



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **City of Sunderland Services for Looked After Children - Fostering**

Penshaw House

Station Road

Penshaw

Houghton le Spring

DH4 7LB

17th March 2004

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

City of Sunderland Services for Looked After Children - Fost

**Address**

Penshaw House, Station Road, Penshaw, Houghton le Spring, DH4 7LB

**Local Authority Manager**

Steve Towers

**Tel No:**

0191 382 3108

**Address**

Penshaw House, Station Road, Penshaw, Houghton le Spring, DH4 7LB

**Fax No:**

0191 382 3165

**Email Address**

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

**Date of last inspection**

12-14  
Feb 2003

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		17th March 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Patricia McKay	106089
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Jayne Noble	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>			

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**  
**Inspection visits**  
**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**  
**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**  
**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**  
**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**  
**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**  
**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

**Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)**

**Part D: Provider's Response**

- D.1. Provider's comments**
- D.2. Action Plan**
- D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of City of Sunderland Services for Looked After Children - Fost. 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 NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The fostering service operates within the Children's Services Division of the Social Services Directorate. The service is located in Penshaw House Penshaw, Houghton le Spring. The aim of the fostering service is to recruit a range of foster carers to provide placements for children of different ages, abilities, backgrounds and assessed needs. The fostering service prepares, assesses, trains, supervises and supports these carers to look after children and young people in family based settings.

The fostering service has 189 foster carers. There are 296 children placed in foster care. The service has a number of categories of foster carer. These include mainstream foster carers, relative and friend carers, short break carers, permanent foster carers, foster care worker scheme and an immediate placement scheme.

## **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.)

### **Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide**

The Statement of Purpose was in place and had been reviewed. Two Children's Guides had been developed for older and younger children. The agency needed to develop a Children's Guide for children with disabilities.

### **Management of the Fostering Service**

The managers were all appropriately qualified and experienced. A senior manager meets regularly with a consultative group of foster carers. The lines of accountability were very clear.

### **Securing and Promoting Welfare**

There was evidence that carers were providing a good service to the children in their care. The Foster Carers Handbook had been reviewed and extended to cover a wider range of information. This had been achieved in consultation with carers. The agency needed to ensure that all foster carer reviews were completed within the statutory timescale.

### **Employment and Management of Staff and Carers**

Recruitment and selection procedures ensured that suitably qualified and experienced staff were recruited. There was a comprehensive training programme for staff and carers. The agency needed to ensure that the foster carer agreement contained all of the elements described in the standards.

### **Records**

There were case records for all the children and carers looked at as part of the inspection process. All records were securely stored. There were some gaps in the information on some foster carers files.

### **Fostering Panels**

The panel was properly constituted. The panel was independently chaired. The panel met regularly to ensure there were no delays. The panel had policies and procedures that governed its operation.

### **Short Term Breaks**



The agency had a number of short break carers. A worker had been recently appointed to further develop this area of work.

**Family and Friends as Carers**

There were a number of relatives and friends approved as foster carers. The agency had developed a format to gather information about these carers to present to Panel at the earliest opportunity. The agency needed to develop a flexible training package for these carers.

The inspectors would like to thank the children, carers and staff who contributed towards this inspection.

## **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:

YES

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:**

The agency needs to ensure that it satisfies all of the requirements in relation to the assessment and review of foster carers and all information pertinent to foster care agreements.

## 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 National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      Patricia McKay      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      Jayne Noble      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**      Gerard Morris      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**      \_\_\_\_\_

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations 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	The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 29(2)	FS21, FS16	The agency must ensure that foster carers are reviewed at intervals of not more than one year.	30 April 2004
2	The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 27(2a)	FS22	The agency must ensure that foster care agreements contain all of the elements specified in Schedule 5.	30 June 2004
3	The Fostering services Regulations 2002 28(5b)	FS25	The agency must ensure that records are kept of all checks and references that have been obtained and their outcome.	30 April 2004

### GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The agency should ensure that the Children's Guide is suitable for all children who are fostered.
2	FS4	The agency should consider including information about foster carer payment schedules in the Foster Carers Handbook.
3	FS11	The agency should ensure that children with disabilities and/or communication difficulties are able to access the complaints procedure.
4	FS23, FS32	The agency should develop and deliver a training package for relatives and friends approved as carers.
5	FS21	The agency should ensure that all foster carers receive the updated foster carers handbook.
6	FS32	The agency should ensure that there is a system to monitor and address the quality of assessments of Family and Friends approved as carers.

\* 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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	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	17/03/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	72

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

The fostering service had a Statement of Purpose in place. The Statement of Purpose contained all of the elements required in the standards. The Statement of Purpose had been reviewed within the statutory timescale. Foster carers who were visited as part of the inspection process were aware of the Statement of Purpose.

The fostering service had two Children's Guides. The guides were aimed at children in particular age groups. The Children's Guides were well presented in an attractive format. The agency needed to ensure that the Children's Guides were suitable for all looked after children, including children with disabilities.

## 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 manager of the fostering service was an experienced and qualified childcare professional. The manager was undertaking a Diploma in Management Studies course. There was evidence gathered during the inspection from social workers and foster carers that the service was effectively managed.

The fostering manager was part of performance management groups within the Directorate and the Looked After Children section. The manager received supervision and support from the Divisional Manager for Services for Looked After Children.

### 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
---------------------------	---------------	---

Personnel records were examined as part of the inspection process. The records contained all of the elements required within Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

## 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 lines of accountability and communication were very clear. The service was clearly located within the wider system of children's services. Financial procedures were monitored and controlled by the corporate division of the council. A procedure for dealing with conflicts of interest was included within the staff guidance manual.

There was written information available in relation to payments made to foster carers. The revised foster carers handbook included a section about financial matters. The handbook did not give details of the payment schedules. The agency should consider including this information in the handbook. It would need to be updated annually.

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

11

**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.**

4

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

0

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

0

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

1

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

3

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

3

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

0

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

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The manager had a clear job description and did not hold a similar position in another organisation. Levels of accountability and delegation were clear.

There were arrangements for deputising in the absence of the manager.

## Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

### Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

A number of foster carers homes were visited as part of the inspection process. All of the homes were warm, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. The carers demonstrated an understanding of health and safety issues.

There was evidence that a health and safety assessment had been completed as part of the initial assessment of foster carers. Health and safety issues were covered in the pre approval training for foster carers. Post approval training on health and safety issues was available for carers.

The foster carer handbook had been recently reviewed. The handbook contained a section on health and safety.

Carers had been supplied with the appropriate equipment for the children in their care. There was a system in place to check that carer's vehicles were properly insured.

### 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

The agency had developed a policy in relation to diversity and equal opportunities. The policy was clearly set out in the foster carers handbook. There was evidence that carers knew about the policy. Carers were able to describe how they would fulfil the requirements of the policy.

There was pre and post approval training available for carers to assist them in meeting the diverse needs of the children in their care.

There was evidence that foster carers for children with disabilities had been provided with appropriate equipment and adaptations to their home.

The agency had committed funding to a regional project to recruit more black and ethnic minority carers.

<b>Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
There was evidence in returned questionnaires and visits to carers that children were matched with carers capable of meeting their assessed needs. There was an officer responsible for managing the placement process. This officer ensured that the best possible match was achieved. The placement and resource panel met weekly. The panel included input from the Education Department. The placements officer actively managed the placement and matching process for all children in the looked after system.		

<b>Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)</b>		
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>	3
<p>The agency had developed a policy on behaviour management. The policy was included in the foster carers handbook. There was evidence that carers were aware of the policy and what it contained. Therapeutic crisis intervention training is not only undertaken by foster care workers and immediate placement carers, it is also open to mainstream foster carers and some attended the first training course.</p> <p>The carers who were visited had the necessary information about the children in their care. The foster carer training included modules about children who had been abused, safe caring, and managing difficult behaviour.</p> <p>There was a system for recording events and notifications on carer's files and in a central file. The information was recorded in a way that ensured information could not be added or deleted.</p> <p>The agency had consistently informed the NCSC of all events which fell within the remit of Schedule 8.</p>		
<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	100	%

**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

There was evidence to suggest that contact was being maintained and promoted as appropriate. There was evidence of contact arrangements on placement agreements. A young person confirmed that contact was taking place at the right level for him with support from the agency.

**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?**

2

There was evidence throughout the inspection process that children felt listened to by their carers and the staff in the fostering service. The agency had a children's consultation officer. There was a strategy for consultation with children and families. The strategy included regular group meetings and individual opportunities for views to be heard. Interviews with young people and returned questionnaires confirmed that young people knew how to make a complaint. Information was included in the Children's Guide. The agency needed to ensure that children with disabilities had access to the complaints process.

**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 foster carer training included input on the health needs of looked after children. There was first aid training for foster carers. The foster carers handbook included a policy statement and comprehensive guidance on health care. The carers who were visited as part of the inspection were able to articulate how the health needs of the children in their care were met. All of the children were registered with a G.P. The service ensured that carers had access to a consultant paediatrician, health visitor and clinical psychologist for looked after children to assist them in the delivery of this standard.

**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 education needs of looked after children were given high priority within the service. The foster carer's training programme included input on education matters. The foster carer handbook included a policy and guidance on education. Foster carers were aware of the importance of education for the children in their care. There was evidence of the commitment of carers to helping children reach their potential.

The fostering service had developed a relationship with the University of Sunderland. Some young people had recently undertaken a 'taster' session at the University. This was part of a strategy to raise aspirations and increase awareness of the availability of higher education programmes.

**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

The foster care handbook and the training programme contained guidance for carers on preparing young people for adulthood and independence. Carers were able to say how they assisted young people in the development of these skills. There was evidence that carers were involved in the completion of pathway plans for young people.

## 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 agency had a staff recruitment and employment policy and procedures. The personnel files, which were examined as part of the inspection process, provided the evidence that the policy and procedures were used. The personnel files contained all of the elements required by the standards.

The staff team were appropriately qualified and experienced. The team were able to demonstrate a good understanding of their role. The team were also able to show their understanding of the needs of carers, children and young people.

Total number of staff of the agency:

12

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

2

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

The management structure within the Children's Services division of the Directorate was clear.

All staff including independent practitioners were provided with an appropriate written contract and job description.

The agency had an efficient administrative team who gave excellent administrative support to the fostering service.

The system for reviewing foster carers was about to transfer to the independent reviewing unit. There was no evidence of a foster carer review having been held for the last three years, on one of the files examined. This was a file for a permanent carer. The agency needed to develop a system to ensure that all reviews were undertaken within the statutory timescale.



<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>The agency had an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff. There was one vacancy for a member of staff this was being addressed.</p> <p>The agency had a recruitment strategy for carers. This was reviewed annually to ensure that it continued to match the profile of the children and young people needing placement. The agency had developed a number of innovative schemes to meet identified placement needs.</p> <p>There was a comprehensive assessment process in place. There was evidence on files that this was in use.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
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>	3
<p>The agency was in the process of reviewing the out of hours support available for foster carers. The agency had agreed funding to further develop this service. Carers commented that the out of hours support had been adequate but acknowledged that there was room for improvement.</p> <p>The agency had a comprehensive health and safety policy and a whistleblowing policy. There was evidence that these policies were known and understood.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>The agency had a comprehensive training programme for staff and carers. The agency had recently strengthened the induction training for foster carers.</p> <p>There was an appraisal scheme for staff.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There was evidence of a regular programme of team meetings for staff. The staff were supervised regularly and this was recorded. Supervision was regular and planned in advance.</p> <p>There was a staff appraisal system in place, which was being used.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>1</b>
<p>The agency had a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. The foster carer handbook had been recently reviewed. The handbook included a section on supervision and support.</p> <p>There was evidence that some carers had not yet received the updated handbook. The agency needed to ensure all carers received a copy.</p> <p>Carers understood the role of the supervising social worker. Carers were able to describe how they would access support in and out of office hours.</p> <p>There was evidence on one file that a foster carer review had not been completed within the statutory timescale. The agency needed to ensure that all carers were reviewed within timescale.</p>		

<b>Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)</b>		
<b>The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The agency had a system for recording allegations of abuse. The manager maintained oversight of this system.</p> <p>Carers had a completed foster care agreement. The agreement did not cover all of the matters listed in Schedule 5 of the Regulations. The agency needed to review the foster care agreement to include the level of support and training that would be provided to carers. The agreement needed to say that some unannounced visits would take place.</p> <p>The foster care handbook contained a section on complaints and representations. There was a system to record complaints and representations. The manager maintained oversight of this system.</p>		

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

The agency had a pre and post approval foster care training programme. There was evidence that some carers had received a high level of good quality training. The foundation training for carers had been recently reviewed and updated.

There was evidence that relative carers and some carers of long standing had not been involved in a training programme. The agency needed to address this. The agency may need to develop a training pack that could be delivered in the carer's homes.

## 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

The case files of four children were examined as part of the inspection. The case files contained all of the information required

Carers held information about the children in their care in a black folder that they kept securely stored.

The carers demonstrated how they would help children to reflect on and understand their history. Files and records were addressed in the foster carers handbook. The agency was developing additional training for carers in relation to recording about the children in their care.

### 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?

1

The agency kept the separate records required in the standard. The storage of records was secure.

There was evidence on one file that the record of checks and references was incomplete.

The administrators instigated the series of reference checks. They completed the reference checklist when they were returned. Files were passed on to social workers at the point of allocation. The agency needed to ensure that the reference checklist was completed for all applicants irrespective of where the file was located in the service. This must take place before applicants are approved at Panel.

**Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:**

296

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

0

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

0

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

37

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

32

**Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £**

63.42

**Maximum £**

357.98

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

There were identifiable premises that were appropriate for the purpose. The premises provided an equipped base from which staff could work. The premises were secure. Records were stored securely and appropriately. The I.T. system was backed up.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

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

The fostering service finances were part of the financial management strategy of the local authority.

There was evidence that the service was financially viable and has sufficient resources to meet its obligations.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

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

The financial processes were subject to the scrutiny of the district audit. There were systems in place to ensure that accounts are properly maintained and audited

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

There was a written policy in relation to the payment of fostering allowances. Carers reported that payments were made to them without delay. Payments to carers were reviewed annually. The rate was set having taken account of inflation and the recommendation of the Fostering Network organisation.

## 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

This is a properly constituted panel in relation to the Fostering Service Regulations 2002, however, as an issue of good practice should include where possible someone who has spent time in foster care, or whose child has been placed with foster carer's.

The panel has an independent chairperson, whose was appointed following completion of all appropriate checks including CRB. Another member of the panel has been identified to act as chair in her absence.

Written procedures are in place that provides guidance on decision-making when not all the members are in agreement.

The chair felt the panel did have a developed quality assurance function and there is a process for feeding this information back to the Social Services Department at appropriate levels. Issues in relation to assessments are discussed and recently the panel have identified that some assessments are coming to panel before all statutory checks have been completed. This has been raised with the Fostering Team Manager.



## 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?
---------------------------	---------------

The agency had ten carers offering short breaks to children with disabilities. There was a panel that considered the requests for short break placements. A principal fostering and adoption officer had been recruited to further develop this service. The agency had a policy and procedures relating to short term breaks placements.	3
---	---

## 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.

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The agency had recently revised the procedure for placements with relatives and friends. The placement and resource panel routinely ensured that placements with relatives and friends had been thoroughly explored before a child was admitted to an alternative placement. The agency had developed an information-gathering format for these placements. The agency needed to ensure that the agreed format was used consistently and that the quality of these assessments was monitored and any issues addressed. The relative foster carer visited as part of the inspection process had not undertaken any training with the agency. The agency needed to consider ways of delivering training to relatives and friends approved as carers.

**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 <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

**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 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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

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