



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

East Sussex Fostering Service

St Mary`s House

52 St Leonards Road

Eastbourne

East Sussex

BN21 3UU

11th – 14th 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

East Sussex Fostering Service

Address

St Mary's House, 52 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3UU

Local Authority Manager

Sally Carnie and Theresa Lavelle-Hill

Tel No:

01273 481238

Address

St Mary's House, 52 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3UU

Fax No:

Email Address

sally.carnie@eastsussexcc.gov.uk

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

Date of Inspection Visit		11th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Anna Gilmartin	077583
Name of Inspector	2	Corrie McKeown	098589
Name of Inspector	3	Lindy Latreille	149442
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		Sally Carnie and Theresa Lavelle-Hill	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

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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)

Part D: Provider's Response

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D.2. Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

At the time of the inspection there were 308 children and young people placed with foster carers who are the responsibility of East Sussex Fostering Service. An additional 59 children are placed through the Family Link Scheme that provides respite care for children with learning disabilities and this service is managed within the Children's Disability Team and is the subject of a separate report. The Fostering Service provides a special placements scheme for children and young people who are assessed as hard to place and whose package of care includes specific specialist support. Where placements cannot be made within the Fostering Services own resources, Independent Fostering Agencies that have been approved as preferred providers by the fostering service are used.

The Fostering Service employs thirty four staff including administrative support staff, a training and development officer and two social work assistants. Two Operations Managers who job share jointly manage the service and there is a Looked After Children Head of Service. The Head of Service for Looked After Children is also the agency decision maker with regard to recommendations made by the fostering panel. A Practice Manager who in turn is managed by the Operations Manager for the Children's Disability Service manages the Family Link Scheme.

The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of foster carers and provides a duty service for the placement of looked after children with foster carers.

The Fostering Panel is responsible for recommending the approval of all carers and changes to their approval status, including those who are part of the Family Link Scheme. It is the agency decision maker who makes the decision with regard to any recommendations made by the panel. The panel chair is the Head of Child Protection in East Sussex Social Services Department.

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.)

Three Inspectors spent four days inspecting the East Sussex Fostering Service. This included meeting with a number of carers and looked after children as well as observing the fostering panel.

One member of the inspection team spent one day with the Link Scheme as well as meeting with two carers providing respite care for the scheme and there is a separate report on this service.

Inspectors found the service to be well organised and effectively managed. It is a service which strives to continually improve. Managers are open and accessible to staff and the staff team are enthusiastic and committed to providing high quality services to carers and children.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met. There is a clear and detailed statement of purpose and children's guide and the children's guide can be made available in different languages.

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

Both of these standards were assessed and one was exceeded and the other was met. Standard 2 was exceeded. The service is very well managed with the managers' having extensive experience of working in local authority fostering services and with the appropriate qualifications and business and financial expertise to fulfil the role efficiently and effectively.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

Both of the standards were assessed and both were exceeded. The service is managed efficiently and effectively with good lines of communication between managers, staff and carers.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

All of the standards were assessed and met and two were exceeded. The service carries out comprehensive and detailed assessments of carers and provides effective preparation training. There is a robust referral system in place and careful consideration is given to appropriate matching. The fostering service has developed a clear criterion for the use of Independent Fostering Agencies and has a preferred provider list in place. The service is commended for the way in which it actively supports and encourages contact between looked after children and their families and appropriate risk assessments are in place in relation to managing any risks. The service is also commended for its commitment to ensuring appropriate educational provision for children in foster care. The two Operations Managers' take lead responsibility for health and education and there are positive developments in place in relation to both of these areas.

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

(Standards 15-23)

All of these standards were assessed, five were exceeded, one was not met and three were met. There are sound recruitment and employment practices in place however inspectors noted that some staff do not have current CRB checks as they were employed several years ago. There is a commendable comprehensive training programme in place for carers and a number of carers have completed NVQ training and others are in the process of undertaking the training.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Both of the standards assessed were assessed and met.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 26)

This standard was met. The office premises are suitable for the number of staff employed and there are appropriate facilities for meetings and training.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

All of the standards were assessed and met and one was exceeded. After consultation with local carers the fostering service introduced a new payment scheme in 2004. The scheme introduces a fee element as well as raising the basic rates and ensures that local authority rates paid to carers are competitive with the independent agencies. Budgets are keenly managed and there are robust auditing and monitoring systems in place.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was met. The panel is well organised and structured and the panel minutes are prepared and presented to the agency decision maker the following day. The written decision from the agency decision maker is usually sent to carers the same day but within a maximum of five days. The Inspector's observation of the fostering panel confirmed that panel members are well prepared and provided with detailed information in advance and members were observed to be robust in their questioning to ensure that they were able to make appropriate recommendations.

Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not fully assessed on this occasion and there is a separate report on the Link scheme.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was assessed and met. There is a clear policy in place with regard to the services expectations of carers as well as what the service will provide such as the same level of assessment, support and training that all other carers receive.

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?

NA

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	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Anna Gilmartin</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Corrie McKeown</u>	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Rita Griffiths</u>	Signature	_____
Date	<u>1/11/04</u>		_____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	20(30(d)	CH15	That all staff have a current CRB check	1\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	FS14	That expectations regarding the role of the Leaving Care Team are made clear to foster carers and foster carers are involved in decision making processes and the implementation of the Pathway Plan.
2	FS22	That unannounced visits are clearly recorded.
3	FS24	That the file audit checklist includes the unannounced visit, LAC documentation and medical consent.

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

Number of Inspector days spent	12
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	11/10/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	36

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 Statement of Purpose of the fostering service is clear with sufficient detail and provides comprehensive information about the service. There is a separate statement of purpose for the Link Scheme and both documents are cross-referenced.

A children's guide to the fostering service has been produced and it is available in a range of languages if required.

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

Two Operations Managers manage the fostering service on a job share basis. The service is very well managed with the managers' having extensive experience of working in local authority fostering services and with the appropriate qualifications and business and financial expertise to fulfil the role efficiently and effectively.

There are five Practice Manager's in post, one of whom manages the Link Scheme.

Staff reported that they felt very well supported and that the management structure was appropriate to support the aims of the service.

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

East Sussex County Council recruitment policy meets the Warner specification and complies with the requirements of the regulations. Staff personnel records are held centrally at County Hall. However it appears that a number of staff do not have CRB checks as they were appointed some time ago. To ensure compliance with the standards all members of staff should have a CRB check and these should be renewed every three years. This matter is referred to again in standard 15.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The management and staffing structures are well defined with clear lines of accountability and good communication at each level.

The budget is closely monitored and controlled and a new computer system has recently been installed. The Operations Managers meet regularly with the finance officer to review the budgets and expenditure.

The fostering service has amended and updated the local authority's policy relating to conflicts of interest so that there is a policy that relates specifically to the fostering service.

As a local authority the fostering service is not required to report significant events under Regulation 43 (1) Schedule 8. However, in line with the good practice recommendation from a previous inspection the fostering service has put a system in place for notifying the CSCI of significant events and there has been one notification with regard to the issues noted below. This individual concerned is no longer a foster carer.

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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?

4

As previously referred to, the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently and the managers at all levels have job descriptions and staff were very clear about their areas of responsibility. Areas of work are delegated appropriately and the lines of accountability are clear.

The Operations Managers have no other duties or responsibilities outside of the fostering service and there are effective arrangements in place to cover their absence.

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?

4

Inspectors examined the case files of a number of carers and nine carers were visited and interviewed as part of the inspection process. These foster carers were selected by the inspectors not the service and included two carers who provide foster placements to children with learning disabilities under the Link Scheme and two kinship carers. Assessments of foster carers are comprehensive and detailed and include a health and safety risk assessment of the carers' home. This is updated annually as part of the foster carers review and the homes are inspected annually during the unannounced visit. Health and safety is also covered in the preparation training provided to carers that forms part of the assessment process. This standard is exceeded in the areas of assessment and reviews. There is a corporate policy in place in relation to the use of vehicles by foster carers, a copy of which is given to them and is included in the carers' handbook shortly to be issued.

Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the sharing of bedrooms by foster children with any arrangement having to be agreed and authorised in writing by the locality social worker.

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 fostering service acknowledges that there is a shortage of black and ethnic minority carers in East Sussex and there is a strategy in place for recruiting carers from more diverse backgrounds and cultures. The service data collection includes information about the number of children and young people who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as well as carers who are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Carers across the service are provided with moving and handling training as required and Inspectors were informed that the service provides carers with appropriate support and information to meet the needs of children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures.

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

A new integrated referral form for accommodation services has been developed that requires the locality social worker to provide greater information about the child's background and reason for the referral at the initial referral stage. A weekly meeting is held to discuss children who are awaiting placement and the children are prioritised according to need. The Operations Manager may also challenge through the appropriate line management structure the locality social workers care plan for the child. An additional meeting has also been introduced prior to the fostering services child awaiting placement meeting with all of the Operations Manager's for children and families to identify and agree priorities.

The fostering service has also developed clear criteria for the use of Independent Fostering Agencies and there is a preferred provider list in place with those agencies having had to meet clear performance indicators.

The fostering service has developed its placement support service providing additional support to carers and children when there are specific issues or to prevent a placement breaking down.

Identified shortfalls are compensated for, through for example, additional support and this is monitored through supervision records.

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
<p>Foster carers are provided with appropriate training in child protection and there is a separate course on Safe Caring and Allegations. There are guidelines in place for carers in relation to safe caring practices as well as a Safe Caring Policy and there is a Fostering Network Safe Care document available to carers.</p> <p>Allegations of abuse and standards of care within foster homes are collated and acted upon appropriately.</p> <p>There are clear guidelines provided to carers in relation to appropriate forms of punishment which make it clear that corporal punishment in all forms is unacceptable. It was evident from talking to carers and the returned questionnaires that carers were clear about the fostering services expectations on discipline.</p> <p>Bullying is addressed in the fostering services policies and in the children's guide.</p> <p>Although a small number of children and young people completed a young person's questionnaire the numbers were not sufficient to provide a percentage figure.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	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?	4
<p>The fostering service is committed to ensuring that children and young people who are fostered are encouraged and actively supported in their contact with family and friends. The service is pro-active in reinforcing to carers the importance of contact and this is covered in foster carers preparation training and through ongoing work between the carers and supervising social workers.</p> <p>The fostering service has a pro-forma in place whereby a risk assessment is completed in relation to contact and appropriate steps are taken to manage the risks.</p> <p>If foster carers are supervising contact they are given clear guidelines and expectations with regard to recording and reporting on the contact.</p>		

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?**

3

The fostering service provides training to carers in relation to listening and responding appropriately to children and young people in their care. There is close contact and consultation between the fostering service and the local Foster Care Association who report the views of carers. Managers are pro-active and attend the Foster Care Association meetings as well as any social events. All looked after children in foster care are provided with a computer where they can access Viewpoint, an interactive computer programme that enables them to input their views about their care in preparation for LAC reviews. The fostering service is developing new approaches to consultation with children and birth parents and as a preliminary step questionnaires have been devised. Young people in foster care have access to an independent advocacy service, X-Press Advocacy. The children and young people are also asked for their views about their carers through a questionnaire as part of the annual review of foster carers.

The children and young people are provided with information about the local authority complaints procedure as well as information being available in the children's guide.

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

At a strategic level there has been considerable progress with regard to promoting the health of Looked After Children in East Sussex during the past year. Health professionals from all of the relevant PCT's have been meeting regularly to monitor the implementation of the 2003\04 action plan and much has been achieved. East Sussex is piloting an Identification, Referral and Tracking system in Eastbourne Downs PCT. Two CAMHS specialists have been appointed and are located within the fostering service. The identification of a LAC specialist nurse post for each PCT has been agreed and two posts have been recruited to so far. There are agreed protocols for sharing information between ESCC and the PCT's and a LAC notification system. There is a further action plan for 2004\2005 to ensure that appropriate health care services are available to all LAC within the county. There is a specialist nurse advisor on the fostering panel.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The Fostering Service is whole-heartedly supporting the ongoing programme in East Sussex to improve the educational attainment of Looked-After Children. This is largely achieved through close involvement with the support initiatives offered to young people by the TEST team, emphasis placed on access to education during the training of foster-carers and the presence of an education specialist on the Fostering Panel.

Support to children has centred around the clear requirement to have Personal Education Plans in place and targeted provision to follow; this might include for example laptops for those in year 11, support from one of the two new mental health workers or extra tuition to support a young people person back into mainstream education.

There are also a number of schemes currently underway to equip carers with the necessary skills to support their children's education; these include the production of a video/DVD on how to encourage literacy skills, a regular contribution in the Foster Carers newsletter by a Maths consultant on how to support maths at home and involvement in a research project, funded by the Paul Hamlin Foundation to explore the reading habits of foster carers with young people.

Future plans to cover areas of need have also been identified, such as the earlier notification to the TEST team of children admitted into care, in order to further improve the chances of children experiencing continuity of 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

Training is available to foster carers on supporting young people moving onto independence. Foster carers were clear about the need to provide appropriate opportunities for young people in relation to acquiring independence skills.

Foster carers told inspectors that the Leaving Care Team who take over responsibility for young people who are moving into independence were slow to act on referrals and generally seem to operate at a different pace to other members of the department and this impacted on transition planning for the young person.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

East Sussex Council operates a recruitment policy, which meets all of the requirements. This was not verified by inspectors on this occasion as all of the records are held by the Human Resources Department. However it appears that CRB checks have still not been taken up on staff whose police check is more than three years old.

Total number of staff of the agency:

34

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?

4

Staff from the main fostering service are now all located in one office, although staff that work for the Link Scheme are located in another office, together with other disability service staff.

Staff are managed and supervised by appropriately qualified and experienced managers and there is an appropriate administrative support system in place. There is good communication between the fostering staff and the fieldwork teams and both parties have a clear understanding of each other's role.

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?**

4

The service has a history of retaining staff though recruitment specifically to social work posts has been more difficult recently. The operations managers have proposed a new workforce plan to recruit additional unqualified staff for specific tasks with view to offering them professional training and career progression. Inspectors observed that the staff were stretched and working to full capacity and without more staff the service is unlikely to be able to expand and take on more carers.

The recruitment strategy for 04\05 identifies the need for carers for priority placements such as sibling groups, parent and baby placements minority ethnic families and adolescent placements.

A number of foster care assessments were examined as part of the inspection and an inspector also attended the fostering panel where assessments are considered and the panel makes a recommendation regarding approval. The assessments seen were found to be detailed and comprehensive documents with good evidence of the assessment carried out.

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 fostering service has sound employment practices in relation to both staff and foster carers and there is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place in relation to carers, children and staff.

Out of hours support is formally provided through the local authority's emergency duty service and the fostering service provide an on-call advice line that is available to carers from 5pm until 8.30am. There is a more intensive on call system in place for carers and children who are part of the Special Placement Scheme. The Link Scheme operates a separate out of hour's service although all calls are routed through the emergency duty service in the first instance.

The fostering service has a whistleblowing policy that is known to all staff and carers.

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?**

4

There is a comprehensive training programme in place for both staff in the fostering team and for carers. A range of training is available to staff through the local social services training department as well as staff having access to external training courses. Staff have a personal development plan that links into their individual and the fostering services training plan for the year. New staff are provided with appropriate induction training and some staff have undertaken the post qualifying award while others were in the process of completing this.

The fostering service employs a training officer who organises and delivers a programme of training, including NVQ for carers. Prospective carers are expected to attend preparation training prior to their individual assessments commencing. Post approval there is an ongoing programme of training available to carers provided by the fostering service and carers also access external training, for example courses run by the Fostering Network. The local Foster Care Association also runs training days and seminars. The training needs of foster carers are identified at their annual review and some training is mandatory. There is also some training provided jointly for carers and staff.

In addition, specific training is provided to carers to help them meet the specific needs of children they are looking after, such as Makaton and PECS for those involved in the Link Scheme.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

All staff have job descriptions and there are clear and detailed policies and procedures in place to support and guide them in their work. Staff were clear when talking to Inspectors about their roles and responsibilities. There is a system in place for staff to receive regular planned supervision and supervision sessions are recorded. An annual Performance Management Personal Development Plan is also in place for all staff. Team meetings are held regularly and appropriately recorded.

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?**

4

There is a strategy for working with carers, which is detailed in the statement of purpose and the foster carers handbook. The majority of carers reported that they felt well supported by the fostering service particularly those carers on the Special Placement Scheme. The service runs a number of support groups for carers. Carers told inspectors that they felt valued by the fostering service. A regular newsletter is sent out to all carers and the service works very closely with the East Sussex Fostering Association. The role of the supervising social worker is clear to both the carer and the worker. There is a comprehensive annual review report and inspectors were told that these reviews are chaired by Practice Managers. All first annual reviews are presented to the fostering panel and subsequent reviews are taken to panel if a problem is identified or if the review identified a change in approval.

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?**

4

There is a comprehensive foster carer handbook and together with the foster care agreement this ensures that the foster carers know what is expected of them. Supervising social workers carry out regular visits to carers and there is a clear expectation of the carers' role and the purpose of the visit. All carers receive at least one unannounced visit a year. From examining records Inspectors could not easily identify whether or not a visit was unannounced. For monitoring purposes inspectors would suggest that there is a more easily identifiable way of recording unannounced visits.

Records about abuse, complaints and Standards of Care investigations are kept centrally and monitored and there are written procedures for dealing with all of these matters.

The service finances independent support to carers facing complaints or allegations. This is managed by the local Foster Care Association (ESFCA).

The fostering service has introduced a new system of payments which ensures that foster carers are paid more promptly.

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?**

4

As previously referred to there is a comprehensive training programme in place for carers and the fostering service has in post a part time worker who has responsibility for overseeing and implementing the programme. The fostering service maintains both a central training record as well as an individual record on each carers file. The fostering service provides child care support to enable carers to attend training and training takes place at different venues across the county and at various times of the day to assist carers in attending depending on their circumstances.

A number of carers have completed NVQ level 3 training in caring for children and young people and others are in the process of undertaking it. Carers were positive about this

training and are supported by the fostering service to do it.

The fostering service has, together with the local Foster Care Association, positively supported foster carers own children and a residential trip took place over the summer for those who wanted to attend. This was organised and run by carers and staff from the fostering service and was viewed as a very positive experience and more trips are planned for the future. The fostering service also organises a range of events throughout the year for carers and their families such as a summer picnic, Christmas party and an awards ceremony.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There is a protocol in relation to files and the information that is required from referring locality teams. The protocol includes the setting up of a child's file separate to the carers. There is a file audit checklist, which the Operations Managers complete once the file has been audited. Not all of the files had been audited at the time of this inspection. Inspectors would recommend that the checklist also includes information about the last unannounced visit, LAC documentation, and medical consent. Practice Managers monitor the quality of the files and the recording by selecting two files to look at in advance of planned staff supervision.

Foster care preparation and training includes information to carers about recording, confidentiality and the safe keeping of records.

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 fostering services administrative records were found to be in order and information is stored appropriately and securely. There are systems in place to monitor the quality of records and essential information such as complaints and allegations. The local authority has written procedures and guidance for staff with regard to record keeping and storing and managing confidential information. A written agreement with panel members sets out the expectations on confidentiality and storage of information and all papers are returned to the fostering service at the end of each panel.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

195

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

661

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:

32

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

13

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

215

Maximum £

400

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

All of the fostering team staff are now located on one site. The fostering service offices are based in Eastbourne and occupy a floor in a large building office block and other social work teams are also based in the same building. The office premises are suitable for the number of staff employed and there are facilities for meetings and the panel to be held on site.

The CAMHS specialist staff are also located within this office and East Sussex Foster Care Association has a base within the office.

ESFCA will be provided with ID passes to St Mary's House.

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 local authority has invested a substantial amount of money in the fostering service this year. Payments to carers have been comprehensively reviewed and substantially increased. The local authority complies with all financial regulations.

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 Operations Managers are very experienced in managing budgets and have monthly meetings with the local authority finance manager. Budgets are keenly managed with a robust auditing and monitoring system. The fostering service is now directly responsible for foster care payments which should ensure that payments are correct and on time.

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?

4

After consultation with local carers, the fostering service introduced a new payment scheme in 2004. The new scheme incorporates an increased basic rate and a fee element to recognise the skills, experience and time involved in caring for a particular child or young person. The payments vary with the age of the child or young person and will be 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?
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	4
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The fostering panel was observed in operation on Monday 11th October. The panel was quorate with a good range of expertise among its members covering the requirements of the Regulations. A new member with medical expertise has been appointed following a recent resignation and enquiries are underway to identify a person able to offer advice on matters relating to children with disabilities.

The meeting was well chaired, keeping close to identified timescales and clarifying issues for future action throughout the proceedings. Any concerns arising from the assessments and reviews presented, were well investigated involving all members of the panel and clear recommendations were made to the Fostering Service Representative. Opinions shared were frank and professional and energy levels were maintained throughout the full programme.

Advice was offered to the Fostering Service on a number of matters including the quality of assessments, which were generally of a high standard and the need to ensure that input from children who foster is included in assessment material whenever possible.

Inspectors would support any efforts the Fostering Service can make to recruit a member to the panel who is able to represent the views of ethnic minority groups, particularly around issues of matching.

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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As referred to in the summary, there will be a separate report on the Link scheme, which was inspected by one inspector for one day following a fuller two day inspection in February 2004.

In addition to the Link Scheme, other carers also provide respite care, for example to children looked after as part of the Special Placements Scheme.

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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There is a clear policy in place with regard to the services expectations of kinship carers as well as what the service will provide such as the same level of assessment, support and training that all other carers receive.

Two kinship carers were visited as part of the inspection.

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 11th - 14th October 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	YES
Comments were received from the provider	YES
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	YES

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 3rd December 2004, 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>	

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 _____ 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.

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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