such as through eating a balanced diet, learning to cook, or encouraged to exercise. One young person described receiving advice from a dietician, and another was observed to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own medication in an age appropriate manner.

Inspection of file records evidence health assessments are undertaken during the care planning process. Carers stated they did not all have a copy of health care plans for the child.

Records evidence that children and young people are registered with doctors and opticians. Carers described difficulties in accessing dental services for children and young people. This issue was raised with the Manager at the time of inspection.

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?****4**

The majority of young people respondents to the questionnaire stated they receive help and encouragement with school work in their foster home. Discussions with individual young people evidenced a high level of support within education, including provision of transport to avoid moving school placements, provision of laptops to facilitate school work, and general support provided by carers, including liaising with teachers to resolve difficulties. One young person had received the school cup for positive behaviour. Another was in receipt of an individual package to facilitate a return to full-time mainstream education.

Inspection of files revealed that personal education plans had been produced, in consultation with the young people. Family Placement officers described working alongside education professionals to focus on, for example, a consistency of response to address behaviour issues both in the classroom and in the placement.

Educational Services produce a newsletter for foster carers on the education of LAC which offers advice to carers about promoting education for children and young people of all ages gives contact names of relevant education officers in the directorate with specific responsibility for the education of LAC.

Young people and their carers had been invited to attend a Celebration of Achievement event just after the inspection, which includes a display of artwork created by young people

in care to take place at a local arts centre.

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

Interview with the Training Manager revealed that a training seminar for carers is planned in respect of preparing young people to leave care and for independent living. Records evidence that Placement Plus carers have received training. The foster carers handbook contains no policy in respect of care leavers, however the Manager stated a draft policy is currently being prepared. The Manager stated that the number of young people leaving care in the authority have a record for employment or further education which is above the national average.

Interviews with young people revealed they are receiving positive support from carers in respect of independence training and encouragement in terms of further education and career choice.

Discussion with staff evidenced that a NCH leaving care worker is allocated to all looked after children at the review prior to their 16th birthday, at which point the pathway plan is compiled. Carers raised some concerns about the accessibility of this service. These comments were passed to the Manager during the inspection.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service uses the Lincolnshire County Council SSD appointment checklist which addresses the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations. 4 staff recruitment files were inspected. These files are managed by an organisation contracted to provide the service, presented as disorganised, and did not contain all the required documentation. The Manager of the service retains a register of staff, however, which contains evidence of CRB checks and documentary proof of qualifications.

Records evidenced that all family placement officers involved in assessment and approval of foster carers are qualified social workers. Interviews with Managers, and inspection of records reveal that family placement assistants involvement in assessment work is carried out under the direct supervision of qualified workers.

The Manager stated that two family placement assistants are currently undertaking qualifying training, and two will commence in September this year. 9 family placement officers have completed PQ1, and 5 candidates are nominated for 2005.

Total number of staff of the agency:

61

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

6

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

The service operates under a clear management structure. Staff stated they feel well supported by the line management processes, records evidence they are supervised by qualified and experienced supervisors. Staff spoken with stated they had had an appraisal within the last year.

Practice Managers were aware of workload variations across the county and described measures in place to work across boundaries where necessary to meet the needs of placements.

Discussion with staff, and inspection of premises and records reveal that the clerical and administrative support available to the service is of a high standard.

Staff in the east and south offices, in particular, work closely with placing social workers based in adjacent teams in the same building. Staff expressed the view that this enables joint working. File records confirmed this.

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

Discussion with staff and inspection of records reveal that carers are recruited through regular local media features, and a range of events publicising the need for carers is planned on an annual basis. The Manager stated that the current preparation course was ongoing with 17 prospective carers.

There are inconsistencies in the service between the areas. Managers and staff acknowledge difficulties in recruiting staff and carers in the east particularly. Observations, discussion with staff, and inspection of records, reveal that contingency plans were in place where staffing vacancies exist, and although staff report high workloads there was an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the children for whom it provides a service. Records evidence that staff turnover was low. Staff described access to robust and appropriate access to supervision, training and appraisal.

Inspection of assessment files evidenced that no competence-based assessment is used. The assessment process is clearly laid out, and files evidenced appropriate checks and references being carried out, with assessments addressing matters required under Standard 17.7. The form F's viewed by inspectors were of a good standard. Carers spoken with described their assessment as 'fair and open'.

The Manager stated that carers who leave the service are requested to complete an exit questionnaire, the outcomes of which inform the recruitment and retention strategy.

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

Inspection of files evidenced that supervision of family placement workers takes place regularly and addresses practice issues in a child focussed manner. Workers spoke positively about the support they received from their managers. Managers described staff as keen and committed.

Out of hours management and support is provided on an informal basis by family placement officers and manager. Carers spoke highly of the support they receive from individual workers.

Carers demonstrated an awareness of the whistleblowing policy, and described an appropriate response to concerns about practice or safety of children and young people.

The handbook contains a comprehensive health and safety policy.

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

A clear training strategy is in place. The Training Manager stated that family placement staff can access training through the LACPC fieldwork and LAC training strategies, in addition to which workshops will be offered to facilitate family placement officers in their role as support to foster carers working through the training workbook modules.

Discussion with family placement staff evidenced a positive commitment to training and professional development. Minutes of staff meetings evidenced that these are well attended and address training issues, support groups, caseload, supervision, staffing and data collection. Supervision records reveal discussion and advice given in respect of improving and developing practice.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not inspected.

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**

There is a clear strategy in place which documents the policy for working with carers. Interviews with staff and carers evidenced that this is understood by staff and followed in practice.

Respondents to carers questionnaires in respect to support received from family placement staff gave a mixed picture. The majority were very satisfied. 3 respondents stated they don't get enough support, including information not being provided in respect of health needs of the children placed. Carers expressed the view that staff were over-stretched which impeded communication at times. Some emergency carers and respite carers particularly highlighted difficulty in accessing support.

Inspectors met with two groups of carers, the majority of whom spoke highly of the support they receive, both from support groups and individual family placement workers. Carers visited in placement described a very high level of individualised support, particularly in a crisis, including practical support, being provided by staff. The Service Managers or Practice Managers attend support groups on a regular basis.

Inspection of files evidenced that annual reviews are carried out on time.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Discussion with staff, carers and inspection of records reveal that a carers supervision policy is being piloted in 2 areas within the service. At the time of inspection there was no guidance in the foster carers handbook, however files evidenced that all carers had been given written information about the policy. Carers stated they have been shown a pro-forma supervision recording form, and were expecting supervision to start the week following the inspection. The pro forma will address issues relating to the child, the carer and their family circumstances, and identify training and development needs.

Carers stated they have received copies of the Handbook, which is being updated on a rolling programme. They were aware of the procedures in respect of complaints, allegations and investigations. Some carers raised concerns about late payment of expenses.

Files evidenced that foster care agreements were current and clearly outlined expectations of all parties. Records about allegations of abuse were kept on file and collated centrally for monitoring purposes.

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

The Training Manager described the training strategy for carers. The training workshop modules 1-3 have been sent to carers, however details in respect of which carers have completed the modules are not available. A series of special interest seminars are planned for carers which will address a comprehensive range of relevant topics. Fostering service staff will be invited to the seminars. The focus of the seminars will reflect the safe care requirements, and will link with the content of the training workbook modules for carers.

Carers questionnaires revealed the majority had received training in a range of areas, several carers stated they attend all training offered. A few carers said they had not been able to access training since approval. One carer cited training as one of the best things about fostering. Another carer showed the inspector their completed module 3 workbook.

Experienced carers stated they are involved in preparation course for new carers, new carers expressed the view that this was an extremely positive aspect of the course.

Family placement officers acknowledged that some carers continue to be resistant to training. Discussion with staff and inspection of files evidence that strategies to address this were in place, family placement staff prioritise training during their discussions with carers and continue to encourage carers to participate, consideration is being given to the timing of sessions to facilitate attendance.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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2 placing officer respondents to the questionnaires stated the child is being looked after in accordance with the care plan, very well.

5 children's files were inspected. Files contained comprehensive up to date information in respect of the care plan for the child, and the monitoring of the plan through the LAC statutory reviewing process. The files had been audited shortly prior to the inspection, and contained a complete record of information. The recording was carried out to a high standard.

There is a written policy on recording in place and foster carers have been provided with a secure case for storage of confidential materials. Discussion with carers and inspection of files evidence carers recording of significant events in the child's life. The training strategy includes a course on undertaking life story work with children and young people.

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?**

4

Inspection of premises revealed that records are stored confidentially and securely. Records are kept in respect of individual children and foster carers, and a policy is in place which enables a child or parent to have access to files as appropriate. Files contain evidence of checks and references obtained, and their outcomes.

There is an effective system in place for keeping records about allegations and complaints, including details of the investigation, and outcomes. Inspection of files evidenced the system is being managed appropriately.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

410

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

188

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

179

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

44

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

27

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

73.25

Maximum £

273.86

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?

4

Premises on the three area sites were visited by inspectors. The premises were found to be appropriately accessible and to contain well equipped and efficient administrative support. All IT systems have data protection and security.

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 was not inspected due to the service being a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44.

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 was not inspected as the service is a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44.

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?

9

This standard was not inspected due to the service being a local authority provision and exempt from Regulation 44. Foster carers allowances are published and reviewed annually.

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

The fostering panel is a joint panel with NCH independent fostering agency who form part of the membership. The fostering panel operates separately from the adoption panel.

The inspector observed one panel meeting during the inspection. The panel was quorate and all members contributed to the discussions. Independent members included expertise in a range of relevant areas, such as education. Panel were observed to identify relevant issues arising from assessments and consider these in open and frank discussion. Disagreements were clearly acknowledged. The policy in respect of the operation of panel does not cover the decision-making process when members are not in agreement.

Prospective carers were enabled to attend panel with family placement officers to provide panel members with an opportunity to clarify issues directly with them.

Inspection of records evidenced that the range of issues referred to panel regularly include private fostering placements, annual reviews of carers and assessments of family or friends as carers.

The panel Chair acknowledged the limitations in the range of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of the children requiring placements, in particular the lack of placements available for older children. The Chair is an employee of Lincolnshire Social Services Directorate with no line management responsibility within the operational service. The Performance Manager role includes that of advisor to panel, and he acknowledged a need for training in order to develop skills to inform practice in this area.

The panel chair raised a concern in respect of CRB checks for panel members. The chair was satisfied that all current members have CRB checks, however she has been advised by the directorate's CRB manager that panel members must not be checked as they have no direct contact with children. This matter is being clarified outside of the inspection process.

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?	0
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This standard was not inspected.

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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Inspection of files evidenced that robust assessments have been carried out. Files contained comprehensive information informing the assessment, and appropriate signed and dated agreements were in place.

Carers described receiving extensive support from family placement staff, including emotional and practical support to themselves and the child in placement. Records evidenced staff working with educational professionals to address the child's needs as identified in the care plan, and family placement staff working alongside social workers to manage sensitively difficult relationships within the family arising from the placements.

Training needs for family and friends carers are assessed as for other carers. Carers were undertaking distance learning training and presented as well motivated to attend further training seminars.

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 2nd to 4th February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We are working on the best way to include Provider responses in the published report. In the meantime, responses received are available on request.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

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

YES

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 within 28 days, 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

YES

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:

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 Mr Matthew Bukowski of Lincolnshire County Council (Fostering Service) confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I Mr Matthew Bukowski of Lincolnshire County Council (Fostering Service) am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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