



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

City of Salford Family Placement Service

Avon House

Avon Close

Little Hulton

Manchester

M28 0LA

18th October 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

City of Salford Family Placement Service

Address

Avon House, Avon Close, Little Hulton, Manchester, M28
0LA

Local Authority Manager

Carolyn Williams

Tel No:

0161 799 1762

Address

Avon House, Avon Close, Little Hulton, Manchester, M28
0LA

Fax No:

0161 790 4892

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

9/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		18th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Chris Tucker	074724
Name of Inspector	2	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Carolyn Williams-Principal Manager Family Placement	

Introduction to Report and Inspection
Inspection visits
Description of Fostering Service

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

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

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

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

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Salford Family Placement Team provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Salford. It provides short term, long term and permanent placements for children “looked after” by the City of Salford. It also provides short term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being “looked after”. This inspection looked only at the fostering side of the service.

It recruits, assesses, approves and supports the foster carers. It provides and operates two fostering panels, one for Adoption and Permanence, one for Fostering. Friend and family carers are usually assessed by social workers in the area based teams but their approval is considered by the relevant panel.

It is a centralised based team, based in an office in Little Hulton in Salford, in a building also occupied by the Child Protection Unit and the Management of the City’s children’s homes. The full fostering and adoption team includes the following posts: 1 Principal Manager, 3 Team Managers, 13 full-time equivalent Family Placement Workers, including 1 development worker (short break care-Standard 31), 4 full time equivalent Family Placement Support Workers, 1 Family Placement Worker (Adoption Recruitment and Family Finding), 1 Adoption Support Worker and 1 Recruitment Officer. 4 ½ of these posts were vacant at the time of the inspection. The administrative team of 11 staff was headed by a Senior Administrative Officer.

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.)

The greater part of this inspection took place in the week beginning 18th October 2004. The previous annual inspection had taken place only 8 months earlier on 9th February 2004.. It was consequently decided to base the inspection principally around the foster carers who had been approved within the previous 12 months.

Salford Family Placement Service

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service. There was a newly produced children's guide that is attractively presented and informative.

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

The manager has 16 years experience working in the field of family placement and was fully qualified. There was record on file of all necessary suitability checks having been undertaken. The service was seen to be effectively organised, managed and staffed.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

The most recent monitoring report and action plan showed that the service was being effectively managed and monitored. There were clear lines of accountability within the team and between the team and other teams within the Directorate. All staff had job descriptions.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Full assessments were carried out on foster carers and any matters of concern addressed, with the focus on the welfare of the child. The service was seen to value diversity and actively seeking to tailor its services to meet varied needs. Because of the demands on the service there was not always a choice when placing children at short notice, even though the team exceeded its target for recruiting carers. The team were seen to be proactive in protecting children from abuse and very alert to the issues raised. Contact with families was clearly seen as an expected part of the life of children placed by the service and foster carers shared this view. Children were consulted in different areas of the teams activities. Health care needs were addressed and there are support services available for children who were struggling educationally. Support was provided for young people moving on to independence.

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

The process of recruiting staff was managed through the Personnel Section and they were seen to operate a sound system. There was a clear management structure for the service and a process for prioritising workloads. At the time of inspection there were vacancies

within the team. The Service uses BAAF's form "F" for assessment of carers which covers all aspects of carers lives as set out in the Standards. The Directorate has established employment policies and procedures. Post qualification training was available though there is limited opportunity for specialist training. The Team members felt supported and received regular supervision. Foster carers were generally complimentary about the support from the team though commented that there appeared to have recently been a change in the extent to which they were involved in planning for the children in their care. Training was part of the assessment process of carers and there was a rolling programme of training that was related to the "Payment for Skills" system in operation.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Each child had their own file which was held in the area office where their supervising social worker was based. The majority of files seen had a complete set of the required documents. The team operated with effective administrative systems.

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

The offices used by the service are shared with other teams and the building was noted to be crowded. Some discussion was needed with the Fire Service about the fire safety arrangements in the building.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

The service appeared to operate to sound financial systems. Foster carers confirmed that payments were paid regularly and there was a newly established system for remuneration of carers.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

The Fostering Panel was seen to operate effectively in its scrutiny of the assessments of carers and in monitoring other aspects of the approval of carers.

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:

As a result of amendments to the Care Standards Act, the Commission is no longer required to make the above notifications.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
N/A		
Comments		

Lead Inspector Chris Tucker **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Lolly Warren **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Elizabeth Williams **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
	34	FS24	Children placed with foster carers must have a completed Care Plan.	31/01/05
2	23	FS26	The City of Salford must write to the Commission setting out the actions taken in respect of the Fire Service's letter of 18 th August 2004, following the discussions between the City of Salford and the Fire Service.	31/01/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS21	The Team should explore further with foster carers their view that they are involved less in planning future arrangements for the children placed with them so that any issues that are identified can be discussed with the teams who are responsible for supervising the children in placement.

* 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	6
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	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	NO
Date of Inspection	18/10/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	38

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose that clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service and its role within the City of Salford's Community and Social Services Directorate. It includes its management structure, the services it provides, the number and qualifications of the staff, the number of foster carers, number of children in placement as at March 2003 and the procedures for recruiting, assessing, training, supporting and reviewing carers. It gives the number of complaints. At the previous inspection in February 2004 it was recommended that the Statement should include information on whether the complaints had been dealt with on an informal basis or whether the concerns were taken to a further stage. The Principal Manager said she was planning to include this information as part of the annual review of the Statement.

The Children's Guide that had been at a draft stage at the time of the last inspection had been printed following consultation with children and young people. It is an attractively presented guide, that sets out in clear language the information a fostered child or young person might want to know. The Guide meets the requirements of the regulations. The difficulties of trying to address the Guide to the whole range of children who are fostered were reflected in comments from foster carers who said that some children welcomed the guide and used the spaces in it for their own information, others did not like to be reminded by receiving the guide that they were fostered and that some young people found the presentation too young for them.

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?

4

The Principal Manager, Carolyn Williams, has been the manager of the team since April 1999 and was a team leader in the service from April 1992. She has worked in family finding since 1988 and so has long experience in the field of family placement. She has a social work qualification and completed an NVQ Level 5 in Strategic Management in March 2004.

Members of the team were clear in their understanding of the function and running of the team and the foster carers also showed a clear understanding of people's responsibilities.

The information for the inspection was presented in an organised and thorough manner and the inspectors formed the view from their contact with those involved with the service, that it is effectively and efficiently managed.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Record of the Manager's CRB (Criminal; Records Bureau) check and of other members of staff were seen by the inspector when looking at the personnel files. A record was kept of the checks and references obtained. The system had been established for renewing CRB checks every three years.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspectors were given a copy of the Unit Monitoring Report for the year ending March 2004 which was produced in June 2004. This was a detailed report record of the progress of the team towards meeting the targets set for the service. It used statistical and qualitative information to measure progress in identified areas and included a Managers Overview. The inspectors were also given a copy of the business plan for the year 2004-2005 which set out the Action Plan for the Fostering Service with reference to the nationally set agenda for services for children. These two reports indicated that the activities of the team were being effectively monitored.

There were clear lines of accountability within the team and between the fostering service and the wider Community and Social Services Directorate.

The Fostering Service is not required to notify the NCSC of the matters listed below

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All members of the team had job descriptions. The manager does not hold a similar position in any other organisation and there are clear lines of accountability within the team and between the team and the wider department.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

On the basis of observing the fostering panels and reading of files, the inspectors formed the view that a full assessment is carried out on the ability of foster carers to provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. In those situations where concerns had been raised about the quality of the care provided, the inspectors noted that these concerns were openly addressed and that assessments were undertaken to establish what action was in the child's best interest.

A system had been set up for the annual review of foster carers and this review looked at the issues of health and safety in the home. Health and safety training and fire safety training was included during preparation groups for new carers and foster carers comments on this training were more favourable at this inspection than they were at the last.

The Foster Care Agreement contains the information that the carers may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

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

The Community and Social Services Directorate had an Anti Discriminatory Practice Policy and an Equality of Service Delivery Policy. These issues were covered in the preparation training undertaken by foster carers.

Following on from a piece of research carried out by the Bibini Centre on the placements of Black young people in Salford, some workshop training had been undertaken for foster carers in which team members participated. Comments from the team indicated that the particular situation of Friends and Family carers might need an adaptation to the content of this training.

The inspector noted in one young person's file how sensitive and supportive help had been given to a young person subjected to racial abuse. It was also noted that for one family, the Foster Care Agreement was being translated into the carer's first language so that they would be clear about what they were signing.

In a couple of instances the inspector noted how the addition of commas or a forward slash had changed the meaning of the ethnic category "white British". These were drawn to the attention of the manager.

There was a well established Jewish community in the City and the service had set up links with members of this community, particularly in respect of short break care.

The short break care service provides care primarily for children with disabilities and had strong links with the team providing social work services for families of children with disabilities.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

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

The annual monitoring service made 149 placements in the year 2003-2004 and of these 47 were with long term foster carers. 15 new foster carers (excluding friends and family carers) were approved in that same period. In spite of the recruitment of these additional carers there continued to be a shortage of foster carers with the effect that it was not always possible, when placing a child at short notice or in an emergency, to have a choice of placements.

All children needing long term placements were considered at one of the two panels and any potential matches were considered at a matching meeting.

The inspectors were aware from discussions during the inspection that children's racial and cultural needs were addressed when seeking a placement.

At the last inspection it was noted that not all LAC (Looked After Children) documentation was completed. This documentation was used by the Service as the Foster Placement Agreement. It was intended that these documents would be replaced by the Integrated Children's System by December 2005. These documents were seen to be completed in the majority of files read during this inspection. There was one exception and the inspectors noted in this file that absence of a Care Plan for the child had been noted in the three past internal audits of the file. (See Standard 24)

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?

4

The manager provided the inspectors with a summary of allegations of abuse relating to children placed with foster carers. This indicated that the concerns received were followed up and appropriate action taken.

One child protection allegation that had been under investigation at the time of the previous inspection had been dealt with by the courts and resulted in a lengthy prison sentence for the foster carer. A reading of the files relating to these allegations indicated that the response to the allegation by the team and department had been immediate and that the subsequent investigation had been regularly monitored and coordinated through multi-agency strategy meetings. The information on the file indicated that the necessary checks in respect of the carer had been carried out.

The Manager told the inspectors that an independent person had been commissioned to undertake an investigation into the departments actions. A copy of the proposed areas of investigation was seen by the inspectors and this would appear to be thorough in its scope. The Enquiry was also to look at the department's actions in respect of one other recent allegation.

A letter to the Inspectors from the Team Manager in the Child Protection and Reviewing Unit commented that the observations made at the time of the previous inspection were still valid. These observations stated that the Family Placement Team were proactive in their response to any child protection allegations and in seeking advice from the Unit.

The Foster Care Agreement makes it clear that physical punishment is not acceptable. This agreement was very explicit in describing the punishments that were not acceptable. The responses from questionnaires sent to foster carers, indicated that they were well aware of the policy.

A recent Local Authority Circular [LAC(2004)4] had made it clear that there was no legal requirement for checks to be made when a looked after child wishes to stay overnight at friends. The City of Salford had amended their procedure to take this new guidance into account.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied [N.B. This question was not asked in the questionnaire used as part of this inspection]

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The new Children's Guide states that it was a foster carer's "job to make sure you get ... help to stay in touch with family and friends, if your social worker thinks this is OK." Foster carers in their conversations with the inspectors clearly showed an acceptance that contact was a normal part of the lives of the children. An example was given of a very sensitive approach to a child's parent. In guidance that had recently been issued by the department the expectations on the parties involved, carers, parents and the Local Authority were clearly set out.

It was evident from comments made by various people, that providing transport for contact can be problematic.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

In questionnaires returned to the inspector by young people in foster care they stated that they felt they were listened to. The inspector noted that in the annual reviews of foster carers the views of children placed with the carers were included in the documents presented to the fostering panel. In addition, a questionnaire specifically for children was available for the children to complete as part of the review process. This uses ideograms of smiling or sad faces to help children with limited literacy skills.

The Children's Guide contains information about who to contact if the child was unhappy about their care.

The City of Salford had a Listening to Children's Officer who promotes the involvement of children in discussions about the department.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There was a Protocol drawn up between Salford Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Salford Community and Social Services on the Health Needs of Looked After Children. This was last updated in January 2004. This protocol identified that the health outcomes for looked after children in Salford, of whom those in foster care were a proportion, are well below government targets. The PCT had appointed a paediatrician and nurse with city wide responsibility for looked after children. The lead paediatrician is a member of the fostering panel and foster carers were able to seek advice from the lead nurse, known as the Health Needs Coordinator for Looked After Children. The protocol lists the objectives to be achieved and sets out the information to be shared between the two parties with a view to

improving the health outcomes. It was reviewed annually.

The records on children's files showed that they attended regular health assessments and that specialist assessments were obtained when required.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Authority had established awards for children who had achieved educationally in the City of Salford and had a joint protocol between Education and Leisure and Community and Social Services on the education of children and young people in public care. The Foster Care Agreement requires the foster carer to promote the education and school attendance of any child placed. A Care and Education Support Team was available to support looked after children who were struggling educationally. One of the Principal Managers in the Directorate had lead responsibility for educational matters.

An increasing number of children were being supplied with computers to support their education.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

As part of the rolling programme of training for foster carers there was a session called "moving on" which deals with the issue of preparing young people for independence. The Community and Social Services Directorate had established a team, Next Steps, whose task was to support young people during their final years being looked after and into their early years of independence. Foster Carers spoke favourably of the support received from this team.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The recruitment of staff for the Family Placement Team was coordinated through the Personnel Section based at Crompton House in Swinton. Arrangements were made for the inspector to view the files of staff who had recently been appointed to posts within the team. From a randomly selected sample of files it was evident that up to date CRB checks had been obtained and a reading of the records indicated that the recruitment process was sound.

All the staff undertaking foster carer assessments were qualified social workers.

The figure given below included those members of staff who work in the Adoption and Permanence Team. As stated earlier in this report the adoption tasks of the team were not looked at as part of this inspection.

Total number of staff of the agency:

38

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

The workers in the Family Placement Team were organised into distinct teams with clear areas of responsibility. Each team had their own team leader and each of these team leaders was responsible to the Principal Manager. These arrangements appeared to be clearly understood by the staff. There was also a clearly understood distinction between Family Placement Workers and Family Support Workers. The latter's tasks were based around practical support for the carers but could include emotional support. Nevertheless, the staff group spoke of working as team members for the overall responsibilities of the Family Placement Team and the Team Managers shared responsibilities for duty cover etc.

Staff confirmed that they received regular one to one supervision.

It was still recognised that that the phone system was still inadequate for their needs and although the issue was to be addressed, recent discussions about alternative offices for the team may mean that The City of Salford may not wish to spend money on a new system.

Initial enquiries from the public were dealt with by a member of the administrative team who aim to send out information within a short time span. Foster carers said that they received a prompt response to their initial enquiries.

All staff had job descriptions and contracts of employment and the staff had access to the grievance procedures, health and safety procedures and the equal opportunities policy.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

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

After a period when the vacancies in the team had been filled, there has recently been some movement of staff that had left vacancies. This had had the effect of increasing the workload pressure on the staff team. In the Unit Business Plan for 2004-2005, the Principal Manager had written that "the team's staffing establishment does not allow all the necessary work to be allocated". Some foster carers did comment that at the time of the inspection they did not have an allocated Supervising Social Worker. The Manager told the inspectors that Family Placement Support Workers were allocated on a short term basis, on based on need.

The comment was made that the more favourable conditions of service and salary offered by the independent agencies, make it more difficult to recruit staff to a local authority fostering team.

There was a clear assessment process which among other documents was set out in the Statement of Purpose. The Family Placement Team use BAAF's form "F" for the purposes of assessment, supplemented by evidence of achieving certain identified competencies. The inspectors spoke to some recently approved foster carers and they commented that the assessment process was thorough.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The City of Salford had established employment policies and procedures, including a Staff Development Policy and an Anti-Discriminatory Practice Policy. There is a “whistleblowing” policy for staff

Foster carers were generally complimentary about the support from the staff at the Family Placement Service. Carers had access to the Emergency Duty Team out of office hours.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

All new staff on the team had an induction programme related to their individual needs. The manager told the inspectors that an induction programme was being developed as an e-learning module so that it would be immediately accessible to staff.

The Directorate had introduced a staff appraisal system. Staff members had access to the Directorate’s post qualifying and in-service training and a number of staff had completed the PQ Child Care Award. During their meeting with the inspectors members of the staff team confirmed that they had undertaken PQ training.

The manager commented in the pre-inspection questionnaires that there were limited opportunities for specialist training.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspector met with the Family Placement Team on 20th October. They confirmed that they felt supported both from within the team by their colleagues and from senior staff on the team. Supervision takes place regularly. There were regular staff and team meetings.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Foster carers commented that there appeared to be a change recently in the practice of inviting them to planning meetings and gave examples of moving on plans being arranged without their involvement and which were not compatible with the child's routine. They said that this had not previously been the case. This is a matter that needs further discussion with foster carers.

Foster Carers had a clear understanding of the different roles of the Family Placement workers and the children's social worker. One carer spoke of feeling part of a network of professionals addressing the needs of the child placed and being very reassured by this.

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

The foster carers' files had record of their being visited by their support worker and receiving support in caring for the child placed. Because of the vacancies in the team not all carers had an allocated support worker, though all carers who spoke to the inspectors knew who to contact should the need arise.

The Foster Care Agreement was very detailed and thorough and provided the information a carer would need to know about their role and responsibility.

A Foster Care Association had been set up by foster carers with a grant from the Community and Social Services Directorate. Officers of the Association spoke of regular meetings with the senior management. A Foster Care Forum had also been established.

Salford Foster Care Association now provide support for foster carers who are subject of complaints or allegations.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Inspectors spoke to foster carers who had been trained and assessed within the previous 12 months. They were appreciative of the training provided as part of this assessment. Safe Caring was part of this training and a safe care policy was drawn up by all new carers.

There was a rolling programme of training courses provided by the team for approved carers. Attendance on these courses was a requirement for carers who wish to progress on to a higher payment for skills level. This was confirmed at the fostering panel observed by the inspector. Subjects covered included "Moving on", "Caring for Sexually Abused Children" and "Contact and Working with Birth Parents". The carers annual review included information on the courses attended by the foster carers.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The inspectors looked at the files which are maintained in the Area Teams that related to children placed with foster carers. Each child had their own file and the recordings in that file related to that child.

At the previous inspection, it was noted that on more than one file the LAC (Looked After Children) documentation was not complete. This was not found to be the case to the same extent on this occasion although there were a couple of files without LAC care plans.

Foster Carers who spoke to the inspector confirmed that they kept the information they received in a secure place.

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?

3

The service keeps separate records for staff, foster carers and children and these were securely kept. These records include checks and references taken up for the purposes of the Service.

The manager had set up a system which allows her to monitor complaints relating to the fostering service and their outcome. The record distinguishes between complaints directly relating to the service and those that have some connection to children placed with foster carers but which related to another part of the service provided by Community and Social Services. Another separate record was made of allegations/child protection concerns relating to foster carers. This record had a summary of the outcome of the allegation/concern.

The information below is taken from the 2003-2004 Monitoring Report dated June 2004.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			260
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			149
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			15
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			18
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

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 premises would be appropriate for the purposes of the Service if there were not other services run from the same building. The building provides accommodation for the Child Protection Unit and Children's Residential Services among others and the amount of traffic this generates was too great for the building's position in a residential road. The building can seem crowded at times. The manager told the inspectors that alternative premises were being sought as part of a general review of office accommodation in the City.

The Fire Service visited the premises in the Summer of 2004 and in a letter dated 18th August 2004, identified action that needed actions that were needed in a number of areas. This included fire risk assessment, means of escape, the fire alarm system, fire fighting equipment and signs and notices. The manager told the inspector that the City of Salford's surveyor was in discussion with the Fire Service about the content of this letter.

The telephone system does need expanding to meet demand and the building was also unable to provide sufficient training space for the needs of the service.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Service was funded out of the budget allocated by the Salford City Council for the running of the Community and Social Services Directorate.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Service operates to the Local Authorities policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. A computer based financial system was used for recording and monitoring expenditure. Payments were made by the Finance Department on the basis of information sent from the Service.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All foster carers spoken to by the inspectors confirmed that payments to them were made regularly and on time.

A new payment for skills scheme was in operation at the time of the inspection. The level of payment related to the assessed skill level of the carers and to the amount of training attended. The payments were explained in a booklet sent to foster carers.

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?

4

The inspector observed the Fostering Panel on 25th November and spoke to the panel chair before the panel meeting. A second Panel considers adoption and long-term approvals and matching and this panel was not observed by the inspector for this inspection.

The Fostering Panel, as well as considering applications for approval as foster carers, looks at the first review of foster carers and subsequent significant review, is kept informed of the progress of approval of those carers approved as Immediate placements and considers exemptions from the normal fostering limit for the City of Salford carers and for foster carers approved by other agencies but living within Salford.

The Panel also approved the progress of a carer from one skill band to another, their level of payment being dependent on their agreed skill level.

The Chair told the inspector that the agency that provided supported accommodation for young people leaving care in Salford had chosen to bring the approval of their carers to the Fostering Panel because he valued the scrutiny they provided.

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Panel also meet with the Principal Manager of the Fostering Team to consider all the annual reviews of foster carers. This had freed up time on the Fostering Panel and allowed progress to be made on catching up with reviews that were beyond time.

At the time of the inspection there was one vacancy for a independent member of the panel. A consultant Paediatrician was an independent member of the panel.

Panel members were presented with progress reports on the assessments of Immediate Placements. The Panel Chair commented that it was taking some time for some of these carers assessments to be completed and presented to the Panel. The information presented to the Panel observed by the inspector showed that a year had elapsed without a completed full assessment. The Chair said he had commented on this to the Principal Manager and Assistant Director.

Panel members were seen to raise very pertinent questions about the assessments being presented and were clearly undertaking a full scrutiny of the information provided. Difficult questions about balancing the needs of the children for stability against known concerns about the carer were openly discussed.

The Chair told the inspector that he had ready access to senior members of the Directorate and was able to raise matters of concern and interest with them.

The inspector formed the view that the Chair and the Panel carried out their task with evident concern for the children, seeking to maintain good standards in the care provided.

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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There is a well established short-break foster-care service for disabled children in Salford called the Family Link Scheme. The Directorate has also set up a Childhood Disability Team in partnership with Barnardos. The Service had different policies and procedures for this service and in particular used their own Foster Placement Agreement for placements. The inspector read the document setting out eligibility and prioritising criteria for short term break services for disabled children. This included both the residential provision and the Family Link Scheme in order to achieve consistency throughout the service.

The inspector noted from reading the files that parents were fully involved in making decisions about their child and, unless pressing child welfare considerations took precedence, decided the level of support received. Guidance had also been drawn up on maintaining the visiting frequency for children who only use the placements at the weekend.

Foster carers who offered this service spoke appreciatively of the support, training and preparation they received.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The assessment of friends and family carers were usually undertaken by the social workers in the area teams. The Principal Manager said that the numbers of staff in the Family Finding Team did not allow them to take on this task. The team had set up a system whereby, as resources permit, a member of the team provided initial guidance and advice to the area workers on what issues need to be addressed in a foster carers assessment and offered continued liaison. Progress of the friend and family assessments was monitored by the panels.

It was generally recognised that the assessment and approval of family and friend carers was problematic. The Inspector was aware from observation of a panel at the previous inspection in February, that the panel found themselves in a position where there was little choice about the approval because the child had become well established with members of their family. They also found that the decision of courts could bind them to an approval, which, on the basis of what was known about the carers, the panel would not wish to make.

The Principal Manager said that the decision to identify a Family Placement worker to advise the area team at an early stage was an attempt to reduce the number of unsatisfactory situations. This was an interim arrangement until the team was of sufficient size to undertake the assessments. It was also recognised that this would be a different task to a "stranger" assessment because the assessing social worker may have also to address issues arising out of the family dynamics that are not present in "stranger" assessments.

The inspectors formed the view that the team and the panels were well aware of the issues arising from friends and families as carers and seeking to address them.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 18th October 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Carolyn Williams of Salford Family Placement 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 Carolyn Williams of Salford Family Placement Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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