



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Derbyshire County Council - Fostering Service

Derbyshire County Council
Social Services Department
County Offices
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3AG

15th – 26 November 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

Derbyshire County Council - Fostering Service

Address

Derbyshire County Council, Social Services Department,
County Offices, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG

Local Authority Manager

Ian Johnson

Tel No:

01629 772005

Address

As above

Fax No:

01629 772009

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

24/11/03

Date of Inspection Visit		15th –26 November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am-5pm	
Name of Inspector	1	Jenny Thornton	074480
Name of Inspector	2	Nancy Bradley	
Name of Inspector	3	Charlotte Cordingley (Locum)	
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		Ian Johnson/Peter Riddle	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

1. Statement of purpose

2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service

3. Management of the fostering service

4. Securing and promoting welfare

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

6. Records

7. Fitness of premises

8. Financial requirements

9. Fostering panels

10. Short-term breaks

11. Family and friend carers

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Part D: Provider's Response

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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 Derbyshire County Council - 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.

The fostering service is part of Derbyshire County Council Social Services Department, and as such is governed by the policies and procedures which apply to Derbyshire County Council. The fostering service has 6 area offices within 3 divisions, which provide the following services for children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years throughout Derbyshire:

- ❖ Time limited placements which include emergency and bridging placements
- ❖ Link Care which offers short term breaks for children with a disability who live with their family or foster carers.
- ❖ Respite care which offers short term breaks for children cared for by other foster carers
- ❖ Long term placements where adoption is not feasible or appropriate
- ❖ Fostering Plus which applies to children with emotional and behavioural problems who require carers with additional skills
- ❖ Children First which applies to children with a significant disability. These placements tend to be long term.
- ❖ Contract Care, which provides self-employed foster carers with additional skills, to care for children with specific needs.

A total of 322 children and young people were placed with the service at the time of the inspection. The service had 340 approved foster carers. The fostering service recruits, registers, and provides ongoing support to new and existing carers. Teams of qualified social workers support the 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.)

The focus of Year 2 inspections undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection is upon outcomes for service users, progress on meeting national minimum standards from Year 1 inspections. This inspection focuses on the areas that were identified for action and development at the last inspection, which took place in November 2003.

The majority of requirements and recommendations from the last inspection report have been met.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met. The service provides a detailed statement of purpose, which had been approved as a final document. A children's guide had recently been produced in consultation with children and young people. This contained a good level of illustrations and was well set out. All children/young people and foster carers were being issued a copy of the guide.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

2 standards assessed were fully met. Senior managers have appropriate qualifications and extensive management experience in childcare and fostering. Derbyshire County Council follows thorough procedures when recruiting new staff.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

2 standards assessed were fully met. The service is well managed. Extensive procedures are in place to monitor the performance and quality of the fostering service. The service was undergoing considerable changes to focus on the key functions of recruitment, supervision and support. Separate adoption and fostering teams were being set up. The structure does not provide an overall manager at operational level leading the fostering service.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

8 out of 9 standards assessed were fully met. Staff and carers showed a commitment to meeting the needs and welfare of children/young people. Staff, carers and children reported that pressures and shortfalls within the children's teams' impacts on welfare issues. Children/young people in foster care felt cared for, and supported in maintaining contact with their family and friends. The Authority continues to make progress in how it consults with children and foster carers. Foster carers showed a commitment to ensuring that children and young people's views are heard and acted upon. A complaints guide had recently been produced in consultation with children and young people.

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

7 out of 9 standards assessed were fully met. Robust procedures are followed in relation to the recruitment of staff and foster carers. The majority of area teams had experienced staff changes over recent months and currently had staffing vacancies. Matching staff to posts within the new structure was being finalised, and staff vacancies were due to be advertised. Staff felt well supported by their colleagues but morale was affected by the changes.

The assessment process for potential foster carers had been strengthened. The Authority recognizes that it does not have sufficient carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the current demands on the service. The service has a clear recruitment strategy and is working hard to recruit additional carers. The service was setting up staff teams to concentrate solely on the recruitment of foster carers.

Staff training and development needs were supported. Improvements had been made to foster carers pre-approval and post approval-training programmes. Although not all foster carers had attended recent training and development for various reasons. The Authority was looking to provide more effective ways of delivering training to foster carers.

The majority of carers felt well supported by the fostering service. The carer's support scheme was progressing well. A new out of hour's service was being established.

Records (Standards 24-25)

1 out 2 standards assessed were fully met. Improvements had been made to the records. Carers files generally contained the required information. Children's files contained a good level of information, but did not contain all-essential information.

The level of information recorded by foster carers varied. Staff were endeavouring to address this issue. Foster carers assisted children to keep records and photographs of significant life events and complete life story work. Although pressures within the children's teams limited time available to support completion of life story work with children.

Fitness of premises to use as a fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was fully met. The office premises are suitable for the purpose. Not all social workers had direct access to computers and e-mail. The Authority was upgrading the

I.T. system and access to computers throughout all areas.

Additional storage facilities had been provided and confidential information was kept securely.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

The standard assessed was not fully met. Derbyshire County Council has a finance team and expertise to manage the finances and payments to foster carers. The Authority had increased allowances and remunerations paid to foster carers in the last year. Staff and foster carers welcomed recent increases, but expressed the need for further increases to cover the full cost of caring for each child. Cabinet Members had recently agreed an investment plan, which will increase the allowances, remunerations and support available to carers over the coming year.

Fostering panel (Standard 30)

This standard was fully met. Policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel were clearly set out. Work had been undertaken to improve consistency in the way the three panels operate. The required composition of panel members were provided, apart from two panels did not have an independent member with expertise in child health. The panel members maintained an appropriate level of independence. Foster carers training and development needs were not robustly reviewed through the annual review process.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was fully met. The service was looking to expand respite and short break care for children/young people across the county. The findings showed that the needs of children/young people receiving short-term breaks were being met. Carers providing short break care received a good level of support from the fostering team.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was fully met. The fostering service gives importance to approving and supporting family and friends as foster carers, where this is in the best interests of children. Staff largely assess and approve family and friends as carers applying the same assessment procedures as other carers, taking into account their relationships with the child. Policies and procedures relating to kinship care and permanency placements had been drafted.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	17	FS12	All carers must receive training in First Aid	31 October 2004
2	15	FS12	The Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed consent is obtained from a child's parent/representative for a child to receive emergency treatment, and that carers receive a copy of this. 	30 June 2004
3	15	FS12	The Authority must put procedures in place to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster carers receive essential information on placement about a child's health needs. 	30 June 2004

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 Jenny Thornton **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Locality Manager Graham Gorsuch **Signature** _____
Date 22/12/04 _____

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 Schedule 1	FS3	All staff personnel files must clearly show the level of C.R.B. check carried out, and the person's disclosure number.	31 March 2005
2	43	FS4	Senior managers must ensure that all notifiable events are reported to the Commission for Social Care Inspection without delay.	31 March 2005
3	17(3)	FS12	The Authority must ensure that foster carers are given essential information about a child's health needs, to enable them to appropriately care for the child.	31 March 2005
4	27	FS17	Foster carers files must contain copies of relevant documents pertaining to their identity.	31 March 2005
5	19	FS17	The Authority must provide sufficient numbers of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Suitably qualified, and experienced persons working for the service. ➤ Suitable foster carers to meet children/young people's needs. 	30 November 2005
6	17(1)	FS23	The Authority must ensure that all foster carers are suitably trained to meet the needs of a child/young people placed in their care.	30 November 2005

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The Authority should produce an alternative children's guide for young people.
2	FS2	The Authority should consider the need for an overall manager at operational level to lead the fostering service.
3	FS3	All reference request forms should include 'whether the referee knows of any concerns regarding the suitability of the applicant to work with children, and if so to explain this'
4	FS6	<p>Health and safety risk assessments of carer's homes should clearly show that they have been reviewed prior to foster carer's annual review, and as changes arise.</p> <p>In circumstances where a child is required to share a room, which is not in their best interests, the outcome of the assessment should be clearly recorded on the child's file.</p>
5	FS8	Staff should ensure that children and carers files clearly show matching considerations. Forms used to provide pre-placement information about matching considerations should cover all needs.
6	FS8	The Authority should continue to support that children receive well-planned placements and introductions to foster carers, where possible.
7	FS9	Foster carers should produce a written policy for each placement covering safe caring in their home, in discussion with the foster child and members of the family.
8	FS9	The Authority should provide an information booklet for children on safe-caring and child protection.
9	FS13	The Authority should provide written guidance on arrangements for children not attending full time education.
10	FS17	Further develop assessment of potential foster carers based on evidence and competencies.
11	FS19	All staff should have a personal development plan, which is regularly monitored.

12	FS22	Foster carers supervisory visit forms should clearly indicate whether a visit was announced or unannounced.
13	FS23	The Foster Carers Agreement and Handbook should clearly state that foster carers are required to attend regular training and development.
14	FS24	The Authority should take appropriate action to ensure that all children/young people's files are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Duly completed, signed and dated ➤ Contain a signed copy of consent to emergency treatment. ➤ Contain essential information and a current health and placement plan
15	FS24	The service should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide further training for foster carers on record keeping requirements. ▪ Ensure all foster carers keep essential records of children in their care, and keep confidential information in a suitable secure place.
16	OP24	The Authority should take appropriate action to ensure children/young people receive a good level of direct contact with their social worker.
17	FS24	Children should be further supported to complete life story work.
18	FS26	The Authority should continue to provide new workstations and chairs, where required.
19	FS29	The Authority should continue to consult with foster carers regarding the allowances and remunerations paid to foster carers to cover the full cost of caring for each child.
20	FS30	The independent members of all three fostering panels should include expertise in child health.
21	FS30	Foster carers training and development needs should be robustly reviewed through their annual review.
22	FS32	The Authority's should approve policies and procedures on kinship care and permanency placements.

* 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	22
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NA
• Local Foster Care Association	NA
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• 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	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	15/11/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	195

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
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The statement of purpose was detailed and contained the required information. Cabinet Members had approved the statement of purpose as a final document, and all members of the service had received a copy. Senior managers planned to review the statement of purpose following restructuring of the fostering service, and to provide a shortened version for parents.

A children's guide had recently been produced in consultation with children and young people. The service was looking at how best to circulate a copy of the children's guide and the new complaints guide, to all children/young people and foster carers. The children's guide contained a good level of illustrations and was well set out. Staff acknowledged that the guide appealed to a certain age range of children, and planned to produce an alternative guide for teenagers. The service also planned to produce a welcome pack, in consultation with children and young people.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Senior Managers have appropriate qualifications and extensive knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering issues. The Head of the fostering service was undertaking a diploma in management studies.

The Head of Children and Families Services has responsibility for all children and family services, including overall responsibility for the fostering and adoption services. The Head of Service was currently undertaking work relating to the integration of children's services, and the Assistant Head of Children Services was assisting with the operational responsibility of the fostering service. The management structure within the Authority combines commissioning and provider responsibilities, which creates a possible conflict of interests. The Head of Service has limited time to oversee the fostering service, due to his extensive role and the size of the service. The structure does not provide an overall manager at operational level leading the fostering service. Staff interviewed within the area teams expressed the need for someone at this level.

Currently the six area offices have a service manager responsible for fostering and adoption work, and an area manager overseeing all children's services. Due to recent staff changes, only three out of the six area offices had a service manager in post, one of which was part-time. Senior managers reported that the service managers' positions had been successfully appointed, with the exception of the south Derbyshire office and the new Disability Fostering manager post.

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

Checks carried out showed that Derbyshire County Council follows thorough procedures when recruiting new staff. The Human Resources teams based within the area offices, are responsible for carrying out the required checks and references in relation to new staff. Staff personnel files have been indexed to aid access to information.

Fifteen personnel files examined showed that required checks and information had been obtained for staff, with the exception of some long service staff. The following issues were highlighted:

- A checklist was attached to personnel files confirming receipt of all employment checks. The form used to evidence criminal record bureau checks referred to police checks and did not always state the level of C.R.B. check carried out i.e. enhanced level or include the person's C.R.B disclosure number. Previous procedures resulted in CRB disclosures being kept separately to the personal files.

The H.R. department has since confirmed that the checklist form will be amended to state whether the CRB check is enhanced or standard and this will replace the previous checklist with immediate effect for all new files. All checklists currently on file will be updated to make clear what level check is on file.

- There were some variations in the format of personal and professional reference reply sheets.

The H.R. department has since confirmed that variations in the format will have arisen from previous versions that are no longer used. The Department intends to review all reference requests forms in use, and standard forms will be issued to all HR teams.

- One file did not contain a written explanation where there was a gap in the person's employment. This related to a long-standing member of staff.

The H.R. department has since confirmed that recruitment practices will be amended to require all managers to ensure any gaps on the employment record are addressed at the interview stage. All managers will be made aware of this requirement through HR communications and local HR recruitment support.

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 fostering procedures were clearly set out. The findings showed that the Authority has extensive procedures in place for monitoring the performance and quality of the fostering service. Work has been undertaken to further strengthen performance management and consistency across all areas. Improvements had been made to the recording and monitoring of complaints. A clear procedure was in place for reporting significant and notifiable events, and a standard form was used for recording all events. The Inspectors identified various notifiable incidents that had not been reported to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Senior managers agreed to address this matter.

The Inspectors found that clear procedures were in place governing placements with independent fostering Agencies. The contract's officer had set up clear written placement agreements and monitoring arrangements with independent Agencies.

Staff and carers were required to declare any possible conflicts of interests.

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

31

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.

2

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

1

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.

8

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

12

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

8

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The findings showed that the service is well managed. The services operate within financial and other resource parameters. The fostering service was undergoing considerable changes to focus on the key functions of recruitment, supervision and support of foster carers. Separate fostering and adoption teams were being set up, which will include specific recruitment and support staff. The new structure will provide a clear link with the children's disability team. The contract care scheme, which provides self-employed foster carers with additional skills, was expanding. The findings showed that the Authority had consulted with staff about the changes to the services, although not all staff interviewed felt fully consulted in this process.

The Inspectors found that there were heavy demands and pressures on the service to meet the need for placements. Senior managers within the area teams inspected showed effective leadership of staff and the running of the service. Staff worked as a team and felt well supported by colleagues. As a result of recent staff changes and restructuring of the service, the area offices had a number of staff vacancies. Senior managers reported that staff vacancies were due to be advertised. Interim arrangements had been put in place to prioritise and monitor caseloads, and provide management support to staff. Staff confirmed that they received regular recorded supervision.

Staff reported that work was being undertaken to improve communications and relationships between the various children's teams.

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
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The findings showed that foster carers provide a safe and nurturing environment. As part of the assessment of new foster carers, staff are required to complete a written risk assessment of the carer's home, to ensure it is safe and meets young peoples needs. The assessment includes checks on carers' transport, to ensure it is safe and suitable for a child's needs. Staff said they reviewed the health and safety risk assessment prior to foster carer's annual review. However files examined and reports presented at fostering panel did not always clearly show this.

The foster carers Handbook clearly stated that children should not be expected to share a bedroom without their agreement. Carers who the Inspectors met were aware of this. Staff confirmed that due to pressures on the service, there are circumstances where a child is required to share a room, which may not be in their best interests. Discussions with staff and carers supported that an assessment is completed and measures put in place to safeguard the children. However the assessment was not clearly shown on individual files.

Staff and foster carers stated that the pre-approval training for foster carers covers health and safety issues. The foster carers handbook provides clear guidance on health and safety matters.

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**

Staff and carers reported that the matching process takes into account a child's cultural, religious, language, and disability needs, and that the service promotes diversity and equality within the resources available. The service acknowledges that it has very few children and foster carers from racial, ethnic or religious minority groups. Matching of children from above minority groups is limited by a general lack of choice of placements. It was reported that a small number of placements were not entirely appropriate to the child's cultural needs, although careful consideration had been given to meeting their needs.

Carers reported that the pre-approval training covered the need to promote diversity and respect other cultures and religions.

Discussions with children and carers and completed questionnaires confirmed that carers encourage children to develop skills and lead as full a life as possible. Foster carers who the Inspectors met showed a commitment to enhancing children's confidence and self worth.

Staff and carers reported that children/young people are encouraged to pursue their interests and hobbies. Discussions with children and completed questionnaires confirmed this.

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?****2**

Discussions with staff and carers maintained that considerable work goes into ensuring that children are appropriately matched with foster carers, capable of meeting their needs. The importance of matching is stressed in the fostering policies and procedures. Although matching considerations were not always clearly recorded on individual files. Forms used to provide pre-placement information about matching were not always thoroughly completed and did not cover all needs. A number of young people referred to the contract care scheme were from residential homes. The Manager stated that the level of written information and risk assessments received from residential homes varied.

The findings showed that high demand for placements, limited resources and information from children's social worker affects the matching process. The service acknowledges that it does not have a sufficient range of carers to offer placement choice and fully meet the current demand for placements. This has resulted in the need to place a number of children

with independent fostering Agencies over the last year. The Inspectors found that independent Agencies are required to provide evidence of matching considerations between carers and children placed.

Children and foster carers reported that where placements are planned, they are generally given the opportunity to get to know each other prior to making a decision about the placement. However a good number of placements were unplanned. Returned questionnaires from carers indicated that pressures on children's social workers, affected time available for introductions.

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

The service works to Derbyshire County Council Child Protection Policies and Procedures. The foster carers Agreement and Handbook clearly set out carer's responsibilities in regards to protecting children. Foster carers pre-approval training covers child protection. Records showed that further training sessions on child protection had/were being held, and that a number of foster carers and staff had attended the training.

Discussions with children and returned questionnaires indicated that children felt safe in their foster home. The foster carer's Handbook includes information on safe caring. Staff and foster carers reported that the pre-approval programme covered safe caring issues. Staff reported that a policy on safe caring had been produced and a form was being approved, with a view to all foster carers completing a safe caring policy for children in their care. Staff reported that safe caring issues were covered in foster carer's annual review, although this was not always evident on annual review reports presented at the fostering panels. Staff reported that children did not receive written information on safe-caring and protecting children.

Carers who the Inspectors met were aware of the vulnerability of children in care in relation to bullying. The Inspectors found that Authority provides a clear anti-bullying policy.

The carer's Handbook and foster Carers Agreement makes clear to foster carers that use of corporal punishment is not acceptable and outlines acceptable methods of discipline and managing behaviour.

The foster carers Handbook contained a clear procedure relating to a child missing from a foster home.

Staff reported that Internet access was in line with the Local Authority procedures.

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

0

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Local Authority provides a detailed policy on promoting contact. The findings throughout the inspection showed that children are encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships, where there are no contact restrictions. A completed questionnaire from one carer highlighted delays in arranging contact for a child in their care. The relevant area office agreed to address this matter.

Care plans examined clearly set out contact arrangements for the child/young person. Children's files showed that contact with family and friend's is reviewed at their statutory reviews.

Carers' responsibility for supporting children to maintain contact with family members and other significant persons was clearly set out in the foster carer Agreement and carers Handbook. Carers who the Inspectors met showed a clear commitment to maintaining links with the child's family and friends. Carers confirmed that the Authority paid transport and costs incurred to support contact.

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 Inspectors found positive examples of children's views being heard and acted upon in placement. The findings throughout the inspection showed that the Authority continues to make progress in how it consults with children and foster carers. Several consultation exercises had been carried out, asking children/young people and foster carers about the service and matters affecting their daily lives. Various changes had been made in response to comments received. The fostering service intends to further develop ways in which it obtains the views of children with communication difficulties.

Returned questionnaires indicated that the majority of children and young people see themselves as being part of the foster carer's family.

The Local Authority has a children's rights officer, who was involved in various projects involving looked after children and young people. A children's reference group was established in one area, which includes young people who have been, or who are currently in care. The children's rights officer worked closely with the children's advocacy service. Ten people provided advocacy support to children/young people, were not employees of the Authority. Records showed that during the last year the advocacy service has provided support to children/young people on a range of issues.

The Authority circulates a regular newsletter to children and foster carers.

Carers showed a commitment to ensuring that children and young people's views are heard and acted upon.

Children aged 11 years and over had access to a computer in their foster home, and a computer was being provided in all foster homes. The Authority was looking to improve access to the Carezone site, which provides comprehensive information for looked after children, and opportunities to communicate via safe and supervised chat rooms. It also enables children to contact social workers and managers directly.

Four Reviewing Officers chaired children's statutory reviews. Children were being encouraged to attend their reviews. Information for the month in which the inspection was carried out showed that 99% of required reviews were completed on time.

Complaints from children were referred to the children's rights officer. The children's rights officer in consultation with children/young people, had produced a guide for children and young people on how to get complaints sorted. The complaints leaflet was well set out and contained a list of useful contacts and phone numbers. The guide was being distributed to all children and young people.

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?

2

Accounts from staff, carers and children and records examined maintained that children's health needs were being met. The carer's Handbook outlines foster carers responsibilities for promoting children's health. Several foster carers expressed concerns that information relating to a child's health needs was not always forthcoming from their social/social care worker. Children's files examined contained information relating to their health needs, although the level of information completed varied. One child's file did not contain a health care plan, and two files did not contain signed consent to emergency treatment. The children's foster carers confirmed that they had obtained signed consent, following request from social workers. Senior staff were looking at the option of providing a health 'passport' for each child, which would move with them on a change in placement.

Staff and carers reported some delays in accessing mental health services for children/young people, where required. Senior managers reported that additional resources were being provided.

Staff reported that work was being undertaken to further develop links with health agencies. Foster carers and staff confirmed that carers pre-approval training covered basic health issues. Relevant health staff had agreed to provide training to carers on various health issues.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspectors found that importance is given to meeting the educational needs of children/young people in foster care. The service works closely with Step up 2000 project, which provides an educational support service for looked after children, both in and outside school activities. Children's files contained an updated educational plan, where required.

Carers were clear as to their role and responsibilities in supporting a child's/young persons educational needs. Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires maintained that carers help children to complete their homework, and were in close contact with the child's school.

Where possible children were placed in close proximity to their own home and school. Staff and foster carers expressed the need for written guidance on arrangements for children not

attending full time education. Staff reported ongoing difficulties where children who were not in full time education, in regards to additional pressure on carers and the service.

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

Policies and procedures were provided on preparing young people towards semi or independent living. Foster carers showed a commitment to helping young people to develop daily living skills. Carers gave examples on how this was being achieved. The carer's Handbook provides guidance on what is expected of carers in terms of preparing young children for independent or semi-independent living. The Inspectors found that a pathway plan had been started for young people approaching 16 years of age, and was in place for those who had left school.

Staff reported that the carers pre-approval training covered preparation for adult living.

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 findings throughout the inspection showed that staff working for the service were suitable to work with children and young people. Social workers had an appropriate qualification and considerable childcare knowledge and experience.

Staff had been assured that restructuring of the service would not represent any substantive changes to staff's terms and conditions of employment.

Total number of staff of the service:

52

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The findings showed that staff were well managed. The fostering service managers no longer have responsibility for overseeing additional services such as residential homes. As previously stated, the service was undergoing considerable changes, with a view to improving the efficiency of the service. The role of the family placement teams was changing to focus on recruitment and support teams.

The Inspectors found that procedures for registering potential foster carers interests, and monitoring completion of assessments had been strengthened.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

As previously stated, the service was undergoing refocusing of its services. The majority of area teams had experienced staff changes over recent months and had staff vacancies. The findings showed that interim arrangements had been put in place to prioritise and monitor caseloads, and provide management support to staff. Senior managers confirmed that matching staff to posts within the new structure had been completed, and the remaining staff vacancies were due to be advertised. Staff reported that morale was affected by the changes.

The Inspectors found that clear procedures were in place relating to the assessment of potential foster carers. Work had been undertaken to further strengthen the assessment process. Completed assessments were detailed. Staff intend to further develop assessments based on evidence and competencies. Foster carers files showed that necessary checks had been carried out to ensure that applicants are suitable to work with children, although not all files contained proof of carers identity.

It is acknowledged that there is a national shortage of foster carers, and that the Authority does not have sufficient carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the demands on the service. As previously stated, the service was setting up staff teams to concentrate solely on the recruitment of foster carers. The Authority has a clear recruitment strategy and was endeavouring to address the shortfall of carers through the recruitment strategy and ongoing recruitment campaign, although the number of carers recruited in areas fell short of the targets set. At the time of the inspection 48 children were placed with independent fostering Agencies, which is not a significant change to the number of children placed last year.

Despite the pressures on Local Authority placements, records showed that use of exemptions and numbers of carers with more than three foster children in placement had reduced.

The Authority is determined to remain the major provider of fostering services in Derbyshire, but faces considerable challenges to recruit, retain and support carers to improve it's current standing. The contract care scheme, which provides foster carers with additional skills to care for children with challenging needs was progressing well. The scheme was expanding and additional resources were being provided. An additional social worker and two family resource workers were being appointed. The scheme provides placements throughout Derbyshire. As the service continues to expand there is an acknowledged need for more than one base to reduce travelling time.

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

Interviews with staff and carers and files examined showed that the service follows thorough employment practices in relation to staff and foster carers. The Authority provides a policy on Whistle Blowing, which had been made available to staff.

Staff interviewed received a good level of support from their line Manager.

Foster carers were aware of the out of hours support available to them. Senior managers reported that the Authority had recently commissioned an independent advice, support and counselling service for foster carers. Foster carers had yet to be notified of this. Staff said that the service registers foster carers on approval with 'Fostering Network'. Discussions with carers supported this.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Inspectors did not meet any newly appointed staff. The Managers said that new staff are required to complete the department's induction programme, which is adapted around their needs.

Staff reported that their training and development needs were supported. Interviews with staff and records examined showed that staff had attended various training in the last year. Full and part-time staff had access to appropriate post qualification training courses. Staff and carers reported that opportunities to attend joint training had increased. Staff said that their training needs are discussed in supervision. Records supported this. Senior managers confirmed that the Department does not have a formal appraisal system. However personal development plans were being set up for all staff, which will be monitored through staff supervision.

Staff reported that procedures were in place to keep them updated of relevant changes in practice and legislation relevant to their work.

Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Staff interviewed felt well supported by their colleagues. There were clear lines of accountability within the area teams. Staff informed the Inspectors that they enjoyed their work, but were apprehensive about the restructuring of the service. Discussions with staff and records examined showed that staff were receiving monthly supervision. Staff supervision records were clear and concise and covered training and development needs. Staff received a copy of their supervision meetings.

Minutes of team meetings were clear and concise. Staff confirmed that they have the opportunity to attend and contribute to team meetings.

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

Staff were committed to supporting carers and maintaining children's placements. Discussions with staff and returned questionnaires from children's social workers showed that staff work closely with children's social workers. Staff reported that due to vacancies within the teams they were under pressure and required to undertake some duties outside their main focus of work. Staff acknowledged that their roles required that they work flexibly, in the best interests of children and foster carers.

The Inspectors found that the service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting foster carers, which was understood by staff and carers. This included arrangements for supervision, out of hour's support and reviews. Carers who the Inspectors met were clear as to the role of their support worker, and said they received a good level of support.

A new out of hour's service was being established. Staff and carers reported that the foster carer's mentor scheme was progressing well. There were plans for further carers to attend the training to become a mentor to less experienced carers.

Staff confirmed that support groups for foster carers were not active in all areas. Senior Managers were keen to develop the support networks for foster carers. Staff and carers reported that some social events are provided, to which staff, children, young people and carers are invited to attend.

Carers confirmed that the service provides a regular newsletter, which contains a good level of information. Carers and children are encouraged to provide items for the newsletter.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

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

The findings showed that the majority of foster carers felt well supported by the fostering service. However a number of carers did not share this view and feel altogether valued for the work they undertake.

Foster carers had been issued a copy of the carers Handbook, which was well set out and indexed, and contained a good level of information.

Interviews with carers and returned questionnaires maintained that carers received regular supervisory visits from their support worker. The purpose and outcome of visits/meetings was recorded on a standard form. Supervisory visit sheets were generally well completed, and had been signed by the carer, staff and line manager. Carers said that staff carried out some unannounced visits to their home. Supervisory visit sheets did not always indicate whether a visit was announced or unannounced.

Foster carers had been issued a copy of the foster carer Agreement, which was clear and concise and included information listed in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The findings showed that prospective foster carers are required to complete the pre-approval training programme. The service had recently purchased the new fostering network training pack, which was being used in all areas. Staff intend to further involve experienced carers in delivering the pre-approval training. Carers said that they had received a good level of preparation training, advice and support.

A post approval-training programme was provided for foster carers. The findings showed that not all carers had attended recent training and development for various reasons. The Authority was endeavouring to provide more flexible training and more effective ways of delivering training, to ensure carers have the skills to meet children/ young people's needs. Staff and carers reported that opportunities of post approval training had increased, although further initiatives were needed to enable more carers to attend regular training. Additional carers had successfully achieved N.V.Q. Level 3 training in childcare. A part time training officer provided the lead on training for foster carers, in addition to other training. It is envisaged that the restructuring of the staff teams will enable staff to be more involved in local training.

The Inspectors found that the Foster Carers Agreement and Handbook did not clearly state that foster carers are required to attend regular training and development.

Staff reported that carers complete an evaluation form of training attended, which helps evaluate the effectiveness of training.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Local Authority had detailed policies and procedures on recording and standards of record keeping. The Authority was commissioning a computerised record system throughout the organisation, which will streamline procedures. All staff had/were due to receive training on the new system, which was coming on line in April 2005.

Ten children's and foster carer's files were reviewed as part of the case tracking process. The Inspectors found that improvements had been made to the standard of recording; carer's files generally contained the required information. Children's files contained a good level of information about children/young person's needs, although the following issues were highlighted:

- Essential information forms were not well completed.
- Four files did not contain current LAC 1 or 2 forms.
- The majority of files contained limited information on the child's matching considerations
- Two young persons files did not contain a signed copy of consent to emergency treatment and first aid.
- One young person file did not contain a current health plan.
- Several forms had not been signed and dated

Records showed that children had an allocated social/social care worker and were receiving the required statutory reviews. Although the level of direct social work contact with children varied.

The Inspectors found that carers enabled children to keep records and photographs of significant life events. Discussions with carers and records showed that a number of carers had recently attended training on life story work, and that further training was planned. The Inspectors found some good examples where children had been assisted to complete life story work. However staff and carers reported that pressures within the children's teams, limited time available to complete life story work with children.

The Inspectors found that the level of information recorded by carers varied. Some carers were keeping detailed records, whilst others were not keeping all essential records of

children in their care. Not all carers had a suitable secure box to store confidential information in. Staff were endeavouring to address this issue. The service had started to issue files to new carers to record information about children in their care. The foster carers Handbook clearly sets out what records carers are required to keep. The service acknowledged the need to provide further training for foster carers on record keeping.

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

Senior managers confirmed that each area had been allocated additional administrative hours. In one out of the three areas inspected, administrative staff were relocated in the team office to strengthen support and communications. Staff had established good systems to ensure the service is well run. Administration time will be more effectively used once the I.T. system is updated and operational throughout the fostering team.

The Inspectors found that the required information is kept. A policy and procedure on keeping confidential information and records was provided. Additional lockable storage facilities have been provided. Staff reported that confidential information was stored securely out of office hours. The Authority had a policy and procedure for children, parents and carers to access their records.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			350
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			55
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			60
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	79.10	Maximum £	426.00

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
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The area office buildings are shared facilities with the children's services. Discussions with staff and a tour of the premises showed that the offices used by the family placement teams are appropriate for the purpose. The office buildings were adequately maintained.

The Authority was upgrading the I.T. system and access to computers throughout all areas. At the time of the inspection not all staff in one area office had direct access to computers and e-mail, and some new workstations and chairs were required. Senior managers have since confirmed that all staff now have their own computer.

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?	0
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This standard was not fully assessed on this inspection.

The Managers confirmed that the Authority had a dedicated finance team who had responsibility for managing the financial viability of the service. The budget is administered in line with the Authority's financial procedures. The Authority operates to Derbyshire County Council's financial and accounting procedures.

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?	0
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This standard was not fully assessed on this inspection.

The Authority produces an annual business plan, and has a finance team and expertise to manage the finances and payments to foster carers. Financial procedures are in place. The accounts are regularly audited.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Policies and procedures are in place relating to foster carer payments and expenses. A team of staff administers the payments and allowances to carers. Interviews with foster carers and returned questionnaires indicated that payments are generally paid promptly, although certain carers providing respite care reported some delays in payments.

The findings showed that the Authority is committed to ongoing consultation with foster carers to further progress the allowances paid to foster carers. Following further consultation with foster carers, the allowances and remunerations paid to carers had increased. Carers had been issued a copy of the revised allowances. Information issued to carers was detailed and covered additional payments. Staff and carers welcomed recent increases in allowances and remunerations, but some staff and carers expressed the need for further increases to cover the full cost of caring for each child. Following further consultation with foster carers, Cabinet Members had recently agreed an investment plan, which will increase the allowances, remunerations and support available to carers over the coming year.

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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The service has three fostering panels. The Head of Children and Families Services is the 'decision maker'. The Inspectors attended all three panels. Work had been undertaken to improve consistency in the way the three panels operate. The panel members worked effectively and maintained an appropriate level of independence. Senior managers were reviewing the venue of the South East panel. The required composition of panel members was maintained, although one panel did not have an independent member with expertise in child health. Senior managers reported difficulties in recruiting additional members with expertise in child health care.

The service planned to establish a permanency panel next year, which will consider long-term placements and matching. Policies and procedures on the functions of the fostering panel were clearly set out. Staff confirmed that panel papers were sent out by a safe mail system to ensure they are delivered to the relevant persons. Administrative staff took the minutes at panel, and had attending training in this area. Further training for panel members was planned.

The Inspectors found that foster carers training and development needs were not robustly linked and evaluated through the annual review process. Senior managers intend to strengthen this.

Discussions with panel members and previous panel minutes confirmed that annual reviews of all carers, requests for deferment of annual reviews, all exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues and significant incidents, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

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
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The service provides respite care for children cared for by other foster carers, and short break care for children with a disability who live with their family. The Authority was looking to expand the service across the county, and provide short term breaks for non-disabled children who live with their family.

Staff and carers were clear that the child's birth parents remained the main carers for their child and retained all legal responsibilities. Discussions with staff and carers and returned questionnaires maintained that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met. Carers were generally satisfied with the level of support they received from the fostering team.

Policies and procedures relating to short-term breaks were provided.

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 findings showed that the fostering service is committed to approving family and friends as foster carers, where this is in the best interests of children. Staff largely assess and approve family and friends applying the same assessment procedures as for other carers, taking into account their relationships with the child. Policies and procedures relating to kinship care and permanency placements had been drafted.

Comments received from family and friends approved as carers indicated that they were satisfied with the level of support received from the fostering team, and were encouraged to attend the pre-approval training. The fostering service recognises that family and friends have different needs to unrelated carers, and intend to provide training relevant to their needs.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

PART D**PROVIDER'S RESPONSE****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 of Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service conducted on 15th –26th November 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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> YES

Note:

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

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

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

Action plan was required	<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 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.

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