



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Calderdale Fostering Service

Ovenden Hall
Ovenden Road
Halifax
HX3 5QG

19th January 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

Calderdale Fostering Service

Address

Ovenden Hall, Ovenden Road, Halifax, HX3 5QG

Local Authority Manager

Lynn Radley

Tel No:

01422 353279

Address

Ovenden Hall, Ovenden Road, Halifax, HX3 5QG

Fax No:

01422 323287

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

March
2003

Date of Inspection Visit		19th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:15 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Helen Walker	073596
Name of Inspector	2	Ruth Rainey	
Name of Inspector	3	N/A	
Name of Inspector	4	N/A	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) 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.		N/A	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Lynn Radley	

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 Calderdale 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 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.

Calderdale fostering service provides a range of fostering services including short term, long term, “friends and family” (referred to as kinship care in Calderdale) and a limited number of respite care (short-break), and remand placements. They also support a small number of foster carers, approved by Calderdale, who reside outside the Calderdale area. Almost 50% of Calderdale’s fostering expenditure is used to fund 30 children placed via independent fostering agencies, where fostering duties are delegated to these agencies. The fostering service operates, in relation to “friends and family” initial recruitment through social work teams whilst the full service provision is from the central fostering team base at Ovenden Hall. This building accommodates a number of other children’s services provided by Calderdale, including: Children Looked After Team, initial response team and outreach team.

Since last years inspection Calderdale has separated the Fostering & Adoption team, each service now has a dedicated manager: Lynn Radley is the Fostering Team Manager.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering service was supporting approximately 80 foster carers who cared for approximately 104 foster children and additionally 30 children were placed with independent fostering agencies. This represented more than half of the overall number of children looked after by Calderdale.

The fostering team consists of a manager who is responsible for 1 senior practitioner, 4 full-time workers (1 post vacant), 1 part-time (30hours) worker, and an adoption team shared; Publicity and Recruitment Officer. Field social work teams are variously involved in the recruitment, and initial assessment, of kinship carers (as their caseloads require). Disappointingly 1 administration officer is attached to both the fostering & adoption team; the proposal last year from the fostering service to increase this support has not occurred – despite an expansion of team sizes and increased administrative roles.

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 was the second annual inspection of Calderdale Fostering service. A number of requirements and recommendations have again been highlighted, including many outstanding from last year's inspection. Disappointingly, Calderdale have not yet carried out, within timescales, some of the tasks detailed in their action plan in response to last year's inspection report, and the Commission expects significant progress to be made over the next 6 months to ensure compliance with the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Details of the inspection methodologies used are given on page 20 of this report. Children, aged 8 years and over, living in foster homes received questionnaires, made group response through Calderdale's Children's Rights Officer and several were seen and spoken with when inspectors visited a sample of foster homes. Foster carers contributed directly to the inspection process via questionnaires and inspectors visited 4 foster homes. Placing authority survey questionnaires were distributed to social workers and 15 replies were received. The aforementioned information is incorporated within part B of this report. The inspectors had a verbal response from Calderdale's child protection officer, which indicated there were no outstanding child protection issues in relation to the fostering service.

It was evident from the inspection that the fostering service is managed and staffed by workers who are enthusiastic and have a good range of skills and experience. Overall there remains a need for systems to be developed by the manager to analyse Calderdale fostering service needs and to strategically plan how targets will be met. Performance management of new work priorities against existing workloads is required along with a risk assessment approach as to how workloads are managed. Currently no monitoring systems exist and these need to be developed in all areas of the service – including complaints, child protection, recruitment and review targets. Quality assurance systems also need to be developed and there may be some benefit in foster carers who cease care to complete exit questionnaires in order to elicit their views.

Foster carers files showed a lack of consistency in contact from fostering service workers, whilst some foster carers spoke highly of workers being very supportive and giving sound advice, others did not receive the same level of contact and support. The vacancy within the fostering team means that some carers are not allocated to a fostering officer. The demand for a range of foster placements generally outstrips availability, although interest was said to have improved since the introduction of a payment for skills scheme since the last inspection. A number of foster carers are members of the Calderdale Foster Carers Association, which meets locally and provides a forum for foster carers to discuss related issues and is a source of support and information.

Key areas for development remain, as identified last year by foster carers, the out of office hours support, improving support systems when part time fostering workers are not in the office or when there is a lengthy period of sickness. There is still a lack of allocated field social workers for children looked after. Inspectors were informed that the number of children in foster homes without a social worker has doubled since last year's inspection. At the time

of the inspection there were 104 children cared for by Calderdale foster carers and 30 additional children placed with independent fostering agencies. From information provided to the inspectors it was noted that 39 children of the 104 cared for by Calderdale foster carers did not have an allocated social worker, which meant that support and information was lacking for children as well as for carers.

Full details of requirements and recommendations made are included in the main body of this report and a summary can be found at the end of part A.

Inspectors would like to thank children in foster placements, foster carers and Calderdale staff who assisted in the inspection process.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

A section 47(5) notice was applicable to Calderdale fostering service at the time of the NCSC inspection. Section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000 has now been repealed by the Health and Social Care Act and is therefore no longer applicable.

Calderdale fostering service have forwarded a suitable and timely action plan in response to this inspection report, which will be monitored through CSCI inspection..

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report, which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	3	FS1	The Statement of purpose needs to be made available to persons as detailed in the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The children's guide must be provided to foster parents and children.	April 2004
2	10 20 Schedule 1	FS15 FS3	Information (proof of identity, CRB check, verification of references, and recent photograph) as required at Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 must be kept in respect of the manager and staff of the fostering service.	July 2003
3	17, 35	FS6	The fostering service (at centralised and field work locations) must provide adequate support to foster carers and appropriate supervision of placements must be given	October 2003
4	12, 13	FS9	Child protection procedure must include information as stated in Regulation 12. Foster carers need training and information about any necessary use of physical restraint on a child.	April 2004
6	17	FS12	Information to be provided to carers stating health needs of any child placed or to be placed and the arrangements for giving consent to the child's medical or dental examination or treatment. This to include written medical consent for children placed with foster carers.	November 2003
7	16, 17 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002	FS14	Support, training and information must be available for foster carers in respect of children leaving care and also for circumstances when a child is no longer required to receive compulsory full time education.	April 2004

8	20	FS15	All staff records must contain all the information required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	September 2003
9	19	FS16	Staffing levels and arrangements in respect of providing adequate clerical support for the fostering service must be reviewed	November 2003
10	17	FS18	There must be appropriate support, training and information for foster carers, including support outside of office hours	April 2004
11	17, 35	FS21	The role of the placing social worker and fostering worker needs to be clearly defined in order to provide the necessary support for the foster carer and supervision of the placement	November 2003
12	17, 28	FS22	The foster carer agreement must contain all information as per Schedule 5 (6, 12)	June 2003
13	30, 35	FS24	Case records in respect of foster carers and children placed must be maintained. The required number of visits, as per regulation 35 must be made to a foster child and a written report prepared of the visit.	December 2003
14	22,39, 31,30	FS25	Case records for foster carers must include documents referred to in Regulation 30 The children's register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 22, Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 The foster carers register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002	December 2003
15	24	FS30	Panel decisions made since April 2002 must be revisited to check they comply with legal requirements	April 2004
16	38	FS32	Regulation 38 must be complied with in respect of placing children with family and friends.	January 2004

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.

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Helen Walker Signature _____
Second Inspector _____ Signature _____
Locality Manager Ruth Rainey Signature _____
Date 11 June 2004 _____

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	3	FS1	The Statement of purpose needs to be made available to persons as detailed in the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The children's guide must be provided to foster parents and children.	30 April 2004
2	10 20 Schedule 1	FS15FS3	Information as required at Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 must be obtained in respect of the manager and staff of the fostering service.	31 July 2004
3	10	*RQN-	The responsible individual for the fostering service has yet to notify the Commission of the name of the person appointed to manage the fostering service and the date on which the appointment took effect	30 April 2004
4	17, 35	FS6	The fostering service (at centralised and field work locations) must provide adequate support to foster carers and appropriate supervision of placements must be given	31 July 2004
5	34 Schedule 6	FS8	Before making a placement there must be a foster placement agreement with the foster carer, which specifies the information in Schedule 6 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A child may only be placed with a foster parent if the foster parent is approved and the terms of his approval are consistent with the proposed placement.	31 July 2004

6	12, 13	FS9	Child protection procedure must include information as stated in Regulation 12. Foster carers need training and information about any necessary use of physical restraint on a child.	31 July 2004
7	17	FS12	Information to be provided to carers stating health needs of any child placed or to be placed and the arrangements for giving consent to the child's medical or dental examination or treatment. This to include written medical consent for children placed with foster carers.	31 July 2004
8	16, 17 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002	FS14	Support, training and information must be available for foster carers in respect of children leaving care and also for circumstances when a child is no longer required to receive compulsory full time education.	31 August 2004
9	20	FS15	All staff records must contain all the information required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	31 July 2004
10	19, 33, 40	FS16	Staffing levels and arrangements in respect of providing adequate clerical support for the fostering service must be reviewed As per regulation 33 and 40 (4) the local authority must enter into a written agreement with the registered person of any independent fostering agency to be used by the fostering service. Where the local authority propose to make an arrangement under this regulation in respect of a particular child the local authority shall enter into an agreement with the registered person in respect of that child as detailed in reg. 40 (5)	31 July 2004
11	17	FS18	There must be appropriate support, training and information for foster carers, including support outside of office hours	31 August 2004
12	17 35	FS21	The role of the placing social worker and fostering worker needs to be clearly defined in order to provide the necessary support for the foster carer and supervision of the placement	31 July 2004

13	17, 28	FS22	All foster carers to have a foster care agreement-containing information as per Schedule 5. The mostly recently revised agreement must also contain points: 6, 12 (reg. 12) and 14 of Schedule 5	31 July 2004
14	30,35	FS24	Case records in respect of foster carers and children placed must be maintained. The required number of visits, as per regulation 35 must be made to a foster child and a written report prepared of the visit.	31 July 2004
15	22, 39, 31	FS25	Case records for foster carers must include documents s referred to in Regulation 30. The children's register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 22, Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 The foster carers register must be developed to include all the information set out in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002	30 September 2004
16	24	FS30	Non-quorate foster panel decisions made since April 2002 must be taken back to a quorate panel.	30 April 2004
17	38	FS32	Regulation 38 must be complied with in respect of placing children with family and friends.	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	FS2	The Manager should have attained Level 4 NVQ in management (or equivalent qualification) by 2005
2	FS3	Written references to check fitness should be followed up with telephone enquiries.
3	FS4	The manager should develop and implement a formal system of monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A review of the current procedures of kinship carers not being supported initially by the centralised fostering service should be revisited to address the shortfalls in the current procedures
4	FS5	The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and lines of accountability should be clearly defined
5	FS6	<p>Accommodation arrangements should reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space.</p> <p>If the child has been abused or has abused another child, then the child's needs and the needs of all other children in the home should be assessed before any decision is made to allow sharing of bedrooms. The outcome of the assessment is recorded in writing.</p> <p>Carers should be provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.</p> <p>Where the foster carer is expected to provide transport for the child, the fostering service ensures this is safe and appropriate to the child's needs.</p> <p>The home and immediate environment should be free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm.</p>
6	FS7	<p>Each child and her/his family should have access to foster care services (including foster placements, which recognise and address her/his needs in terms of religion, ethnic origin, language and culture.</p> <p>Kinship carers should be provided with preparation and training to ensure they support and encourage each child to develop skills to help her/him to deal with all forms of discrimination.</p>

7	FS8	Matching should reflect NMS 8.1, 8.2, 8.3. 8.7 and this should be evidenced in foster carers records.
8	FS9	<p>Management systems should be in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. This information is scrutinised regularly.</p> <p>Safe caring guidelines should be provided, based on a written policy, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household. The guidelines are cleared with the child's social worker and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child.</p>
9	FS10	<p>The fostering service should ensure that all foster carers receive full information about the young person to be placed with them including details of contact arrangements given in the placement plan.</p> <p>There should be clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed.</p>
10	FS11	<p>The fostering service should ensure that the opinions and views of children on all matters affecting them, including day to day matters, are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis and not taken for granted.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure that children in foster care know how to raise any concerns or complaints, and ensures that they receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised.</p>
11	FS12	The carers should be provided with a written health record for each child (including those children over 5 years of age) placed in their care: this is updated during the placement and moves with the child.
12	FS13	The fostering service should have information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.
13	FS14	There should be clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living.

14	FS16	<p>There should be structures and systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively.</p> <p>There should be a clear understanding about how the fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure carers maintain a training portfolio.</p> <p>Before the fostering service uses fostering agencies the commission's inspection reports should be checked to ensure there are no concerns about the agencies assessment, approval and review process.</p>
15	FS17	<p>Staffing levels and arrangements should be reviewed in consultation with foster carers and solutions found to issues and concerns raised by foster carers.</p> <p>There should be a clearly set out assessment process for carers, particularly kinship, which defines the: the task to be undertaken, the qualities, competences or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved, the standards to be applied in the assessment, the stages and content of the selection processes and the timescales involved and the information given to applicants.</p>
16	FS18	<p>Out of hours support for foster carers to be improved.</p> <p>Management systems for carer supervision, appraisal and support to be developed.</p>
17	FS19	<p>Training programmes should reflect the policies of the fostering service and joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers held on a regular basis.</p>
18	FS20	<p>Field social workers recruiting and initially assessing kinship carers, who are not part of the centralised fostering service, should receive appropriate management supervision and input from the fostering service. This should apply unless new procedures are developed to ensure that the dedicated centralised fostering team carries out all recruitment.</p>
19	FS21	<p>A strategy document to be produced covering all matters detailed in NMS21.2.</p> <p>Development of a good system of communication between the fostering service social worker and the child's social worker.</p>
20	FS22	<p>Foster carer's handbooks to be kept up to date.</p> <p>The supervising fostering service social worker should meet regularly with foster carers and these meetings should be documented in the foster carer's files. There should also be occasional unannounced visits made, at least one each year.</p>

21	FS23	<p>All new carers including family and friends carers should receive induction training.</p> <p>Further development of the training programme for foster carers, to develop their skills and tackle any weaknesses.</p> <p>Specific considerations to be given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers.</p>
22	FS24	<p>A specific policy is developed in relation to the fostering service's files in line with NMS 24.2.</p> <p>The practices for monitoring files are more robust.</p> <p>If placing social workers do not provide carers with sufficient information about children they place, request to be made in writing for this information and the request is kept on the foster carers file.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure carers store information in a secure manner, which may be achieved by the provision of a lockable filing box.</p>
23	FS25	<p>A system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records and remedial action to be taken when necessary should be developed.</p>
24	FS26	<p>Administrative systems should be further developed to include staff training and access to IT equipment.</p>
25	*RCN	<p>Consideration should be given to revising the wording/content of the letter issued to foster carers when an overpayment has occurred.</p>
26	FS30	<p>The fostering panel's monitoring role, including tasks identified in NMS30.5 and 30.7, should be developed.</p>
27	FS32	<p>The support and training needs for kinship carers (family and friends) to be assessed and met in the same way as for any other carers.</p>

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
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	19/01/04
Time of Inspection	09:15
Duration Of Inspection (days)	10

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?

1

The fostering service has a Statement of Purpose, which had recently been agreed by elected members of the council. The Manager informed the Inspectors that this document would be made available to parents, children and other significant others. The service has recently developed a children's guide for children placed with carers, which has yet to be distributed.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The manager of the fostering service has a social work qualification and has been in post since January 2004. Prior to the current manager's employment, one person managed both the fostering service and adoption service. Due to the development of the services, each now has a dedicated manager. Prior to taking on this role, the manager was employed as a fostering social worker with Calderdale fostering service and has previous fostering work experience with another fostering service. The manager does not hold a management qualification but is part way through an NVQ level 4 management course. The manager is in the process of assessing the systems that are in place within the fostering service and recognises some of these need to be changed and updated to ensure the service runs more efficiently and effectively. The previous manager of the service is currently employed in developing policies and procedures for the fostering service.</p> <p>All the services social work staff have social work qualifications</p>		

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?	1
<p>Personnel records for the manager evidenced that some of the required information as in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 was outstanding: there was only one written reference on file, no telephone enquiry to follow up the written reference and no recent photograph. Evidence was available at the inspection to demonstrate that a Criminal Records Bureau check had been received for the manager.</p> <p>The Inspectors viewed personnel records for all staff employed in the fostering service and found that not all records contained the required information as in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Three of the fostering staff have yet to have a Criminal Records Bureau check. Discussion with personnel staff and the fostering service manager confirmed the checks would be obtained without delay.</p> <p>Discussion with personnel section of the fostering service confirmed their awareness of the need for Criminal Record Bureau checks to be renewed every three years</p>		

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

The new manager came into post in January 2004. She is keen to set good standards and has much work to do to establish a clear procedure for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service, as identified at the last inspection. It would be good practice for the manager to have systems in place to monitor matters such as those listed in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

Whilst the age related boarding out payment is set, the introduction of the payment for skills banded fee scheme means that there should now be demonstrable evidence of differences in payment. Since last year's inspection the separation of fostering and adoption services, each with individual managers, has resulted in a realistic management workload.

As at last year's inspection, there remains some discrepancy in the amount of fostering workers support that carers receive. Kinship carers are still initially recruited and supported by field social workers and, as at last year, one carer seen by the Inspectors was unaware of the financial payments they may have been entitled to. The fostering service senior practitioner continues to visit the field social work teams on a regular basis to assist social workers in completing the initial assessment reports for kinship carers and to answer other fostering related queries. However this process does not run smoothly and it is suggested that the stage at which work is transferred to the fostering team for assessment should be much earlier to ensure work with applicants (many of whom may have children in placement) is carried out by fostering officers who have full understanding of the fostering worker's role. As at last year's inspection, the fostering manager stated there are no clear processes followed by field social work teams to ensure she is made aware of kinship placements. However closer examination of delegated powers and children's services procedures found that fieldwork staff are not following Calderdale Council's procedures and the fostering service provider and respective managers will need to address this.

Annual reviews of foster carers have progressed but not all have received one since the last inspection, a reminder system may assist in achieving full compliance. The fostering service should adopt a system to make the notifications as outlined in the regulations.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	1
Death of a child placed with foster parents.	0
Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	0
Serious illness or accident of a child.	0
Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	0
Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	0
Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	0
Serious complaint about a foster parent.	0
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	1
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?	2
<p>The fostering service now has a dedicated manager with responsibility for 6 fostering social workers (including one senior practitioner). Field social work staff generally instigate the kinship foster care assessments but it is still unclear from the manager's job description how this part of the service is managed effectively. From discussion with the manager it is apparent there is some confusion about the level of delegation and responsibility the manager has. Some decisions had been made by the manager, which should have been taken at a higher management level according to 'delegated powers'. There is one senior practitioner in the fostering team who is in charge when the manager is absent. Staff members interviewed were aware of their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of others. They were knowledgeable about the operations of the service and aware of the management arrangements.</p>		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
<p>During the inspection process 4 foster carers (family and friends, long term, remand and short term) were visited and interviewed. All made the inspectors very welcome in their home and cooperated fully with the inspection process. It was evident from the inspection of foster carers records and visits to their homes that a variety of size and styles of accommodation is provided. All of the homes visited were warm and comfortable. One carer was in the process of decorating the foster child's bedroom and awaited the arrival of bedroom furniture and a carpet. This meant the child was, in the interim period, sleeping on a camp bed and there were no curtains, carpet or furniture in the bedroom. From visiting foster carers the Inspectors saw there were a number of safety issues in some of the homes, which needed to be addressed. The young people spoken to commented favourably about the care received from their foster carer.</p>		
<p>The approval process for foster carers and the review process includes consideration of health and safety issues but this needs to be further improved as risk assessments were not routinely being carried out. Inspectors found that a family and friends carer was using a motorcar but did not hold a full driving licence or have insurance. The field social work team had made the placement of this child, which meant the social worker was involved in sorting out the many complexities of the case but was not conversant with aspects of fostering. The manager of the fostering team informed the Inspectors of a lack of contact from some of the field social work team</p>		
<p>Health and safety training is provided and taken up by some of the carers but needs to be further targeted towards friends and family carers, as initially, there seems to be limited information given to them. Yearly reviews of foster carers are now in the process of being undertaken and there has been recent revision of the health and safety procedures, which have yet to be distributed to foster carers. There was limited information on foster carers files to evidence the homes being inspected annually, in order to make sure that it meets the needs of foster children. The Inspectors could not find evidence to indicate that routinely, risk assessments were being undertaken in relation to foster children and their placements, particularly regarding child protection and health and safety. Foster carers informed the Inspectors that the fostering service has a positive and speedy response to the request for equipment, which appropriately assists them in caring for foster children. A revised agreement for foster carers informs them that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the NCSC inspection of the fostering service.</p>		

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?****2**

The initial training and assessment process for foster carers covers areas of diversity and equality but the fostering service need to further target training for kinship carers. The manager informed Inspectors that post approval training for carers is to be further develop to include training such as restraint and race awareness. The 'payment for skills' scheme has now been introduced, which focuses on foster carers undertaking training as part of their fostering role. The fostering service provides predominantly white carers, which reflects the ethnic background of children using the fostering service in the Calderdale area. The inspectors were told that should foster carers be needed for children from ethnic backgrounds then the service would first of all look to using Calderdale carers from the same ethnic background or arrangements could be made for children to be placed with carers from independent fostering agencies or carers who were supported by the fostering service to meet the young person's specific needs.

The inspectors visited an Asian kinship carer who had until recently been caring for an Asian relative. The carer informed the inspectors that the placement had been very difficult to manage and said she had been told by the field social work team, that if the child was not looked after by family then there would be no alternative but to place the child with available foster carers who would not be from the same ethnic background. Neither the child nor family wanted such a placement. There should be liaison between the placing social workers and fostering team to ensure awareness of the possibility of other more appropriate placements being available.

The manager told inspectors that a 'support care scheme' for children, was being developed. This would provide short-term (respite) care for children who may already be placed with foster carers and also provide care to support children remaining with their own families. There is a 'link scheme' for children with learning disabilities in place, only three such placements currently exist and this is to be further developed. There are also three remand carers, caring primarily for children who have been referred via the court system. One remand carer said they had good links with the Youth Offending Team.

The Looked After Children (education) team of Calderdale's education department run a 'Friday club' for children who are in foster or residential care. This takes place weekly on a Friday evening, providing all children who are of school age with an opportunity to participate in a variety of supervised leisure and social activities. Children using the Friday club were extremely enthusiastic about attending. Children spoken to during the inspection said they were very happy with their foster placements, which they felt met their needs.

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?**

1

The Inspectors found through discussion with foster carers and viewing of file records held at the fostering service, that foster carers were approved to care for foster children within certain categories but often children would be placed with foster carers outside of the approved category. This continues to be taking place due to a lack of foster carers. The need for a placement took priority and therefore the matching of child with foster carers was not given primary consideration. Retrospective approval for foster carers taking children out of category may be sought from the fostering panel. As detailed at Standard 4 Calderdale's delegated powers and related procedures have not been followed in relation to some decision making and this needs to be addressed by the fostering service provider. The Inspectors were informed of instances where carers had been approached to take beyond the maximum number of foster children allowed, including non-sibling placements. The kinship carer seen by the Inspectors did not have a fostering officer allocated. The carer spoke at length about being out of her depth and had just experienced the breakdown of the placement.

As at last year's inspection the manager advised it was not routine practice to contact social workers that already had a child placed with a particular foster carer to discuss the placement of an additional child with the carer. This remains of concern. Procedures should be developed regarding matching to indicate the level of consultation with field social workers, including those who may already have a child placed with foster carers when an additional placement with carers is under consideration.

The foster placement agreement is the field social worker's responsibility and the DOH Looking After Children forms are used. In addition to this form, the fostering service has introduced an additional placement agreement form. Field social workers are not yet using this form routinely. Of these documents sampled by inspectors many were incomplete. Not all of the children had an allocated field social worker. Since the last inspection the number of foster children not without an allocated social worker has almost doubled from 20 to 39.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

Foster carers receive initial foster training, which covers safe caring and protection of children. Subsequent training is offered to foster carers but evidence from discussion with foster carers, fostering service staff and the manager shows that take up of training has been low. The skills based fostering payment scheme is in place and there is an expectation that foster carers will attend training, as this now forms part of the foster carer agreement. Current training programmes are available to all foster carers. One foster carer told inspectors she had attended training about managing behaviour but found the course was mainly intended for those working with older people, not with foster children. Discussion with foster carers indicated they had limited information about use of restraint and how to respond to bullying and were using strategies they had determined to be appropriate to deal with this matter. The Inspectors felt that foster carers would have benefited from further

training and professional advice about this issue, particularly as some children did not have an allocated field social worker.

The manager informed the inspectors that the fostering service had been in discussion with the social services training department and it was hoped, in the coming year, the training offered would be specific to those caring for foster children. The fostering service recognise a gap in their provision of training to kinship carers and the manager is looking to further develop this particular part of the service.

Child protection and safe caring information and guidelines are in place in the foster carers handbook as is information relating to bullying and unauthorised absence. The foster care agreement details corporal punishment as being unacceptable.

Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the number of foster children without an allocated social worker. A significant number of foster children had not had an allocated social worker for many months (some over 12 months). Information received indicated there were 39 children out of 104 who did not have an allocated social worker, this number is almost double that of the last inspection. This meant that foster carers had only limited contact with field social work teams and there was little if any explanation to the child about safe caring guidelines.

Of the 19 written responses received from foster carers, 36% considered they had not been provided with full information about the foster child and his/her family to enable them to protect the foster child, their own children and themselves. Foster carers should be provided with information about children they are to care for including medical consent via the Looking After Children documentation, Essential Information Record, placement agreement form and Placement Plans. Foster carers identified there was a lack of permanent field social workers, there was use of agency/temporary staff and also some of the placing social workers were inexperienced. This meant that not all of the required information and documents were given to the foster carers.

Foster carers concerns about receiving satisfactory information regarding children they care for should be addressed and all placements made under Regulation 38 must be supported with an agreement and adequate information to care for the child and protect them. This is the responsibility of the placing authority.

There was no system in place within the fostering service to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. The service's procedures regarding child protection need to be developed to comply fully with Regulation 12 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 – to include: notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service, to the Commission, written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response.

A scoring of 0 is provided below, as the fostering service's records systems currently are not set up to provide this information. This should be addressed.
One child informed inspectors he was being bullied at school.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	0	%
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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.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Foster carers said they generally receive information about contact arrangements from the placing social worker. Information in children's records about contact (particularly with siblings) was not always fully recorded and this was especially scant in relation to children moving from foster carers to adoptive placements. Foster carers informed Inspectors of how they promoted appropriate contact between family and friends, which included transporting children to various venues, supervising contact and making contact arrangements directly with other foster carers who were looking after siblings of the children they were caring for. From discussion with the foster carers, children and members of the fostering service it was evident that foster carers put a great deal of time and effort into promoting contact.

The fostering service should develop procedures for setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. A number of foster children did not have an allocated field social worker; this was an issue for some carers and children, particularly for those children placed outside of the area.

Financial support is provided by the fostering service for transport or other costs involved in supporting contact. Foster carers seen by the inspectors were aware of how to obtain this financial support.

Most of the foster carers spoken to were fully aware of the need to keep records of contact visits but some were unable to give feedback and discuss the perceived impact of the visit due to the child not having an allocated social worker

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

Information is included within the children's guide about how to raise concerns or complaints, this document, however, had not been issued to the children at the time of the inspection and this should occur as soon as possible. Children spoken to felt their foster carers were listening to them but were unsure about who they would approach, should they have a complaint. The fostering service has not yet established a process for obtaining the opinions and views of children in foster care. The manager has recently had liaison with the children's rights officer for Calderdale and further discussion is to take place about the ways and means of seeking the opinions of children in foster care.

Foster carers are provided with information in the fostering service handbook about complaints and how these can be made. The 19 written responses received from foster carers, with the exception of two, indicated they were aware of how to make a complaint on behalf of a child.

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?

1

The manager and fostering officers are aware of health services available locally and where possible this is taken into account when children are placed with foster carers. Financial arrangements are agreed for any transport that may be necessary to enable children to attend health appointments.

Details of Calderdale and Kirklees NHS Trust facilities, such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Paediatrician and Accident and Emergency details are available in the foster carers handbook. The fostering service have an, 'initial health assessment' procedure, which outlines the responsibilities of individual agencies. There is also a 'Health Action Plan', which is to be monitored by the child's social worker. There may be difficulties in the monitoring of this plan, given the number of children without an allocated social worker.

Discussion with foster carers and the records viewed by Inspectors indicated there was not always a full description of the health needs of a child given at the time of placement, and if received, this could be some considerable time later. Inspectors noted one child's medical consent had been obtained several months after initial accommodation, when the child required medical treatment. Not all foster carers visited had copies of children's Action and Assessment records nor were these held on field social work files. The completion of these records could be beneficial when considering the child's health needs.

Foster carers visited were aware of promoting children's health and tried to ensure appropriate medical appointments were made and attended. Where possible the foster carers inform social workers of such appointments and the outcome, but as previously stated not all children had an allocated social worker. Foster carers seen didn't specifically keep a written health record for children over 5 years. For children under 5 years carers had the child's birth record book. Basic training on health and hygiene issues and first aid is available to foster carers but the uptake on this training has been low. The manager considered that the 'payment for skills' scheme and more flexibility in the timetabling of training would encourage carers to attend. The way in which foster carers maintained and stored records differed. The fostering service may wish to consider the consistency of this and provide further guidance and a lockable box for storage purposes.

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?****2**

There is positive contact between the LACE (Looked After Children Education) team and children who are placed with foster carers. The LACE team had a very strong presence and it was noted that the provision of a 'Friday' group was of particular support to children looked after by Calderdale fostering service. Children spoken with said they enjoyed attending this group and there were many social/leisure activities, educational/ interest visits they could participate in. Foster carers were also appreciative of this group as this was one of the few agency-organised groups available for children who are of school age and in foster care.

The Inspectors were pleased to note computers are to be provided to each foster home for use by children of school age.

Foster carers told the inspectors of their involvement with children's schools, which included attending parent's evenings (as appropriate) and discussion with teachers. The foster carer's handbook should be developed to detail their role in promoting the education of children looked after and include information regarding personal education plans.

The fostering service does not yet have systems in place to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care service or the numbers of children excluded from school.

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**

Since last year's inspection the payment for skills scheme has been introduced and carers have been awarded varying fee levels based upon the assessment of their competence. This has introduced a career fostering approach that requires foster carers to update and evidence their competence to retain fee banding. Inspectors were advised that overall carers have welcomed the scheme, and next year's inspection is expected to see evidence of the development of skills and competence resulting from this.

Some carers spoken with mentioned that some of the training offered is too generalised, e.g. bereavement training was geared to the elderly rather than children, and a recommendation has been made in respect of this.

Additional specialist training will also need to be offered to meet the skills range required by an expanding fostering service e.g. remand carers training. Training to meet the care needs of children will also need to be addressed. The fostering service should be pro active in providing training in areas that prepare foster carers to meet the needs of children, for example training relating to: drug & substance misuse and modifying difficult behaviour/holding/restraint.

The fostering service has yet to provide practice guidelines and training to carers regarding preparation for children who are moving towards independence. Of the foster homes sampled, no child was of an age to be involved in leaving care/pathway plans. Any advances in this area during the last year were not observed.

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?

1

The Calderdale MBC recruitment and selection process applies to staff employed in the fostering service. The Inspector examined personnel records relating to staff in the centralised fostering service. It was noted on two of the fostering workers records that Criminal Record Bureau checks were outstanding although police checks had been carried out prior to April 2002. A number of staff records had the following documents missing: positive proof of identity including a recent photograph and documentary evidence of any relevant qualifications. These documents are required as at Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Before the end of the fostering service inspection, the staff and manager of the fostering service had liaised with personnel section regarding the above-mentioned matters.

The Inspectors were pleased to note, the most recently appointed members of staff to the centralised fostering team had received an appropriate induction to fostering work. All the fostering service's social work staff have professional childcare qualifications and staff undertaking assessments meet with recommendations in 15.6 of this standard. The fostering service has a publicity and recruitment officer as well as an administrative officer. Both these posts are full time but the full time hours are shared between the fostering service and adoption service.

Total number of staff of the service:

6

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****1**

The current manager was appointed in December 2003. A management structure is in place and staff members interviewed said they were clear about lines of accountability. The manager is responsible to an operations manager. In the absence of the manager the operations manager oversees the service and there is also a senior practitioner in the fostering team. Discussion with the manager evidenced that there was some misunderstanding about her level of responsibility. The manager was able to seek clarification at the time of the inspection, about her role and responsibilities in respect of delegated powers. The manager is planning to have individual supervision with staff on a monthly basis. Already staff had received supervision from the manager. Weekly, minuted team meetings are taking place. The manager is to review the current system, in respect of prioritising and monitoring workloads of the fostering team.

The fostering service and adoption service share one full time administrative worker. This worker is responsible to an administrative manager and is expected to provide cover, at times, for duties such as switchboard, in the social services building where the fostering service is based. Should this worker be absent, there is no administrative cover for the fostering service and work has to be dealt with on her return. Unless the fostering service officers take on the administrative task the work can be delayed. The operation manager informed inspectors that discussions had taken place about the appointment of further administration staff.

The inspectors were told that approximately 30 Calderdale children had been placed with independent fostering agencies. There were no procedures in place to demonstrate that a check had been made of the Commission's inspection reports, in respect of an independent fostering agency, in order to ensure there were no concerns about the agencies assessment, approval and review processes. The inspectors tracked the case of a foster child placed with an independent agency. There were no records held in the child's file to indicate the placement had been made, no information detailing the reasons for the placement or how the matching process had taken place. The inspector contacted the contract section of the fostering service to locate the contract for this placement but was told it was not currently held in their files.

Kinship carers are initially assessed by field social workers, who do not generally have the fostering skills and experience held by staff of the fostering service, although the senior practitioner attends a social work team base, usually once per week to offer guidance on fostering matters. It was evident that the fostering service is managed and staffed by enthusiastic workers who have a good range of skills and experience.

All new carers have a training portfolio and for existing carers this is being developed through supervision and annual reviews. Staff and foster carers have access to training courses for professional and skills development. Foster carers sometimes felt courses were lengthy and the venues not always convenient. Remand carers felt they would benefit from more specific training relating to foster children, as some of the courses were more appropriate to those caring for adults. The recent introduction of the foster carers 'payment for skills' scheme, may raise the uptake of post approval training.

There is no policy and procedure about the roles of fostering service workers and fieldwork staff. Matters such as the minimum visiting levels by each are not defined in relation to individual placements. It is suggested that a policy and procedure is developed about joint working, or at a minimum that some written guidance is prepared.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Since last year's inspection there has been the division of the fostering and inspection team, each now with a dedicated manager that has resulted in a manageable staff team size to cover the current roles and responsibilities of the team. The team is carrying one vacancy, and whilst some lengthy period of sickness had occurred during the last year all staff were working at the time of the inspection. When an earlier shortfall in staffing levels had occurred the contingency plans to resolve the situation were unclear, and seemed to rely upon the carer ringing in and (different) duty officers taking the call. This year found all the fostering team staff to be full time, other than 1 worker who works 4 full days a week. Two new team members have been appointed and new energy will benefit the existing fostering experienced team. All hold an appropriate social work qualification.

Of the 19 responses received from foster carers, 89% felt there were not enough staff in the fostering service and comment was also made about the disparity between workers in the level of contact they had with carers. Out of office hours fostering support, highlighted as an area needing development last year, still needs to be addressed. It is recommended that the position should be reviewed and should involve consultation with foster carers about their concerns and issues, to which solutions should be found.

Some kinship carer's contact with the fostering service was limited, and the kinship home sampled did not have a fostering worker allocated despite high need; this placement broke down immediately before the inspectors' visit. The discussion revealed a carer, without an allocated fostering officer, struggling to meet the fostering task. It was found that no checks had been carried out in relation to the carer's driving licence and car insurance, so that the social worker did not realise that the carer of a child on a full care order was driving a car without having passed the driving test or having car insurance. The fostering service continues to use Fostering Network form A10, for the assessment of foster carers. It is suggested that some work is done to ensure all outcomes of risk assessments and safety issues that have been undertaken are contained on this report, with fuller information available in the portfolio for panel members to access.

Policies should be in place, which encourage the retention of carers (providing support, training and services) and these should be available to them in the foster carers handbook.

Some of the of early stage initiatives referred to at last year's inspection have not progressed far e.g. the employment of carers from ethnic minorities, short break and respite scheme. There is an assessment process for carers but this should be further developed for kinship carers to include matters as in Standard 17.6

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

Calderdale MBC has appropriate employment procedures in place. Of the 19 written responses received from foster carers, 10 said they were very satisfied with the support received from the fostering service, 1 said they were supported quite well, 6 felt the support was ok, 1 said they didn't get enough support and 1 made no comment.

Out of hours, an emergency duty team provides support, which is not specific to fostering. The manager is hoping to further develop a system for providing foster carers with out of hours fostering support.

Although only recently appointed, the manager has already provided supervision sessions to staff. The manager will endeavour to supervise staff on a monthly basis with more frequent supervision for staff new to the fostering team. Staff informed Inspectors that they were very satisfied with the level of support and supervision provided by the manager.

Reviews of foster carers are now starting to take place and a 'review of foster carers' policy has been developed. The IT system has yet to be updated to incorporate a reminder system for reviews. There have been times when supervision of foster carers has been intermittent, particularly when a carer's fostering worker has been absent long-term. The fostering service carer's handbook gives information about how the service will support carers but does not outline the procedure for carer supervision and appraisal.

The fostering service have now produced health and safety guidelines for foster carers, which has yet to be issued.

The fostering service has a whistle blowing policy which staff are aware of and foster carers spoken to by inspectors had an understanding of the term 'whistle blowing'.

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?****2**

Two new members of staff have joined the fostering team since the last inspection and one told inspectors they had received what they considered to be a good induction, which involved shadowing and joint working with another member of staff.

Within Calderdale MBC field social work teams, there are social workers undertaking completion of the initial fostering assessments, primarily linked with kinship carers. The manager informed inspectors that the senior practitioner generally visits the social work team at Elland on a weekly basis to offer guidance about the fostering assessment and report writing process.

Fostering service staff informed Inspectors that they have positive training opportunities, which are accessed in house or through external agencies. The manager is enthusiastic about offering training opportunities and encourages staff to attend these. The manager said training is discussed at team meetings and also within individual staff supervision sessions.

The manager has had discussion with the training section of the Department and it is hoped that future training will be more specific to meeting the needs of foster carers. There has been recent revision of a number of policies, which have yet to be distributed to fostering staff and carers. There should be continuing consideration given to the training needs of the centralised fostering team workers, field social workers and carers, once these policies have been produced and agreed.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

Staff have written job descriptions outlining the duties and responsibilities expected of them. There is now a dedicated fostering team manager who provides regular planned supervision for staff. The manager also receives supervision from the operations manager. The creation of separate fostering and adoption teams will make lines of accountability easier. Staff informed inspectors that they found the manager to be approachable and supportive. Team meetings usually occur on a weekly basis. The fostering service's policies and procedures are held at Ovenden Hall and are available to staff for reference.

Currently the manager of the fostering service does not manage the field social workers who undertake the initial fostering assessments in respect of kinship care. Although there is a procedure in place for the fostering manager to be made aware that a kinship placement had been made, it was evident that field social work staff are not following this procedure. There should be further liaison between the fostering team manager and operations manager to ensure the procedure is followed and appropriate supervision given to the field social workers in respect of their initial fostering assessment role.

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

1

There are strategies in place covering some of the issues identified in 21.2 of this standard and guidance for foster carers in the foster carers handbook. The inspectors note there is a procedural document Fos-07 (September 1999), 'Supporting children and carers in fostering placements', which covers some of the issues but several parts are out of line with the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The fostering service should consider developing a comprehensive document to cover all the matters in 21.2 of this standard. From discussion with foster carers, issues were raised about support and these included the inadequate level of out of hours support and the arrangements made for supervision and contact when their fostering officer was absent from work for long periods of time. The arrangements for supervising and contacting carers in the absence of their allocated fostering worker should be reviewed.

Information received from the fostering service indicated there were 104 children fostered by Calderdale carers and out of this number 39 did not have an allocated social worker. This has had an impact on the fostering service due to the additional support they have provided to foster carers in the absence of a child's social worker. Foster carers spoke of their frustration at not being able to discuss matters relating to a child with the child's social worker.

The fostering service is now undertaking annual reviews of foster carers.

The system of communication between the fostering service social workers and children's social workers continues to need to be improved. Questionnaires sent to placing social workers asked how well they thought the fostering service worked in partnership with the placing authority. Out of 15 responses to the questionnaire: 6 thought the fostering service worked very well, 8 thought fairly well and 1 thought this was disappointing. Discussion with placing social workers based at Ovenden Hall outlined good access to the fostering service and felt the fostering workers were accessible and approachable. Although the senior practitioner visits the Elland social work team on a regular basis and the manager of the fostering service has offered and provided training, the inspectors felt communication between the two teams could be further improved, particularly by the fostering service being kept informed and to monitor kinship care placements and assessments.

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?

1

Foster carers said they usually had regular contact with their allocated fostering officer but for some carers their allocated fostering officer had been absent for long periods of time. There were no definite strategies in place to provide supervision to carers when the officer was absent and generally carers were left to make contact with the fostering service as needed.

In respect of the kinship carer seen by the inspectors there was no fostering officer allocated to this case although the child was subject of a Care Order and had been placed with different family members over a period of years. The child had, at one point, moved to carers out of the Calderdale area and was without an allocated fostering officer. The child returned to a family carer in the Calderdale area. The placement had previously been assessed as unsuitable by the fostering service. Due to the lack of communication between the social worker and fostering service, the fostering service were unaware the placement had been made.

Foster carers were aware that many children looked after by Calderdale MBC did not have an allocated social worker. This deficit extended to some children in foster homes, including some of the carers that inspectors spoke with. Some carers had experienced significant gaps in professional support and were frustrated by inadequate duty officer cover from field social work teams and the fostering service. Unannounced visits to foster homes have not been occurring but the manager and fostering officers said there were plans for these to take place.

The foster care agreements have been revised to include the required information and are now being used. The inspectors noted from records viewed, that not all foster carers have agreements on file in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

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

Pre-approval and induction training is provided for carers. The foster carers are now paid under the 'payment for skills scheme', which means carers have to attend post approval training to increase their skills, for more payment. Discussion with the manager indicated that the fostering team are now liaising with other fostering services for provision of training to Calderdale carers who live out of area.

Some of the foster carers told inspectors they would like greater flexibility in training times and venues. The content of the training provided will also need to be reviewed. Carers told inspectors they felt much of the training provided was aimed at carers for adults and would like training focused on issues more specific to the group of children they are caring for such as drug and alcohol abuse, leaving care and the use of restraint. The fostering service should liaise with other agencies to facilitate this type of training. Financial support is available for travel and child care to enable carer's attendance at training. .

There is no specific support, groups or training for the foster carers own children, and it is suggested that the need for this could be explored

Annual reviews of foster carers are now starting to take place. A recently developed review format has been introduced which includes an appraisal of training and development needs.

The Information held on inspected foster carers files was found to be inconsistent and variable, including that relating to training.

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?	1
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Records on foster carers are held at the fostering service. Records on the children are held by the placing social workers (who are also employed by the provider). Some of the placing social workers are based in the same office as the centralised fostering team. The responsibility for maintenance of children's files is the responsibility of the placing field social worker and is monitored by their line manager. The child would also access their file through the placing social worker.

Recording in children's files was variable; some contained only parts of relevant 'looking after children' documents. There was also a lack of statutory visits recorded in the files and those recorded gave minimal information.

The recording in foster carer's files was also inconsistent. Fostering officers should be given guidance about what is expected from them in respect of the level and content of recording.

The inspectors looked at the case file of a child who had been placed with an independent fostering agency. The relevant information and paperwork for this placement was not on file.

Discussion with and receipt of questionnaires from foster carers demonstrated to inspectors that carers felt they were given inadequate background information about the children they cared for. The practice of making written request for outstanding information, as recommended in this standard, is encouraged.

Foster carers visited by the inspectors indicated that they had an understanding of their role in assisting children to understand their history and that they recognised the importance of keeping written records. They were also aware of priority areas of information needing to be recorded and the type of information they would pass onto the fostering service.

Foster carers had not been provided with a lockable filing box for the safe keeping of information. The manager stated the fostering service would rectify this by providing a suitable lockable box.

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

Calderdale MBC personnel dept have the responsibility for keeping staff records in respect of recruitment and employment. The fostering service manager maintains supervision, appraisal and training records for staff. In respect of staff involved in the delivery of Calderdale fostering service it is recommended that a front sheet be placed on personal development records to contain staff information as detailed in schedule 2 (2), of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and that this information is accessible at the fostering service's office. A record of all accidents occurring to children whilst placed with foster parents also needs to be kept.

Foster carer records are kept at the fostering service office. Children's records are kept at the relevant field social work offices. Inspectors noted that a Regulation 38 carer did not have a specific foster carer file and records were integrated in the children's files rather than in the foster carer's file.

In respect of the fostering service, the manager keeps a record of any allegations and complaints, with relevant details kept on staff, carers and children's files. The fostering service does not currently have a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of records kept and such a system should be developed. One kinship carer's file had a sticker on the cover indicating the file had been closed in March 2002 and to be destroyed March 2012. The fostering service need to be mindful that records in relation to a foster parent must be retained for at least 10 years from the date on which the placement is terminated. The Inspectors found that records were being stored securely and that Calderdale have a policy on access to personal records, which is outlined in the carer's handbook.

The children's register and register of foster carers needs to be further developed to include all the information required by Reg. 31 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Foster carer's files examined did not contain full Looked After Children documentation giving details of their current placements.

The fostering service has both paper and computer recording systems. The Inspectors were told that Calderdale MBC were looking towards installing an up to date IT programme for the children's services, which should provide a much more comprehensive and accessible information system for the fostering service. The manager must establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Allowances vary according to the age of child and foster carer fees vary according to the skills level of the carer.

The number of placements made by the fostering service in the last 12 month is unknown.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	104
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	33
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	12
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	8
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	140.47
Maximum £	477.52

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?

2

The fostering service is based at Ovenden Hall a 17th century building now used solely as offices by a number of Calderdale MBC children's services teams. The fostering team is situated on the first floor of this building. The manager's office is reached by walking through the office used by adoption workers and then through the office of the shared administrative officer; the door to her office has been removed since the last inspection because of a fire evacuation issue. The offices remain cramped and awkward to access due to a warren like building layout. The fostering service records and equipment are situated in various parts of the building and basement level is reached from the fostering office via a steep staircase. Records are therefore not easily accessible. The fostering service has access to a meeting room within the premises via a booking system and this is a shared facility.

The fostering service is equipped with some IT and communications systems and the manager and administrator said that more IT equipment is being acquired. Appropriate security measures are employed in relation to the safe storage of confidential information and the information retained on the computer system. Lockable and secure storage facilities for confidential information are available.

Currently administrative systems consist of both manual records and records held on an IT system. The IT system is accessed via personal passwords. IT skills across the staff group vary but the database held at the fostering service is only accessible by the administrator and the development worker. Should these people be unavailable then access by fostering staff to records held on computer is limited. The administrator is keen to further develop the fostering service database should input from IT and staffing levels allow.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not inspected as this standard does not apply to local authority fostering services

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

Not inspected as this standard does not apply to local authority fostering services

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Since the last inspection there has been the introduction of the 'payment for skills' scheme. From discussion with foster carers it was apparent they felt the scheme was a significant improvement on the allowances previously paid by the fostering service. Details of the financial arrangements are outlined in the recently revised foster care agreement form and more detailed information is given on an allowance and grants to foster carer table (FOS-09i). Carers told inspectors that their payments are received regularly and on time. One foster carer spoke of having received a very curt and demanding letter for an overpayment of allowances, which had been paid to them, through no fault of their own. The carer contacted the finance section of the fostering service to complain about the tone/content of the letter, as the foster carer said the letter appeared to be blaming them for the overpayment. Discussion with the fostering team manager confirmed that such letters were still being sent out to carers in circumstances of overpayment. The manager had contacted the finance section and asked that the letters be withdrawn and a more appropriate approach made for repayment of any overpayment. The inspectors suggest the fostering service have further liaison with the finance section about this matter.

All foster carers have received information of the new payment schemes and information is included in the revised foster care agreements form.

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?

1

Last year's action plan to ensure constituents of the fostering panel met with Regulation 24 was not achieved by the agreed date of September 2003. However the February 2004 panel was appropriately constituted. The new fostering team manager is the fostering advisor to the panel, and this knowledge is supported by new panel members including an independent member, with fostering knowledge who works in another local authority and internally a social worker with fostering knowledge. A practicing social worker, familiar with child placement and childcare issues has been appointed, but was not present at the February panel. The fostering provider is positively pursuing last year's recommendation to recruit someone with expertise in education and has appointed an independent member with a professional child health background; which should ensure a broader and more fully considered approach by the panel of the full placement issues, including education, health, child development and parenting issues. To date there has been no success in recruiting a person who has at any time been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with foster carers.

The previous in-quorate position of the panel affected the status of decisions made since April 2002. The fostering service provider's action plan proposed to have all those decisions brought back to panel by April 2004. This has not yet begun, but panel sessions have been scheduled to achieve this by April 2004.

As recommended last year the fostering service's written procedures in respect of the fostering panel need to be reviewed to give clear guidance, mindful of The Fostering Services Regulations 24, 26 and 28 also National Minimum Standards. The Inspectors were informed that some fostering panel members have yet to have Criminal Record Bureau checks, and a monitoring system of this should be maintained. No legal services representative attends the panel and some system should be established to ensure timely legal advice when required. At the February panel an application was recommended for approval subject to legal clarification that a reported schedule 1 offence by a member of the household, when under 18 years, would not preclude the approval. However, the X 2 convictions, with custodial sentences, for supplying Class A drugs was not commented upon by panel members.

From discussion with the chair of the panel, fostering service staff and sampling of fostering panel papers, the role of the panel is in line with regulation 26 but further consideration should be given to the panel providing a quality assurance function as at Standard 30.5, particularly in respect of kinship care placements. In respect of regulation 38 placements current approvals are not in line with regulation 28, in that they are being recommended and

approved, before a completed fostering assessment has been carried out. A recommendation and requirement has been made in respect of this.

Some practice issues are dealt with under the auspices of 'any other business' in the panel meeting. At the present time foster carers do not attend panel as part of the approval process. Attendance may assist panel members to reach a more informed decision and also allow panel members an opportunity to clarify any issues, which cannot be answered by the presenting social workers. From observation of the panel, Inspectors found that the fostering service staff complete quite detailed portfolios for foster carers whose assessment were being brought before panel. There again appeared to be some confusion as to what purpose the presentation of the portfolio served for the panel, as generally members did not access the portfolio in the approval process. Some consideration of how the panel should gain knowledge of the portfolio content should be explored, e.g. by 1 panel member reading one portfolio and informing the panel as appropriate of any relevant matters.

All of the cases presented to the February 2004 panel were incomplete with a lack of information available on which panel members could make a full recommendation, and this resulted in all recommendations being made subject to outstanding clearances, e.g. medical, criminal records bureau (CRB), legal advice. It is suggested that some protocol is agreed with the medical advisor to ensure that medical information is made available in goodtime to the relevant panel, including when the medical advisor is unable to attend the panel, to enable informed recommendations to be made. The CRB position nationally is now generally responsive and the fostering manager believes she has ironed out an internal bottleneck in this process. It is recommended that a system be devised to collate over an annual period any matters, which delay the approval process so that any procedural matters can be addressed as required.

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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The service does provide short-term breaks for children. There are only a small number of carers providing this type of care within the fostering service. The manager informed Inspectors that it was hoped more carers, particularly to care for children with disabilities, would be recruited within the near future. One of the newly appointed fostering officers and the senior practitioner are to be involved in the recruitment process of short term break carers. The Procedures (FOS-15) for short-term breaks were written in January 04 and these will need to be made known to fostering service staff and carers.

The inspectors did not visit a short-term break carer as part of this year's inspection process.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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1

The fostering service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends (known as kinship care in Calderdale) as carers. There are more family and friends' carers, as opposed to those unrelated, currently being approved as foster carers through Calderdale fostering service.

The Inspectors viewed records and visited one kinship carer. The child had been placed with this carer previously at what the carer described as being an incredibly difficult time. The placement broke down and the child went to live with other family members. The child again returned to this carer even though the carer had not really felt to be in a position to look after the child, as there were difficulties in coping with the child's behaviour. The carer said she felt pressured to take the child as she was told the alternative would be to place the child with carers from a different ethnic background, which neither the child nor carers wanted to happen. The placement had broken down the day prior to the inspector's visit to the home. There had previously been a fostering officer involved in the case but not during the most recent placement. The fostering service had confirmed from a previous assessment that the carer was not in a position to care for the child but were unaware that the most recent placement had been made until the child had been living in the home for several weeks and the placing social worker was already undertaking the fostering assessment. The carer therefore had no support from the fostering service team and the placing social worker was heavily involved with the complexities of the child's case. There are issues arising from this case about the procedures followed and support this family were receiving, which need to be addressed.

The fostering service are to develop training for kinship carers and have recently had a kinship carer recommended for approval as a carer for other Calderdale children. The payment for skills scheme is also applicable to kinship carers and it is hoped this would be an incentive for carers to attend suitable training courses.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor NA **Signature** NA
Date NA

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 19th January 2004 of Calderdale Fostering Service 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<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

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"/>	NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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