



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **City of York Fostering Service**

10/12 George Hudson Street

York

YO1 6JL

5th 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**

City of York Fostering Service

**Address**

10/12 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6JL

**Local Authority Manager**

Mary McKelvey

**Tel No:**

01904 613161

**Address**

10/12 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6JL

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

**Date of last inspection**

05/03/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		5th January 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Monica Hargreaves	137644
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Stephen Sharp	
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		N/A	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		N/A	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Ms. Mary McKelvey	

**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)**

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**2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**

**3. Management of the fostering service**

**4. Securing and promoting welfare**

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

**6. Records**

**7. Fitness of premises**

**8. Financial requirements**

**9. Fostering panels**

**10. Short-term breaks**

**11. Family and friend carers**

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

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**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of City of York 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.**

The City of York Council operates its fostering services through two teams that are part of the Community Services Department. The Family Placement team provides mainstream fostering. This involves children being looked after in family placement settings. The Sharing Care Team provides short term breaks for children with disabilities. All the carers working as part of these two teams are approved to act as foster carers.

## **PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **Inspector's Summary**

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

##### **This statement was met**

The department has developed a document which gives clear information about the nature of its services and how they will be delivered.

#### **Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)**

##### **One of these two standards was met**

The service has sound recruitment and selection policies with clear procedural guidance for staff. The Manager anticipates completing the required management qualification in early 2005.

#### **Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

##### **Both of these two standards were met**

The local authority has in place a scheme of delegation with clear lines of communication and accountability between managers, staff and carers.

#### **Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)**

##### **Eight of these nine standards were met.**

All foster carers undergo a thorough preparation and training period prior to approval. The homes of carers are inspected annually and regular reviews are held. The service promotes equality and diversity and in conjunction with social workers, ensures that all children are appropriately placed. There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that all carers understand their role and that children are able to make their views heard.

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

##### **Five of these nine standards were met**

The Community Services Department has sound recruitment and selection policies and procedures for staff and carers. There are clear schemes of delegation and lines of accountability and all staff receive a handbook which covers issues of induction. The Fostering Teams are made up of staff who are well qualified and experienced. All foster carers have foster care agreements and are well supported by the team. The service is to give further consideration to the type of support that is available to carers out of hours and also to the need to identify and resource more advanced training for experienced workers.

#### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

##### **Both of these standards were met**



There are comprehensive case recording procedures which are available to all staff. Both teams enjoy the support of enthusiastic administrative and clerical workers. Management systems are thorough.

### **Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)**

#### **This standard is met**

The teams work from two offices. Both buildings also house teams of social workers and have facilities for the secure retention of records. The authority has provided all its workers with appropriate IT systems and ongoing training.

### **Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)**

#### **Of these three standards, three were met.**

This fostering service is delivered as part of the work of the City of York Council. There are clear lines of delegation for financial responsibility and systems in place to monitor these. The scheme of payments to carers is also clear and carers can also be remunerated according to further skills developed during their work with the service. As part of its current strategy for the care of children, the Community Services Department is developing a Teenage Fostering scheme that will include enhanced payments to carers.

### **Fostering Panels (Standard 30)**

#### **This standard is met.**

The Foster Panel is well organised and efficiently run and there is full participation from all its members. The Manager of the service ensures that Panel receives management information. The administrative support systems developed by the clerical support team are sound and ensure that deadlines are met.

### **Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)**

#### **This standard is met.**

The Sharing Care Team operates as part of the Fostering Service, but is separately managed and has its own procedures. It recruits its own carers specifically to provide short breaks for children with disabilities and their families. It is clear about its function and works successfully.

### **Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

#### **This standard is met.**

The Community Services department works hard to place children, wherever possible, with family or familiar adults. The Fostering service appreciates fully its responsibilities in relation to the preparation, training and ongoing support of kinship carers and of how their needs might differ from those of mainstream 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:

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
2	3	FS5	The City of York Council needs to establish a protocol with the Commission with regard to access to the personnel files of staff working in the fostering service in order that inspectors can make necessary checks on site	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2003
4	17	FS22	The service needs to produce a handbook which covers policies, procedures, guidance legal information and insurance details and which is given to people on their approval to act as foster carers	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2003

**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	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<u>Monica Hargreaves</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<u>Stephen Sharp</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Locality Manager</b>	<u>N/A</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	_____		

## 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	
			NONE	

### 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 of the service should complete a management qualification which matches the competencies required by NVQ Level 4
2	FS13	The City of York Council needs to give further consideration to the educational needs of the small minority of teenagers who have serious difficulties with school attendance
3	FS18	Action should be taken to ensure that foster carers receive adequate and appropriate support out of hours

4	FS19	Those responsible for the management of the fostering service should review the effectiveness of the training programmes for the more experienced staff in their section and consider their need for more advanced training.
5	Fs23	The fostering service should consider sampling the views of carers regarding the timing of training sessions to ensure that carers are able to attend.

\* 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	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NA
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• 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	05/01/04
Time of Inspection	9.00A.M.
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	52

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?
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There is a clear statement of purpose that covers the service. This includes the work of the Sharing Care Team. It has been approved by elected members and is to be reviewed in November 2004.	
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The Service has provided a written guide for children, contained in a BAAF booklet with additional information specific to the York fostering service. The Sharing Care Team is producing a guide that is relevant to the children who use their service in content and format.

## 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
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The manager of the service possesses a qualification in childcare and has significant work experience relevant to her post. She is working towards the attainment of a management qualification which will be complete in March 2005.

**See recommendation no. 1 from this inspection**

The Sharing Care Practice co-ordinator is also suitably qualified and experienced and will complete her management qualification in 2004.

At the time of writing this report, there is a temporary manager who is in post to enable the substantive post holder to undertake service development work. She was recruited from within the family placement team and is appropriately experienced and qualified. She holds a qualification in management. It is anticipated that the arrangement will cease in 3 months' time.

### 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?	2
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An examination of a random sample of files at the Human Resources Section of the Council's Headquarters revealed that all appropriate checks are undertaken. These include CRB, references and identity checks. Also on file were copies of notes taken at interview. Although all files are centrally kept, Human resources staff confirmed that all references are sent to the managers appointing staff for their consideration, before any offer of employment is made.

**See requirement no. 2 from previous inspection**

## 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 local authority has in place a scheme of delegation with clear lines of communication and accountability between managers, staff and carers. There is a policy concerning conflict of interest.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC 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 NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

### Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard is met. Job descriptions were made available for the inspection. There are clear arrangements in place to cover for the absence of the manager and there is at present a temporary arrangement for the management of the service as described in Standard 2, that was confirmed to work well.

## 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

All foster homes, including the homes of carers offering shared care, have regular safety checks undertaken. Those homes seen at the time of the inspection were found to be clean, warm and comfortable. In some households, children share bedrooms, and the service has undertaken a survey of provision in respect of issues of appropriate space. At present there are 2 households where more than 2 children share a bedroom. Placing social workers interviewed as part of this inspection confirmed that those children being cared for in a 'busy' household were appropriately placed and were making good progress.

Foster carer preparation and training covers issues of health and safety.

### 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 foster care training stresses the value of diversity and social workers, carers and family placement staff work together to support children. The small number of questionnaires received from children and the discussions with children during the inspection, confirmed that carers support activities and personal interests and generally show encouragement to the children in their care.

The Sharing Care team recruits, trains and supports carers specifically for children with disabilities. There is a nurse working as part of the team and they have developed close links with paediatric and other services to ensure that carers are provided with the appropriate equipment and support for their role.

The authority is to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of its service.

**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

Given the demand for foster placements, matching can be a difficult process. Files sampled showed children placed within the age range and tasks for which carers were approved. Referrals for placements are discussed at team meetings and efforts are made to match children with carers who are able to meet their particular needs. The service also endeavours to provide additional support to carers and children if this is necessary to ensure the viability of any placement. Social workers interviewed as part of the inspection, confirmed that they are able to contribute to the discussion about possible placements.

Within the Sharing Care Team, all placements are carefully matched and parents and carers between them have the final say over whether or not a placement takes place. Inspectors were told that this can mean that some families might wait for some time for a placement, but that parents agree that appropriate matching is the most important factor for them and their children.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

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

3

Every carer household has an individual safe caring policy specific to their situation. Guidelines are provided for carers and all the issues covered in this standard form part of the preparation and ongoing training of carers. The Foster Care agreement also covers the issue of appropriate punishments and makes clear the authority's position with regard to the use of any form of physical chastisement or humiliating punishment. The issue of bullying is not specifically referred to in the Foster Care agreement although it is addressed in training. It will form part of the Carers' Guide which is being prepared.

**Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:**

100

%

<b>Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)</b>		
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
During preparation and in training, the fostering service makes clear to all its carers, the importance of maintaining family links. Young people interviewed as part of the inspection, spoke about their experience of contact and carers confirmed their understanding of the importance of this issue for the children in their care. There were examples of the resources that the fostering service and the local authority makes available to ensure that contact takes place.		

<b>Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)</b>		
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
There was evidence in the files and in the conversations with carers of good communication with children. Carers advocated on behalf of children and sought to ensure that their views were listened to. The Children's Rights worker in the locally based Children's Society Project has visited all carers to introduce herself. She has worked with groups of young people in foster care to encourage them to make their views heard. The fostering service has encouraged links with this Project.		

<b>Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
Files inspected contained essential information on childrens health and this formed part of the Placement Plans. Carers interviewed confirmed that they had been made aware of the needs of children prior to or at the time of placement and that they routinely took children to GP or dental appointments etc. Health needs were discussed as part of the reviewing process.		
The Sharing Care Team has a nurse as one of its team members and has established links with other health professionals to ensure that carers are properly equipped and supported to care for children with significant disabilities.		

**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**

All foster care agreements address the issue of education and this is reinforced through the care planning and reviewing process. There was evidence on files that children had personal education plans and that their education is given a high priority. Foster carers in discussion confirmed that they are involved in school meetings and reviews of education. In addition, the authority has the involvement of a teacher (part-time) and educational psychologist to consider the needs of children in the looked after system overall. A Right to Read scheme is also in operation in the city, which aims to provide material to encourage and support learning. Computers are available to those older children studying for GCSE.

However, in discussions with placing social workers and in the questionnaires received from carers, there was some evidence that the educational needs of a small minority of teenagers were not always able to be met through the current systems. This is an issue for education and community services to consider jointly when planning services for older children in the looked after system.

**See recommendation no. 2 from this inspection**

**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**

Carers are encouraged throughout placements to develop the skills of the children for whom they are caring. The City of York has an established Pathways Team and links with Connexions. The Pathways Team picks up referrals for all young people preparing for independence and leaving care. Carers confirmed that they were fully involved in the plans and placing social workers stated that young people are given accommodation and are supported into further education, training or work. Carers also commented that at times young people are too keen to move into independence, perhaps before they are ready. There was evidence of some young people maintaining contact with carers after they had left and even in one instance of a young person returning to the household to live after trying independence.

The authority has put effort into the recruitment of specific carers for a teenage fostering scheme which it is hoped will further enhance the opportunities of young people in the looked after system.

The Sharing Care team become part of the planning process for youngsters with disabilities as they near 18 years of age and become no longer eligible for childrens' support services.

## 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 authority has in place clear recruitment and selection procedures which meet the requirements of this standard. Staff in both teams have the necessary qualifications and experience to fulfil the requirements of the service and displayed a sound knowledge of the necessary legislation and corporate policies and procedures.

The Sharing Care Team has an appropriately qualified nurse working as part of the team.

Total number of staff of the agency:

12

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

0

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service is well structured and the management sound. On starting their employment, every member of staff receives an induction handbook which is clearly set out. Staff commented that senior managers are supportive, knowledgeable and approachable. Carers are appropriately trained and confirmed that they too feel supported by link workers from the teams. Comments from both the family placement team and the social work team, confirmed that working relationships are sound.

The clerical support systems, developed largely by workers currently in the fostering team, are thorough. Initial enquiries are responded to speedily and clerical staff ensure that all necessary records are kept up to date. The Sharing Care Team has a dedicated administrative support worker (part-time) who is fully involved in all the work of the team. The morale of staff in both parts of the service is good, with a shared commitment to the development of the service overall.



**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**

At the time of the inspection, one of the Family Placement Team members was covering the post of Service Manager, to allow the substantive postholder to undertake development work. Her post within the team had also been filled. In the sharing care team, one staff member was on an extended period of sick leave and arrangements had been made to fill her post through a fixed term contract. Staff in the Family Placement Team stated that they were very busy, and at times felt somewhat 'stretched' although they generally welcomed the opportunity to do both fostering and adoption work. In the past few months, there has been an increase in the established hours for the Family Placement Team.

Part of the present management strategy confirms a commitment to recruiting a wide range of carers, with a particular emphasis on recruiting to the teenage fostering scheme which will attract enhanced payments. There has also been a recent initiative to recruit permanent foster carers.

The assessment and preparation process for carers is thorough and full assessment reports are presented to Foster Panel for approval.

**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?****2**

There are sound employment policies and practices in relation to both staff and carers. These include a whistle blowing policy. Staff have regular supervision and annual appraisals. Managers of the service offer out of hours consultation in relation to fostering issues.

Annual reviews are undertaken on all carers and carers confirmed that they receive good support from Family Placement workers. However, there were comments from carers in discussion and on questionnaires received, that they felt they did not always receive an adequate response to situations which arise out of hours. The managers of the service were aware of carers' views and at the time of the inspection were looking at the issue in consultation with the neighbouring authority with whom they operate an emergency duty team. They hope to be able to develop the response that this team is able to offer out of hours.

**See recommendation 3 from this inspection**

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	2
<p>The authority has in place a staff induction plan which includes training. Staff confirmed that this aspect of the training provision is good. Foster carers across both are offered training at regular intervals – approximately monthly. There are annual appraisals where training needs are identified and plans made. Staff also have the opportunity to raise training needs in supervision.</p> <p>The main issue for staff in both teams was the difficulty in obtaining more advanced training. They stated that it is not always possible to access any that may be available because of time constraints or budgetary considerations. Staff felt that training in such issues as advanced presentation skills and attachment theory (to quote two examples given) would enhance their skills and benefit the service.</p> <p><b>See recommendation no. 4 from this inspection</b></p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>All staff have job descriptions and copies of policies and procedures are made available. Staff in both teams are able to attend the regular staff meetings which take place. Staff and managers confirmed that supervision sessions are planned and recorded. Annual appraisals take place.</p> <p>There was evidence on files of managers reading and signing files in line with the authority's policy on recording.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. It encourages the development of self help groups. Those foster carers who were interviewed confirmed that they found the shared experience valuable, although this generally came through meeting other carers at training events rather than at specific self help groups.</p> <p>Both the fostering team and the social team workers interviewed, confirmed that they enjoyed good working relationships and that any difficulties which arose were speedily resolved.</p> <p>There was evidence on file that annual carer reviews are routinely held and that there is consultation with children's social workers, although at present this is by phone contact rather than written reports. The service has developed a system of written feedback for placing social workers which will form part of the annual reviewing system.</p>		

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

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

2

Every carer is supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker and all files sampled contained foster care agreements. These agreements contain all the information required by schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations. There was also evidence on files of supervisory visits undertaken by support staff. Carers confirmed that they are appropriately supported by link workers. The issue of out of hours support is dealt with elsewhere in this report (see Standard 18)

Carers confirmed that they have received information about complaints procedures and how any allegations might be dealt with. All complaints are referred to the Complaints Officer within the local authority. The Manager of the Fostering Service maintains records of any allegations made.

The Sharing Care Team has a comprehensive foster carer handbook, which clearly sets out all the information required.

There is as yet no similar handbook for the Family Support Team. The manager stated that this is currently being prepared as outlined in the action plan arising from the previous inspection report.

**See requirement no. 4 from previous inspection**

**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

All foster carers undertake initial training, prior to approval. There is also an ongoing training programme offered to carers. Carers are encouraged to develop their skills through training and can receive increased payment in recognition of this development. These issues are raised in annual reviews.

Carers for the Sharing Care service receive a different training package tailored to meet their specific role within the fostering service. This includes input from the nurse who is part of the team.

Those carers interviewed as part of the inspection or who completed questionnaires, spoke positively about the training which is offered. There were carers who commented that training might be more accessible if it were held during the school.

**See recommendation no.5 from this inspection**

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written policy on recording which is available to all staff. Foster carer files sampled contained appropriate information in relation to the children cared for – placement plans, essential information records and records of visits to carers where children were seen. Care plans detailed necessary information in relation to health, education and contact issues. The fostering service makes clear to all carers the need to record significant events in the life of a child and carers confirmed that they kept all records securely.

The local authority's procedure on case file records states that each child's file should contain an up to date chronology. These were not evident on all files sampled.

### 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 Human Resources department retains all staff records. The fostering service maintains supervision records for staff and annual appraisals. It also maintains records of carers currently working for the service, of enquiries and approvals being processed, of any allegations made and children currently placed with carers. All case records seen were typewritten and legible and carers' files showed evidence of regular monitoring by managers. All carers' files contained confirmation of checks made and references taken up. The authority has a policy on retention of files with procedural guidance for staff.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

82

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

77

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

56

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

31

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

18

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

62.58

Maximum £

525.16

\*includes both Foster Carers and Sharing Care Carers

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

This standard is met. The Family Placement Team is located in a building that also houses the 11+ social work teams and the Pathways Team. They share one office and have administrative support staff placed on a separate floor. The office is well equipped and all records are securely held.

The Sharing Care Team is located in a separate building which also houses the under 10s social work team and the team working with people with disabilities.

As identified earlier in this report, both teams are supported by robust administrative systems, staffed by enthusiastic clerical support staff.

## 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
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This is a local authority fostering service. The standard is met.

### 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
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The Service Manager has responsibility for budgets within the Family Placement Team and the Sharing Care Co-ordinator takes responsibility for those within the Sharing Care Team.

The local authority has robust financial systems and monitoring systems.

**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

The carers consulted during the course of the inspection confirmed payments were received on time. There is a written policy on fostering allowances of which foster carers are all made aware. The Service has in hand an incentive scheme for additional allowances paid to carers as their skills develop. In addition, the service has developed a provision for enhanced payments for specialist carers for teenage children. All allowances are reviewed annually.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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As part of the inspection, the inspector was able to attend a foster panel and sample assessments and presentations made to the Panel. The Panel is chaired by a psychologist from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service and includes representatives as required by the Regulations. The Panel Chair confirmed that the work of the Panel is planned and that all reports are received in good time. The Panel also sees the first reviews of foster carers.

In all respects, the work of the panel makes a positive contribution to the work of the fostering service as a whole.



## 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?

3

The Sharing Care Scheme exists as a separate team within the Fostering service. Its function is to provide short breaks for children with disabilities who live at home with parents, although on occasion it has provided a service to foster carers also. The scheme is governed by its own policies and procedures and the first line of management is provided by a manager within the sector providing services for children with disabilities. At the next level of management, responsibility is held by the Group Manager.

Staff within the team are clear that the service their carers provide is very different from that provided by carers within the Family Placement Team. They are also very clear that birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs of their children. Placements are only made after very careful matching and with the full involvement of parents and carers.

All carers recruited to the Sharing Care Team are prepared, trained and approved by the Foster Panel. The team is enthusiastic and committed. It has successfully narrowed the gap between children waiting for a placement and available carers.

There is a comprehensive hand book for carers and the team is at present producing a guide for children who use the service, looking at how to make this as accessible as possible to all children, many of whom may have communication difficulties.

Those carers who were interviewed as part of this inspection and those who responded to the questionnaire, were very positive about the scheme and the support offered to them as carers.

## 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
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The authority is committed to placing children within extended family or with familiar adults, if this is possible and in the best interests of the child. All family and friends carers are approved by Foster Panel. Assessment reports are provided in the same way as those for other carers. The service does however recognise the need to tailor training to meet their differing requirements and ongoing support is arranged to reflect pre-existing relationships.

Those family and friends carers who were interviewed as part of this inspection or who returned questionnaires, spoke positively about the process of approval and support. One family commented that it 'was a little long' but felt that it was very fair and not intrusive. They also stated that they understood the need for a thorough assessment. They believed that they had benefited from the support of other carers at training events.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

Not Applicable

**Lay Assessor**     N/A     **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 5<sup>th</sup> January 2003 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.

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

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

**Or**

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

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

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