



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service**

The Pines  
Bilford Road  
Worcester  
WR3 8PU

31st January, 1st, 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and  
10th 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**

Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service

**Address**

The Pines, Bilford Road, Worcester, WR3 8PU

**Local Authority Manager**

Jean Pickering

**Tel No:**

01905 752830

**Address**

The Pines, Bilford Road, Worcester, WR3 8PU

**Fax No:**

01905 752806

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

16/3/04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		31st January, 1 <sup>st</sup> ,2 <sup>nd</sup> ,4 <sup>th</sup> ,7 <sup>th</sup> ,8 <sup>th</sup> ,9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2005		<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Sue Young	089999	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Katherine Ward		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>	Jacqueline Dunster		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>	N/A		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		N/A		
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		N/A		
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		N/A		

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

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**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this 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**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
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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 Worcestershire 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.**

Worcester County Council Fostering Service provides a range of foster care services to children requiring short-term, long-term and permanent placements. The Service operates a countywide duty system accepting referrals from social workers and will aim to provide a link with an approved foster carer. Where this is not possible the Fostering Service provides assistance in identifying a placement with an alternative fostering service provider. The Service recruits and trains new foster carers, provides a range of training, support services and supervision to existing foster carers and approves family and friends as 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.)



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 Inspection took place over fourteen days in February 2005. It found that the majority of the National Minimum Standards had been met or partially met.

The Inspectors were aware of the considerable work that had been conducted by the Service in developing policies, procedures and guidance since the last Inspection.

Where appropriate young people living with foster carers were asked to complete questionnaires. Questionnaires were also sent to foster carers and Children's Social Worker.

175 children's social worker questionnaires, 61 foster parent questionnaires and 47 young peoples questionnaires were completed.

These questionnaires were used to inform the requirements and recommendations set out in this report.

In all questionnaires children's social workers responded with positive comments about the Service and considered the Service worked well in partnership with them.

Young people felt they were generally consulted about issues in the placement and were aware of the complaints procedures.

Foster carers on the whole responded in a positive way about the Service although many expressed concerns over frequent staff changes and long periods without allocated fostering social workers, which in turn affected the level of support received.

The Fostering Service Manager provided the Inspectors with comprehensive and informative pre inspection information. The pre inspection questionnaires demonstrated that the Fostering Service was aware of areas where it met practice and areas where practice needed to be developed.

#### **Statement of Purpose.**

This Standard was partially met.

Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose, which has been reviewed since the last Inspection to meet all the requirements listed in Standard 1.4. The Statement of Purpose sets out clear aims and objectives and the service it provides. The Service employs a User Involvement Officer who has produced a Children's Guide with the input of a group of young people who are in the Looked After System. This needs to be further developed to ensure clear information is provided to ensure children are aware of how to complain, and to include the telephone number of the Commission

#### **Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service.**

Both Standards were met.

The Service Manager provided effective leadership, which was evidenced in the Inspectors' discussions with the Service Manager and other staff. She demonstrated good awareness of the areas that required development in the organisation and management of the service. Since the last Inspection the Service has employed an Assistant Service Manager. All CRB's and appropriate checks under Schedule 1 had been undertaken.

#### **Management of fostering service.**

1 Standard was partially met and 1 was met.

The Service Manager had a clear job description setting out the duties and responsibilities of the post. Since the last Inspection an Assistant Service Manager has been appointed to provide dedicated oversight to the fostering service.

The Inspectors recommend Worcestershire Fostering Service develop a system for monitoring and controlling the activities of the Service and ensure quality of Service in line with Schedule 7, Regulation 42. Inspectors saw that some matters listed in Schedule 7 such as records of allegations and complaints were being monitored.

### **Securing and promoting welfare.**

1 Standard was not met, 3 were partially met and 5 were met.

The Inspectors saw evidence, which ensures children and young people are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

The Inspectors saw clear guidance, policy and procedures including a matching matrix for permanency placements. No such policy or matrix existed for matching children to short-term placements. Policies, practice and procedures need to be developed which demonstrate the matching process of all placements.

At the time of this Inspection the Fostering Service used elements of LAC documentations as the Foster Placement Agreement. These documents did not meet the matters and obligations set out under Regulation 34(3). Worcestershire County Council need to review the LAC documentation to ensure that the combined documents cover all the matters set out under Regulation 34(3), Schedule 6 and that the agreed format of Foster Placement Agreements are completed to a Standard that enables the foster carer to care for the child. Foster carers demonstrated awareness of child protection and safe caring principles and practice. Training had been provided to foster carers on child protection and behaviour management. Written guidelines based on the policy relating to safe caring need to be produced to each foster carer.

The Inspectors saw evidence of a presumption of trying to ensure children and young people stay close to family and friends when considering and finding a suitable foster carer.

The Inspectors saw evidence that consultation with children and those of their families does occur over issues likely to affect children's daily lives. Consultation on a general level was promoted through the Total Respect Training and the use of facilitators such as the User Involvement Officer for Young People who meets with young people looked after on a regular basis and is commissioned to set up consultation on strategic and practical matters. This is good practice.

The Service has developed a Protocol of the Health of Looked After Children (LAC) and clearly demonstrates an interest and concern in the health of LAC.

The Looked After Children Education Resource (LACER) and the Primary Care and Support Team (PC&ST) are now part of the Integrated Service for Looked After Children and over the last 12 months have built on and extended this provision to provide a service to LAC at risk of exclusion from school

The Service Manager must ensure that all children leaving foster care receive the appropriate services in accordance with legislation. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is not being implemented; all young people must have completed Pathway Plan in place by their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers.**

4 Standards were partially met and 3 were met. 2 Standards were not assessed.

The Fostering Service has recently undergone a process of restructuring, the aim of which was to make the Service more efficient and effective. As this has only just occurred at the time of the Inspection the Inspectors were not able to assess whether this reorganisation had improved efficiency. The Service has restructured into 4 teams; Foster Care Team North, Foster Care Team South, (both which provide support to foster carers), Placement/Panels Team which is responsible for matching children and young people to foster carers and operates a duty service across County, and the Adoption and Fostering Development Team which is responsible for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers across County.

Systems were in place to check CSCI registration and inspection reports of other fostering agencies and ensure that there are no concerns about the agencies' assessment, approval and review.

There is a clearly set out process for foster carers, which includes training and assessment. The Service uses the BAAF Form F and uses a competency-based matrix. As part of the Local Authority, the Fostering Service followed sound employment practices in relation to staff and carers. The out-of-hours support to foster carers was provided through the Council's emergency duty system. Supervision and appraisals need to take place on a regular basis. Staff had copies of job descriptions, which detailed their roles and responsibilities and they had access to policies and procedures. The Service had a written Foster Carer Agreement (FCA), which had been reviewed and developed since the last Inspection. This needs to be further developed to fully comply with Regulation 29(11).

### **Records.**

1 Standard was met and 1 was not assessed.

Worcestershire Local Authority has developed policies, procedures and staff guidance to ensure that up to date and comprehensive case records are maintained for each child in foster care and for each foster carer.

All relevant information relating to a child or young person looked after is shared with foster carers

The Inspectors heard how foster carers encouraged and supported young people to reflect and understand their history and to keep appropriate memorabilia.

### **Fitness of premises for use as fostering service.**

This Standard was not assessed.

This Standard was met at the last Inspection

### **Financial requirements.**

These Standards were not assessed.

This Standard was met at the last Inspection.

### **Fostering panel.**

This Standard was partially met.

The Fostering Service have developed policies and procedures with regard to the Fostering Panel. Panel Chair demonstrated that she had appropriate experience of working in the field of child care/child protection and in chairing meetings.

Panel members included two social workers, one employed in the fostering service and one from a childcare team. Independent members included a foster carer from another agency, one member with a health background and one with a social work background.

The Inspectors were not able to determine how the Panel carried out its quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process, as there was not a Form F presented to Panel.

The Fostering Service need to ensure that the Chair and all Panel members review the effectiveness of the quality-monitoring role of the Panel.

### **Short-term breaks.**

This Standard was met.

Since the last Inspection the Fostering Service has introduced a short-term break scheme "Support Care" for non-disabled children living at home. The Service currently has 9 short-term carers.

This Standard will be Inspected fully at the next Inspection.

**Family and friends as carers.**

This Standard was partially met.

The Service has a policy and procedure on family and friends carers. The Inspectors saw evidence that the Service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as carers.

The Service must ensure that family and friends carers understand that they can access the same information, support and training opportunities as all carers.

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

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

### **THIS SECTION IS NO LONGER APPLICABLE.**

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)****(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<u>Sue Young</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<u>Katherine Ward</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	<u>Alan Sholl</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<u>13 May 2005</u>		_____

## 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	3	FS1	The Service Manager must further develop the Children's Guide to comply with Regulation 3.	1/9/05
2	34		The Service Manager needs to develop policies, practice and procedures, which demonstrate the matching process of all placements made.	1/9/05
3	34 38 Sch 6		The Service Manager needs to review and develop the system to ensure that all information required by Schedule 6, Regulation 34 (3) is made available at the point of placement, except in the case of an emergency placement when Regulation 38 (1) would apply.	1/9/05
4	17	FS9	The Service Manager needs to ensure that refresher training in child protection and behaviour management for foster carers takes place on a regular basis	1/9/05
5	14 17	FS10	The Service Manager must ensure training is provided to foster carers to ensure appropriate contact is maintained.	1/9/05
6	<b>Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000</b>	FS14	The Service Manager must ensure that all qualifying children who leave care receive the appropriate services in accordance with legislation	1/9/05



7	7, 20 & Sch 1	FS15	The Service Manager must ensure that the deficiencies in the recruitment process identified under this standard are rectified.	1/5/05
8	29	FS16	The Service Manager must ensure all foster care reviews are held at intervals of not more than a year in line with Regulation 29((2)	1/9/05
9	40(5)	FS16	The Service Manager must ensure where gaps in the IPA are identified these are met.	1/5/05
10	21(4)	FS20	The Service Manager must ensure regular supervision and appraisals of staff are taking place and recorded in line with Regulation 21 (4) (a), and Standard 20.3 and 20.4.	1/5/05
11	28(5)(b), 29(11) & Sch 5	FS22	The Service Manager must ensure that a revised foster carer agreement complies with the Regulations.	1/5/05
12	26(2)	FS30	The Service Manager must ensure that the training needs of the panel are identified and appropriate training provided to enable the panel to carry out its functions.	1/9/05
13	26(2)	FS30	The Fostering Service must ensure that the Chair and all panel members review the effectiveness of the quality-monitoring role of the panel.	1/9/05
14	17	FS32	The Service must ensure that family and friends carers understand that they can access the same information, support and training opportunities as all carers.	1/5/05

### 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		The Inspectors recommend the Service Manager ensure that procedures and systems are developed to ensure full compliance with Schedule 7

2		Inspectors recommend a system is developed to highlight when foster carers MOTs and Insurances are due and expiry dates are clearly recorded on foster carer files.
3	FS9	The Service Manager should ensure that written guidelines based on the policy relating to safe caring, are produced to each foster carer, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household, are cleared with the child's social worker and explained clearly and appropriately to the child
4	FS9	The Service Manager is recommended to put into place procedures to recognise and record instances of bullying and provide training to foster carers in anti-bullying.
5		Foster carers should record the outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child.
6	FS14	Written guidance and requirements for foster carers in terms of preparation of young people for independence should be developed.
7		The Service Manager should establish a formal workload management system.
8		The Inspectors recommend carers who have not been assessed using the BAAF Form F are re-assessed using the BAAF Form.
9		The Inspectors recommend the information regarding the child protection process and the provision of an independent support to carers during an investigation is included in the Foster Carer's Handbook.
10		Service Manager should ensure that each member of staff has the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings.
11		The Service Manager is recommended to continue to widen the membership of the panel to include medical and education expertise.
12	FS30	The Panel Chair is recommended to involve panel members in recording the reasons for the panel's recommendations.
13	FS32	The Fostering Service is recommended to consult with family and friends carers and facilitate setting up such a group.

\* 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	14
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• 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	31/1/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	169

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose, which has been reviewed since the last Inspection to meet all the requirements listed in Standard 1.4. The Statement of Purpose sets out clear aims and objectives and the service it provides. A process has been established for the annual review of the Statement of Purpose and it's approval by the Council's executive. The Inspectors were informed that this would be reviewed in April 2005 to reflect the changing organisation of the Service.

The Service employs a User Involvement Officer who has produced a Children's Guide with the input of a group of young people who are in the Looked After System. The Inspectors were informed that this is still currently in draft form and has not yet been issued to children. It is expected that all looked after children placed with foster carers will be provided with a copy of the guide. All children would subsequently receive a copy of the guide at the point of commencing placement. The Children's Guide needs further developing to ensure clear information is provided to ensure children are aware of how to complain. The telephone number of the Commission needs to be included in the Children's Guide.

Since the last Inspection the Service has developed and updated it's operational policies, procedures and guidance. Many of these were still in draft form.

The Inspectors have been informed by the Service Manager that the Foster Carer's Handbook has been reviewed and developed to include all new policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details and is due to be given out to all foster carers. A series of team meetings are planned with carers to discuss the new Handbook.

## 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

The Service Manager had an appropriate professional qualification and was undertaking a programme of management training. The Service Manager provided effective leadership, which was evidenced in the Inspectors' discussions with the Service Manager and other staff. She demonstrated good awareness of the areas that required development in the organisation and management of the service.

Since the last Inspection the Service has employed an Assistant Service Manager.

### 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 Inspectors examined the staff vetting files for the Fostering Service Manager and Assistant Manager. All CRB's and appropriate checks under Schedule 1 had been undertaken. There was no evidence of telephone reference checks having been made; human resources staff confirmed that these telephone checks were not made. Please refer to Standard 15.

## 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?

2

Regulation 42 requires the “registered person” to maintain a monitoring system. Since local authority fostering services do not register, local authorities are excluded from this requirement. It is good practice however for the matters included in Schedule 7 to be monitored and reviewed. The Inspectors recommend Worcestershire Fostering Service develop a system for monitoring and controlling the activities of the Service and ensuing quality of Service in line with Schedule 7, Regulation 42. Inspectors saw that some matters listed in Schedule 7 such as records of allegations and complaints were being monitored.

The Service had clear lines of accountability and all staff had job descriptions. The Inspectors found that the recent reorganisation of the Service had resulted in inconsistencies regarding communication. The proposed changes in the Service produced mixed responses from staff.

Since the last Inspection the Fostering Service has developed a Conflict of Interest Policy and a declaration included as a component in the staff contract. The Inspectors could find no evidence of a declaration of conflict of interest signed by foster carers. This needs to be developed.

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

7

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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.

5

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

1

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

5

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

23

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

2

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

1

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

The Service Manager had a clear job description setting out the duties and responsibilities of the post. Since the last Inspection an Assistant Service Manager has been appointed to provide dedicated oversight to the fostering service.

The level of delegation, responsibility and lines of accountability were clearly defined.



## 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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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As part of the Inspection the Inspectors visited four foster homes. All the homes were decorated and furnished in accordance with this Standard and demonstrated accommodation appropriate to the needs of the children and young people placed. The homes were well furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Young people accommodated had their own bedroom.

From interviews and questionnaires, children and young people felt they were consulted about issues in the placement and stated they felt part of a caring family.

Health and safety checks were taking place and Inspectors saw evidence of these on foster carers files.

The Inspectors saw evidence of procedures for the assessment and placement of children who have been abused or have abused other children

All foster carers attend preparation training, which covers health and safety issues and are provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.

The service had a system of annual unannounced inspections of foster homes.

Evidence was seen that supervising social workers checked foster carer's home and car insurance on an annual basis. Inspectors recommend a system is developed to highlight when foster carers MOTs and Insurances are due and expiry dates are clearly recorded on foster carer files. The format and recording of these checks should be formalised to ensure that agreed and regular checks are carried out and accurately recorded.

Foster carers told Inspectors that they had been informed of the impending Inspection and that they might be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's Inspection process.

**Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)**

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

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

Worcestershire Fostering Service's training programme provides induction and training to foster carers in valuing diversity as part of their core training. Awareness of diversity issues is also a core competency in assessment.

Since the last Inspection the Service has developed an Equality and Diversity Policy. A pro forma has been developed which recognises the importance of culture and ethnic origin and is used when considering matching children and young people with foster carers. The service provided a number of placements for children with physical and learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. Since the last Inspection the Service has consulted with foster carers to ensure all children are provided with the appropriate services, equipment and support. There was evidence that children with disabilities were provided with assistance to access a range of activities and support. Guidelines on the provision of aids and adaptations had been produced and were at the time of the Inspection in draft form. Special arrangements required to meet the needs of a child were identified through core assessments, which informed Looked After Children (LAC) documentation for the child. Specific arrangements are then reviewed at Statutory Reviews.

In interviews family placement social workers and foster carers were able to describe how a child with a disability was assessed and supported to maximise their potential and describe appropriate care and practice to meet the individual needs of young people.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The Inspectors saw clear guidance, policy and procedures including a matching matrix for permanency placements. The Service Manager informed the Inspectors that no such policy or matrix existed for matching children to short term placements. The fostering duty officer takes referrals via children's social workers. Referral information is then used to identify any appropriate foster carers. A pro forma is used by the duty worker, which highlights the criteria required for matching short-term placements. Inspectors considered this pro forma to be simplistic and in need of further development. Inspectors could not find evidence of matching or analysis of the thought processes as to why the placements had been made on any of the case tracked files. The Service Manager informed the Inspectors that the recent reorganisation of the Service has established a placement team, which should give the opportunity to put systems in place to ensure the matching decisions are more fully recorded. A new computer system is planned which should also provide evidence of decision-making. The Service Manager must develop policies, practice and procedures, which demonstrate the matching process of all placements.

Worcestershire County Council are currently using the Looked After Children (LAC)

documentation Placement Plan Part 1, and Essential Information Part 1 as the Foster Placement Agreement at the point of placement. Inspectors sampled this documentation and found that it failed to meet the matters set out in Regulation 34 (3) Schedule 6.

In addition to this shortfall Inspectors were concerned to note that the quality of LAC documents produced by Children’s Social Workers varied and at times were inadequate. This meant that on occasions children were placed with foster carers without the essential information required to ensure that their needs were being fully met. Clearer and more specific references need to be made to practical arrangements for children when the placement has been unable to match all issues in relation to the child’s identity. This matter is explored in more detail under the appropriate Standards in this report.

The Inspectors do not wish for work to be duplicated and understand the principle of utilising the LAC documentation as the Foster Placement Agreement at the point of placement. This system should be reviewed and developed to ensure that the information required by Regulation 34 (3) is made available at the point of placement, except in the case of an emergency placement when Regulation 38 (1) would apply. This may be achieved by an additional document being developed addressing matters not set out in the LAC documents with guidance stating the intention of the forms as Foster Placement Agreements requiring specific information to be made available in them when being completed.

The Inspectors saw evidence that in trans-racial placements, support was given to both the foster carers and the young person in relation to language and cultural needs.

The inspectors saw evidence that when it was possible, the child had an appropriate period of introduction that was well planned and involved other agencies such as schools. The Inspectors were informed by family placement social workers that the duty worker contacts the foster carer after 1 or 2 days following placement to see if they need more information. This is good practice.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>Management systems were in place that collated information on the circumstances, numbers and outcome of all allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care. The Service Manager should ensure evidence is provided which demonstrates the evaluation and analysis of the information collated.</p>		
<p>The Inspectors saw evidence of training that had been provided to foster carers on child protection and behaviour management; this forms part of the foster carers core training. The Inspectors were informed that refresher training in both child protection and behaviour management did not automatically take place on a regular basis. The Service Manager needs to ensure that refresher training takes place on a regular basis. Foster carers demonstrated awareness of child protection and safe caring principles and practice.</p>		
<p>The Service has a Policy on Child Protection.</p>		
<p>The Inspectors saw a written policy, currently in draft form; which had been produced in relation to safe caring practice for foster carers. Inspectors could not see evidence of written guidelines taking place for each foster carer. The Service Manager should ensure that</p>		

written guidelines based on the policy relating to safe caring, are produced to each foster carer, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household, are cleared with the child's social worker and explained clearly and appropriately to the child.

The service had clear guidance that corporal punishment is prohibited and this is included in the foster carer agreements.

The Fostering Service has developed a Policy on Control, Restraint and Discipline, which provides written guidance regarding permitted and acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children. The Service, where appropriate, needs to provide foster carers with restraint training as part of the providers measure to implement their policy. The Inspectors were informed this matter is being reviewed and training developed to ensure this matter is addressed.

The Service has developed an Anti-Bullying Policy though Inspectors could not see evidence of procedures in place to recognise and record instances of bullying. Inspectors could not see evidence of training provided to foster carers on anti-bullying. The Service Manager is recommended to put into place procedures to recognise and record instances of bullying and provide training to foster carers in anti-bullying.

Foster carers who were interviewed by the Inspectors confirmed that they were provided with information about children placed with them and about their families that assisted them in providing appropriate care. The Service followed the local ACPC policy and procedures.

The Service had a joint protocol between a number of councils and the police describing procedures to be followed in the event of a child going missing. The Service has developed a missing from Home protocol which has been provided to foster carers.

<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	X	%
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**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

**The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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The Service has developed written guidance for foster carers entitled "Contact for Looked After Children".

The Foster Placement Agreement used by Worcestershire Local Authority was the LAC documents as described in the appropriate section of this report. The Inspectors sampled these documents and the additional LAC documents completed after placement and found that details regarding contact arrangements with friends, family members and social workers were detailed.

Once a child is placed with a foster carer contact is reviewed on a regular basis and through LAC review meetings.

Contact arrangements were detailed in the children's records; foster carers interviewed were clear about the individual arrangements for which they were responsible and spoke positively about the value to children of promoting such contact. Foster carers described how they were supported by the fostering service in dealing with any difficult contact issues.

The Inspectors did not see evidence of contact in the training of foster carers. The importance of foster carers helping children to maintain appropriate contacts needs to be included in assessment and training of foster carers.

The Inspectors saw evidence of a presumption of trying to ensure children and young people stay close to family and friends when considering and finding a suitable foster carer, unless there is a good reason not to. Contact is included in the matching needs pro-forma used by the service to place children.

At the time of this inspection not all foster carers were maintaining individual records for each child. Fostering social workers were supporting foster carers to set up individually written reports for all children placed. These records should record the outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child.

Foster carers were able to claim financial support to provide for transport and other costs involved in ensuring contact arrangements take place.

#### **Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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The Inspectors saw evidence that consultation with children and those of their families does occur over issues likely to affect children's daily lives.

Consultation on a general level was promoted through the Total Respect Training and the use of facilitators such as the User Involvement Officer for Young People who meets with young people looked after on a regular basis and is commissioned to set up consultation on strategic and practical matters. This is good practice.

The Inspectors were informed that the Service plans to purchase a computer package called "Care Zone" for children and young people who are Looked After to access and use

The evidence obtained from examining records and interviewing and talking to foster carers indicated that foster carers had a good understanding and commitment to listening to the views and opinions of children in their care.

Inspectors did not to assess at this Inspection how the Service ensures children with communication difficulties are able to express their opinions and views. This was assessed at the last Inspection and found good evidence of this occurring.

Evidence from the children's questionnaires suggested that children and young people knew how to raise complaints or concerns and that they are regularly consulted. The Inspectors however were aware of 2 young people looked after who did not know how to complain and did not have access to any contact numbers. The Children's Guide needs further developing to ensure clear information is provided to ensure children are aware of how to complain. This is addressed in Standard 1.

A Children's Advice and Representation Officer acts as an Independent Visitor to children and young people looked after by Worcestershire County Council.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The Service has developed a Protocol of the Health of LAC and clearly demonstrates an interest and concern in the health of LAC.

All children case tracked were registered with a GP. Good links had been established with health agencies within the County. Evidence was seen that carers could access specialist health resources when required. The Inspectors were told that a fast-track system to accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) had recently been set up giving Looked After Children priority. This is part of the Integrated Services for Looked After Children (ISL). The team consists of a Consultant Paediatrician, 2 Clinical Psychologists, a LAC Nurse and CPN. A network also exists into school nurses.

Training was provided for foster carers in first aid and a range of health issues. LAC documentations, children's health records, LAC review minutes, initial and annual health assessments detail health information relating to each individual child placed. Foster carers said they were provided with information about the health needs of children in written form at the point of placement wherever possible and contributed information to the children's reviews.

The panel had access to a medical advisor who was also available to staff for advice and consultation.

**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 Looked After Children Education Resource (LACER) and the Primary Care and Support Team (PC&ST) are now part of the Integrated Service for Looked After Children and over the last 12 months have built on and extended this provision to provide a service to LAC at risk of exclusion from school. This is a service provided in partnership between the LEA and Social Services and has a specific brief to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for LAC.

Carers spoke positively about the support that had been given by LACER and PC&ST. Inspectors were satisfied that staff and carers within the service had a commitment to helping meet children's educational needs.

The Council has information systems through the Children's Service Performance Management Report, which demonstrates the educational attainment of the children and young people in the Looked After System as a whole. The Inspectors saw evidence that there had been one exclusion from school over the last year.

All children and young people case tracked of school age were in education. Feedback from children's questionnaires suggested most young people were doing well at school. The Inspectors saw Personal Educational Plans (PEPs) on the case files examined.

In line with Standard 13.4 the Foster Placement Agreement needs to state the foster carer's role in school contact in conjunction with the birth parent and where financial responsibility lies for all school costs, including school uniform, school trips and school equipment. This is addressed in Standard 8.

The service had made good progress in implementing a programme of placing computers in foster carer households for use by children.

**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**

The Inspectors did not find written guidance or requirements for foster carers in terms of preparation of young people for independence. This was noted at the last Inspection. Through interviews the Inspectors were given evidence that foster carers had a clear understanding about their responsibility to promote independence.

The Local Authority had a contract with a voluntary agency for the provision of leaving care service to young people. The Service Manager conceded that there were still ongoing contractual difficulties with the agency and that little had been improved since the last inspection. The Inspectors were told that the agency has been asked to submit an action plan to the Local Authority. The agency was expected to provide individual and group preparation for young people approaching independence and that foster carers would be involved in this process. The inspectors noted that the service seemed to be limited to young people aged 17+.

Pathway Plans seen on young people's files were not completed at 16 years of age and were inadequate in detail. The Inspectors saw evidence where a Pathway Plan had been completed within a few months of a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Inspectors saw evidence where young people were not in receipt of, or plans made for, college placements or employment. The Fostering Service must assist with and make arrangements for the education, training and employment of young people in line with Regulation 16(5).

The Service Manager must ensure that all children in the foster care receive the appropriate services in accordance with legislation. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is not being implemented; all young people must have a completed Pathway Plan in place by their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.



## 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 Fostering Service follows the policy and procedure on staff recruitment of Worcester County Council; this is based on the agency's equal opportunities policy. In inspecting the service against this Standard, the Inspectors examined 17 personnel files; these mainly related to staff appointed within the last year and included social work staff and administrative staff.

The records were kept in good order; they each included a fully completed application form, evidence of competitive selection interview, two references, a contract of employment including a clause informing staff of their responsibility to declare any conflict of interest; all had enhanced CRB checks, kept separately from the personnel files. Although most records included proof of identity and evidence of qualifications, not all did. There was no evidence of telephone reference checks; human resources staff confirmed that these telephone checks were not made.

The record of an agency social worker was also examined and found to be incomplete; the fostering service relied on the agency to carry out the relevant checks but failed to obtain and retain copies of these.

The service manager must ensure that the deficiencies in the recruitment process identified under this standard are rectified.

All social work staff had appropriate qualifications and experience and, in interview, gave evidence of an appropriate level of knowledge and skills. The service does not directly employ psychologists or therapists.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

44

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

9

**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?****2**

The Fostering Service has recently undergone a process of restructuring. The aim of which was to make the Service more efficient and effective. As this has only just occurred at the time of the Inspection the Inspectors were not able to assess whether this reorganisation had improved its efficiency.

The Service has restructured into 4 teams; Foster Care Team North, Foster Care Team South, ( both which provide support to foster carers), Placement/Panels Team which is responsible for matching children and young people to foster carers and operates a duty service across County, and the Adoption and Fostering Development Team which is responsible for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers across County. At the time of the Inspection these teams were based in various locations within the County. The plan is to centralise much of the Service in Worcester and provide 'outposts' across the County.

There was a clear management structure and lines of accountability. The staff are managed by people who have appropriate skills and qualifications. There was no formal workload management system in place and therefore the inspectors were unable to establish how staff prioritised their work efficiently. The Service Manager should establish a formal workload management system.

The Service had developed systems and procedures in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed effectively and by people who have appropriate skills. The Inspectors noted that foster carer reviews were not held on time. The Service Manager must ensure all foster care reviews are held at intervals of not more than a year in line with Regulation 29((2). The Inspectors examined review reports compiled by fostering social workers and found the reports to be competency based and of a high standard. Carers did not have a training portfolio although details of training were included in the review report.

There were systems in place to check CSCI registration and inspection reports of other fostering agencies and ensure that there are no concerns about the agencies' assessment, approval and review processes. These records were inspected and found to contain information including registration certificate, inspection report and Statement of Purpose.

The Inspectors sampled three foster agency files. These demonstrated that Worcestershire County Council has systems in place to monitor that procedures are followed in line with Regulation 40 (4) and 40 (5) to ensure that no arrangements are made without written agreement in respect of each placement and child when a gap in information is identified such as Individual Placement Agreements (IPA) not in place, action is taken quickly to resolve the situation. Worcester County Council is a member of the West Midlands Consortium. The Inspectors found that the IPA's used do not fully meet all matters in Regulation 40 (5), namely 40(5)(d) and (f). The Service Manager must ensure where gaps in the IPA is identified these are met.

Professional supervision is provided for social work staff by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. This is referred to in Standard 20.

Administrative support was not raised as an issue by staff or managers interviewed.

Administrative arrangements for dealing with inquiries for services now fell within the remit of the Development Team. 1.5 Customer Service Advisor posts had been created to deal more efficiently with these and other inquiries.

Fostering social workers had a clear understanding of the children's social workers' role. All had contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The experience and qualifications of staff are adequate to the size of the service and are in line with the Statement of Purpose. Where a short fall in staffing levels occur a contingency plan exists and work is prioritised. The Service has recently employed an Assistant Service Manager to further improve efficiency. The Service Manager was aware of the shortfall in numbers and considers that restructuring will improve support to staff.</p>		
<p>The Service has recently employed an agency member of staff for a short period of time and may consider a further agency worker.</p>		
<p>The Service has developed a recruitment policy and strategy that aims to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.</p>		
<p>There is a clearly set out process for foster carers, which includes training and assessment. The Service uses the BAAF Form F, which covers matters set out in Standard 17.7 and uses a competency-based matrix. These forms were sampled through a system of case tracking.</p>		
<p>The Inspectors noted that some foster carers had been assessed many years ago not using the BAAF Form F. The Inspectors recommend these carers are re-assessed using the BAAF Form F.</p>		

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>As part of the Local Authority, the Fostering Service followed sound employment practices in relation to staff and carers.</p>		
<p>The out-of-hours support to foster carers was provided through the Council's emergency duty system. The Inspectors noted that there was a practice of some individual fostering officers providing personal home phone numbers to carers.</p>		
<p>There is a system for monthly supervisory visits to foster carers. Records of these sessions are maintained by fostering social workers and used to inform annual reviews and training needs of foster carers. A management system of annual appraisals for foster carers is</p>		

incorporated into annual reviews.

The Service has developed a Health and Safety Policy for foster carers and a Whistleblowing Policy. In Interviews with foster carers the Inspectors found that carers were not aware of these policies. The Service Manager informed the Inspectors that these policies will be included in the new Foster Carer's handbook which will be delivered to all foster carers. The Inspectors were also informed of the arrangements for a series of team meetings across the County to go through the handbook.

**Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

0

This Standard was not assessed at this Inspection. This Standard was met at the last Inspection and will be fully assessed at the next Inspection.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

Staff had copies of job descriptions which detailed their roles and responsibilities and they had access to policies and procedures.

Not all staff interviewed were receiving annual appraisals or adequate support and supervision. Through interviews with fostering social workers the Inspectors found that supervision had not always been taking place in all teams and some workers had felt isolated and unsupported in their work. The Service Manager conceded that there had been difficulties in some parts of the County with regard to support and supervision of staff and feels this should now improve following the recent reorganisation of the service.

The Service manager must ensure regular supervision and appraisals of staff are taking place and recorded in line with Regulation 21 (4) (a), and Standard 20.3 and 20.4.

The Inspectors were informed by fostering social workers that regular team meetings had not always been taking place over the last year although this had improved recently. The Service Manager should ensure that each member of staff has the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings.

**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**

The Service had developed a comprehensive policy and strategy for working with carers that is documented and understood. There was evidence throughout the Inspection that staff understood what was expected of them in respect of providing supervision and support to carers. The service had clear arrangements for training, support, supervision and review of carers. The service had support groups and had set up an out of hour's support system and respite care was available.

In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions fostering social workers and foster carers were able to describe how foster carers and children would be supported in a range of situations although many foster carers expressed in questionnaires a lack of support and communication by the fostering service often due to staff changes and long periods without allocated fostering social workers.

Inspectors observed a fostering panel and saw evidence of annual review reports being presented to and made available to the panel. This is detailed in Standard 30. Foster carers stated that fostering social workers were supportive and proactive in resolving concerns and providing support.

From the foster carers meeting attended by the inspectors, from interviews with foster carers and from the response to the questionnaires, there was evidence that there was a good level of communication between the fostering worker and carers and between the fostering social worker and the child's social worker. The Inspectors were informed of two instances however where young people had been placed in foster homes and fostering social worker had not been informed at the 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?****2**

The Service had a written Foster Carer Agreement (FCA), which had been reviewed and developed since the last Inspection. This needs to be further developed to fully comply with Regulation 29(11). The Inspectors did not see evidence of the updated FCA's on all foster carers files sampled. The Service Manager informed the Inspectors these were being updated alongside the annual reviews of carers.

Foster carers informed the Inspectors that they were aware of what was expected of them and of the fostering service.

Each foster carer case tracked was supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and had access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice. Evidence received from questionnaires stated that some foster carers are not getting regular support and there are long gaps without fostering social workers being allocated and frequent changes of fostering social workers.

Inspectors saw evidence of supervision of carers taking place. These are recorded on foster carers files. Inspectors considered the quality of supervision to be variable and recommend the Service review and develop its supervision report pro-forma to ensure more consistency. The foster carers informed the Inspectors that they were given a Handbook prior to approval.

The Inspectors have been informed by the Service Manager that the Handbook has been reviewed and developed to include all new policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details and is due to be given out to all foster carers. A series of team meetings are planned with carers to discuss the new Handbook.

Inspectors saw evidence of unannounced visits taking place on at least an annual basis. These are recorded on foster carers files.

The service had a written procedure for dealing with complaints and representations. Foster carers were provided with information regarding the complaints procedures and the procedures dealing with investigations into allegations. In discussion with foster carers comments were made to the Inspectors, which suggests this information needs to be re submitted to carers, making it clear that the procedures necessary in order to protect a child can be a lengthy process. The foster carers need also to be made aware of the provision of independent support to carers during an investigation. The Inspectors recommend this information is included in the Foster Carer's Handbook.

Records of allegations of abuse are kept and monitored. This is detailed in Standard 4 and Standard 9.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

0

This Standard was not assessed at this Inspection. This Standard was met at the last Inspection.

This Standard will be Inspected in full at the next Inspection.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Local Authority had a written policy on case recording.

A main children's record is maintained by the children's social workers relating to each young person placed with foster carers. Fostering social workers maintain a file specific to each foster carer that details supervision records, relevant information, and visits. In addition to these the fostering social workers maintained files containing basic information relating to children referred and placed. These files were stored alongside the foster carers files.

In interviews with fostering social workers and foster carers the Inspectors were told that relevant information relating to a young person would be shared with foster carers. The foster carers indicated that they were clear about why the children were in placement and the intended duration and purpose.

The Inspectors heard how foster carers encouraged and supported young people to reflect and understand their history and to keep appropriate memorabilia. The Inspectors were told of two specialist social workers who promote life story work throughout the department and give guidance to children's social workers in conducting life story work.

The Service provided lockable storage for carers to keep records. The Inspectors were not able to view this storage.

At the time of this inspection not all foster carers were maintaining individual records for each child. Fostering social workers were supporting foster carers to develop their recording skills and to maintain appropriate case records.

The Service has developed an audit of files. This needs to include an assessment of the quality of records. This will be examined fully at the next Inspection.

**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. The Standard was met at the last Inspection.

**Weekly payments to foster carers are as follows:**

Fees paid per child per week to all foster carers except relative and friends foster carers:

Fee on approval	£70
Fee after 3 years and progression agreed	£103.03
Fee after 5 years and progression agreed	£127.61

Age related allowance paid in respect of each child to all foster carers:

0-4 years	£72.17
5-10 years	£82.32
11-15 years	£102.41
16-17 years	£130.48

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>	425
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>	258
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<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>	294
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<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>	21
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<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>	30
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<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	X	<b>Maximum £</b>	X
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## 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. The Standard was met at the last Inspection.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard was not assessed at this Inspection. The Standard was met at the last Inspection.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard was not assessed at this Inspection. The Standard was met at the last Inspection.

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

0

This Standard was not assessed at this Inspection. The Standard was met at the last Inspection.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

In order to inspect the Service against this Standard, the Inspectors examined the policies and procedures for the Fostering Panels; examined the minutes of the last 4 Panel meetings; observed one of the Fostering Panels, in the south of the county; examined the reports prepared for this Panel, interviewed the Chair of the Panel and confirmed, by examining their records, that all current Panel members had satisfactory CRB checks and two satisfactory references.

Examination of the application form and references of the Panel Chair demonstrated that she had appropriate experience of working in the field of child care/child protection and in chairing meetings.

Panel members included two social workers, one employed in the fostering service and one from a childcare team. Independent members included a foster carer from another agency, one member with a health background and one with a social work background. At the time of the Inspection there were no members with medical or education expertise. Inspectors have been informed that since the last Inspection a retired head teacher has been recruited to the North Panel. An advisor from the fostering service and an administrator supported the panel. The Panel does have access to a medical adviser who scrutinises all applicants' health assessments and gives appropriate advice. The Service Manager is recommended to continue to widen the membership of the Panel to include medical and education expertise. The Inspectors were informed that a care leaver sits on the North Panel and another care leaver has recently been recruited to the South Panel.

The Chair told the Inspectors that Panel members had not undertaken any training in the last year. In the course of her interview the Panel Chair talked of some training she thought would be useful. The Service Manager must ensure that the training needs of the Panel are identified and appropriate training provided to enable the panel to carry out its functions.

At the Panel observed, the business consisted of, a foster carer annual review to consider progression to level 3, change of approval and a long-term link; two terminations of approval; the noting of a temporary change of approval and noting of respite arrangements. The business was conducted appropriately. The Panel Chair greeted applicants prior to their attendance at the meeting and reported the outcome of Panel deliberations to them. All Panel members had received their papers and had studied them before the meeting. In Panel discussions, the Chair ensured those Panel members' issues were heard; questions were formulated and put to the applicants. The Inspectors noted that occasionally, the foster carers seemed to determine the direction of the discussion and some areas of concern were

not probed as thoroughly as they might have been. When summing up, the Chair made sure that all Panel members were clear about what was being recommended; however, once the recommendation was made, she dictated the reasons for the recommendation to the Panel administrator without involving Panel members. The minutes of previous meetings recorded the reasons for the Panel recommendations, in accordance with regulation 25(2). The Panel Chair is recommended to involve Panel members in recording the reasons for the Panel's recommendations.

The Inspectors were not able to determine how the Panel carried out its quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process, as there was not a Form F presented to Panel. There was evidence that some Panel members understood this role vis-à-vis the review report.

The Inspectors discussed with the Chair the Panel's wider quality monitoring function. There was some evidence, from previous minutes, from a series of memoranda sent either by the Chair or by the Panel advisor to the fostering service, and from the annual report drawn up by the fostering service, that there was an understanding of this function and attempts were made to initiate action when this was thought necessary. The Inspectors however noted deficiencies in the information available to the Panel, for example: it had been acknowledged by the Service that the foster carer annual reviews were not being completed on time, but the Chair did not know how many were outstanding or what action had been undertaken to rectify this. The Chair also had no record of the number of temporary changes of approval and exemptions agreed by the service within a given time-frame; although she was confident that the issues raised in the memoranda were dealt with by the service, there was little evidence in the form of replies to these memoranda to report on the action taken to panel members. The Fostering Service must ensure that the Chair and all Panel members review the effectiveness of the quality-monitoring role of the Panel.

The Inspectors were told that staff and applicants are asked for feedback on their experience of the Panel, so that the panel can improve its performance; one result of this consultation was the change of venue for one of the Panels.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Since the last Inspection the Fostering Service has introduced a short term break scheme, "Support Care" for non-disabled children living at home. The Service currently has 9 short-term carers.

The Inspectors were impressed over the number and range of carers found. This Standard will be Inspected fully at the next Inspection.

## 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?	2
<p>The Service has a policy and procedure on family and friends carers. In inspecting the Service against this Standard, the Inspectors case tracked and interviewed one family member acting as carer together with the children and examined a number of questionnaires completed by families acting as carers.</p> <p>The Inspectors saw evidence that the Service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as carers.</p> <p>The Inspectors were told that family and friends carers have access to the same information and training opportunities and support as are available to all carers; however the Inspectors were given the impression by family carers that this was not always so; one placing social worker expressed concern in a questionnaire that 'there was no allocated (fostering) social worker'; another stated that the carer 'is old and does not receive training'; one family carer stated on the questionnaire: 'no training is offered to relation carers'. The Service Manager explained that, if the service experiences difficulties in allocating fostering social workers, due for example to staff sickness, some priority rating, based on a risk assessment, has to be established and family and friends carers may not be a high priority. Inspectors were informed that family and friends carers receive the newsletter, which informs them of service developments and training opportunities. The Service must ensure that family and friends carers understand that they can access the same information, support and training opportunities as all carers.</p> <p>A number of family and friends carers told the Inspectors that they would value a support group focused on their specific needs. The Inspectors were told that there had been such a group in the past, which had ceased because of lack of support from carers; relatives and friends carers are invited to all foster carer forum meetings. The Fostering Service is recommended to consult with the carers and facilitate a support group, which is focused on their specific needs.</p>		

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_



**PART D**

**PROVIDER'S RESPONSE**

**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.**

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> 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"/>
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"/> 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 by 15 April 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

**Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:**

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I Jean Pickering of Worcestershire 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.**

<b>Print Name</b>	Jean Pickering
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Designation</b>	Service Manager (Looked after Children)
<b>Date</b>	15.4.05

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of Worcestershire 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:**

<b>Print Name</b>	_____
<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Designation</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	_____

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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