



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

**Plymouth City Council Local Authority
Fostering Agency**

Civic Centre

Plymouth

Devon

PL1 2EW

14th March 2005

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

Plymouth City Council Local Authority Fostering Agency

Address

Civic Centre, Plymouth, Devon, PL1 2EW

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

01752 668000

Address

Civic Centre, Plymouth, Devon, PL1 2EW

Fax No:

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

12/3/04

Date of Inspection Visit		14th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Emmy Tomsett	
Name of Inspector	2	Michelle Oxley	
Name of Inspector	3	Mandy Sharp	
Name of Inspector	4	Stephen Spratling	
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		Maureen Grimley	

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

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(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**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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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 Plymouth City Council Local Authority Fostering Agency. 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.

Plymouth City Council Fostering Service is predominantly divided in to two teams, each managed by a team leader, who in turn are both supervised by the Fostering Service Manager. The service employs twelve link workers and two support workers although additional posts were being advertised at the time of this inspection. 207 foster carers were registered at the time of inspection, this broke down in to 63 friends and family carers and 144 approved foster carers. At the time of this inspection the service accommodated 318 looked after children.

The service had become supported by the newly established “ Children’s Action Support Team” who have 10 support workers working towards reducing placement breakdown by apply a range of interventions

The fostering Service had undergone a massive restructure and modernisation/ redevelopment programme and was anticipated that this would be ongoing until September 2005. In light of this the report will reflect what was in place at the time of inspection as well as acknowledge what is envisaged for the future.

Some areas have been able to evidence these improvements comprehensively whilst other areas will strive to attain the minimum standard in forthcoming months and will therefore be acknowledged in the next inspection report, should it be achieved.

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.)

Description of the strengths and issues to be addressed by the Service and the Authority :

Since August 2004, the Fostering Service has undergone a significant and much needed redevelopment programme.

The subsequent changes were therefore either in their infancy or at the planning stage and as such the findings of this inspection will reflect this fact.

The major strengths of the Service are :

- 1.The stability of the staff team with an apparent culture of an open, communicative style. The appointment of a temporary Fostering Manager to implement and monitor the redevelopment plans pending the recruitment and selection of a permanent manager.
- 2.Feedback from almost all foster carers was that each link worker provides support to them at a level that they perceive to be above and beyond their role.
- 3.The revised Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide was found to be imaginative, informative and user friendly.
- 4.The introduction of the children's file with the carers file, although recording of information needs to be improved and formalised as detailed in the body of the report.

The major issues for the Service are highlighted below:

- 1.To develop systems for the monitoring of the functions of the Service.
- 2.To ensure that the role of the link worker is more structured and ensures that this role achieves the balance of support giving with that of the overwhelming need to assess and monitor foster carers practice and level to which they meet the needs of each child placed with them, on an ongoing and formal basis. Monitoring and reassessment to include significant consideration of each child's health and educational needs and discussion with the child's social worker. The service to complete and monitor the occurrence of unannounced visits to foster carers homes.
- 3.To develop a needs led approach to matching as a result of broadening the foster carer pool through the recruitment campaign.

4. To significantly improve the availability, frequency and quality of training delivery for fostering staff and carers. Consideration is given to providing childcare arrangements to allow carers to attend such training as most seems to take place during office hours. Linkworkers to ensure both carers from the household attend training at differing times. To ensure that carers receive training on a regular basis and specific training needs are sourced if they are not provided in house.
5. Complaints to be acknowledged, investigated and resolved in a timely fashion.
6. The fostering service to ensure that documentation presented to Panel is complete, comprehensive and of good quality.
7. To ensure that the Panel progresses to full compliance with the regulations and standards.
8. Staff files to contain all information as outlined in Schedule 1.
9. The CAST team to provide support to carers at the times that placement breakdowns are most likely to occur. i.e. out of hours and at weekends. The CAST staff to have a venue for their work with young people.

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	
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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 _____ **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	12,28	FS6	A comprehensive system to assess and monitor the areas set out in standard 6 must be implemented in order to safeguard the welfare of children	August 1 st 2005
2	8	FS8	The service must provide evidence that due care and consideration is given to placements at the point of the initial matching process and as set out in standard 8	August 1 st 2005
3	15	FS12	A structured and formalised system must be devised to ensure that the health needs of children are monitored	August 1 st 2005
4	16	FS14	Support system to monitor skills development for care leavers and systems to support foster carers to enable this must be implemented	August 1 st 2005
5	20	FS15	Staff files must include all the information set out in Schedule 1	July 1 st 2005
6	35	FS21	The service must be able to evidence that foster carers receive supervision and that this supervision focuses upon the foster carers progress in relation to the needs of children placed	July 1 st 2005
7	29	FS22	The service must be able to provide evidence that unannounced visits to foster carers are taking place	June 1 st 2005

8	18, 12	FS29	The service must devise a system to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a timely fashion, records of complaints held are accurate and the outcome of complaints must be used to inform future practice	August 1 st 2005
9	14	FS10	The service must devise a system to ensure and to evidence that contact was taking place in line with LAC reviews	July 1 st 2005
10	16	FS13	The service must devise a system to ensure that the educational needs are monitored and promoted effectively for every child placed	August 1 st 2005
11	12	FS23	Where a child has specific needs identified, the service must provide training to carers to enable them to effectively provide care to meet this specific need	August 1 st 2005
12	27	FS30	The foster service must ensure that information provided to panel is sufficient and of good quality to enable panel members to reach a decision.	June 1 st 2005
13	27	FS30	Information must be brought to panel in a timely fashion and so that the length of time the child is in placement is not the overriding factor in deciding suitability of placement	July 1 st 2005
14		FS32	The service must ensure that family and friends carers are assessed and supported	1 st august 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	FS2	The Commission anticipates that the service will employ a permanent Manager
2	FS4	The service should devise a formalised system to monitor all aspects of Schedule 7(regulation 42)
3	FS4	The service should continue to ensure that significant events are reported inline with Schedule 8

4	FS7	The service should move forward with plans to address issues of racial diversity and promotion of equality
5	FS9	Comprehensive training regarding safe care for foster carers should be provided more comprehensively
6	FS11	The service should provide more evidence that verifies that children's opinions have been sought
7	FS17	The service should continue to recruit staff in line with stated objectives
8	FS18	Out of Hours provision should be effective in preventing placement breakdown and in emergency situations must make appropriate and lawful placements
9	FS19	The service should continue with its plans for training as described under this standard
10	FS25	The service should provide evidence that children have been provided with information about how to access their files
11	FS30	The service should ensure that the full complement of members at panel are in attendance before business can proceed

* 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	24
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NA
• 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	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
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	14/3/05
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	151

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) |

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"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 had been significantly improved since the last inspection. This process will be part of an ongoing programme due for review in January 2006. The Statement of Purpose was comprehensive and specific. The Children's guide had also been updated and was available in two formats according to the child's age. Both documents were child friendly with excellent and imaginative graphics and accessible and informative for children in care. Both Statement of Purpose and children's guide contained the required information. process. The Manager said that a period of consultation had taken place with foster carers, link workers, and area social workers regarding these documents and these documents were finalised during this inspection.

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

During the inspection process it was evident that prior to August 2004 no Service Manager had been in post and responsibility had fallen to one team leader. As a result link workers reported this to be a challenging and difficult time, but praised the improvements made since that time.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Service had two team leaders who were in day to day management of practice issues and the supervision of the two teams. These two roles appeared to be clearly defined and staff and foster carers confirmed this. The overall service had benefited from an interim Service Manager who had taken on this role pending the appointment of a permanent fostering Service Manager. This recruitment process had begun during this inspection and once this appointment is made it was anticipated that the interim Manager will work along side the new Service Manager in order to effect a seamless transition.

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

All staff records were maintained by Plymouth City Council personnel department, according to their general recruitment and selection process. Selective Managers files were examined, these were seen to include the required information

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Due to the redevelopment of the entire service, and the implementation of new structures and process it was too early to fully evidence the monitoring of quality performance under Schedule 7 . In discussions with link workers, team leaders and the Manager, it was evident that there was a clear process of monitoring change and the result of which would be apparent in forth coming months.

Notifications of significant events in line with Schedule 8 were not received by the Commission prior to December 2004 and since this date only a small portion have been received.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

Currently the Fostering Manager is in a temporary role pending the recruitment process for a permanent replacement , it was anticipated that this person will be in post by the summer. Lines of accountability for this role were clearly defined and both team leaders, link workers and foster carer's reported a clear understanding of these roles.

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?
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A systematic approach to safeguarding the child's physical, emotional and mental welfare could not be evidenced. There was no clear approach to ensure that the areas identified in this standard were monitored or assessed comprehensively.

There was no evidence that link workers were receiving specific training in the area of securing and promoting welfare

A number of concerns were identified during the inspection, particularly regarding foster carers who were over numbers in terms of accommodation arrangements. There was no evidence on file of the decision making process and assessment outcome for sharing rooms. Evidence was found of unacceptable situations where children/ young people and babies who were unrelated, were sharing rooms and where the accommodation was unsatisfactory and that these arrangements were not reflected on file. There was no evidence that link workers frequently monitored the accommodation on behalf of the child.

Since the last inspection a health and safety form to assess the foster carers' homes had been introduced and was to be completed at the foster carers annual review and on each return to panel. However, the impact and outcomes of this new system could not be assessed as it had been so recently implemented. At the time of this inspection there was no evidence that the fostering service assessed the safety of transport the carers use for children. The Manager said that the service was however in the process of devising a system to risk assess and monitor this area

Documentation suggested that the foster service expects link workers to complete ad hoc unannounced visits to carers at home. There was very limited evidence that these were taking place in line with these expectation and it was unclear whether this was due to poor recording or that this type of visit was not occurring frequently enough for the inspectors to detect it in their sample.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

All link workers spoken to confirmed that they had recently completed training in diversity and racial awareness, this was confirmed by the Manager.

During the inspection the Manager acknowledged that the area of diversity and racial awareness required significant improvement. Embryonic plans were in place for the forthcoming year to address this area. It was noted that foster carers were predominantly of white British origin and the fostering service planned to work closely with local ethnic groups in order to attract and recruit future carers from alternative ethnic backgrounds

There was evidence that children from non English speaking backgrounds were placed with carers who did not speak their first language. Files for young person and foster carers for these particular children did not provide documentary evidence in relation to the rational for these placements during the matching process. They did not acknowledge communication difficulties, cultural differences, or endeavour to seek out an appropriate advocate for the young person or provide suitable foster carer training.

One link worker had been allocated to work specifically for children who have disabilities, discussions indicated that this role was in early development with a view to promoting the needs of children with disabilities within the service.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

A new form to match children and carers has been introduced, however its impact and outcome could not be assessed because the form had not been used on any of the sample files examined.

Discussion and evidence on file revealed that in reality the matching process had the potential to be a paper exercise due to extremely limited placement options. The service had at the time of this inspection launched an innovative and wide reaching process to recruit new carers in order to address the short fall.

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?	2
<p>Foster carers received introductory training regarding managing behaviour, safe care and recognising signs of abuse in their preliminary foster care training. However foster carers and link workers reported that availability for foster carers of more comprehensive training was extremely limited.</p> <p>New procedures had been introduced for allegations made against carers. Observation at team meeting revealed mixed responses from link workers to the new procedures. The Commission would support the new procedures in terms of protection.</p> <p>If police do not pursue an allegation against a carer through the criminal route it is left for the balance of probability / judgement by the team and sometimes returned to a strategy meeting. Team leaders felt this process needed formalising and greater consistency to formally recognise the outcome of such an allegation before it is heard by the panel.</p> <p>Evidence was found that link workers remain unclear as to their exact role during a child protection investigation against a carer, despite the new policy and procedure guidance</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?	1
<p>Where appropriate it is evident thought foster carers, young people and documentation that contact arrangements were a priority and all foster carers understood the high importance of this taking place. The views of the young person were sought by their advocate or social worker, through the statutory LAC review process, evidence of this was seen on file and confirmed by young people . Inevitably foster carers reported concerns about parents not always recognising the significance of contact especially when parents did not turn up as planned resulting in a detrimental effect on the child.</p> <p>There was no evidence on the files examined that link workers were formally monitoring contact arrangements .</p> <p>Some carers facilitated contact in their own home, some contact took place at a designated contact centre when appropriate.</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?	2
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45% of young person questionnaires reported that young persons felt the foster service did not ask their opinion about the foster placement.
60% of young person questionnaires reported that children did not feel the fostering service asked their opinion on how to improve the fostering service.
However, evidence was seen through LAC review minutes and on young person and foster carer files that the young persons views were sought through these processes. Evidence was seen that the fostering service had recently conducted their own young person questionnaire with some results published in the young person's magazine.
Views of parents were sought by the young person's social worker and appeared to be fed to the link worker between reviewing processes, although recordings of this were limited and were not formalised.
Foster carer questionnaires reflected that a small percentage would like more influence on the young person planning process.
66% of young person questionnaires reported that young person 's knew how to make a complaint about the service should they wish to. The new children's guide included information for young person about how to complain.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
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Evidence of attention to the young person's health care needs was seen on the young person file within the review documentation. There was no evidence on the foster carers files that link workers had addressed how the carer was meeting the health care needs of the young person on an ongoing basis and in a structured and formalised way.

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?**

1

Inspectors met with a team manager for LAC education team who reported that less than 20 looked after children were in less than full time education and of these 3 did not have an allocated full time school place. It was evident through discussion with foster carers and link workers that a high priority was placed on the educational needs of each looked after child. Interviews with foster carers as well as questionnaires, revealed that LAC education leaflets were not being received by carers. There was no evidence on the foster carers files that link workers had addressed how the carer was meeting the educational needs of the young person on an ongoing basis and in a structured and formalised way.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

At the time of the inspection, foster carers and link workers reported that the carer leavers team were not taking new referrals for work with young persons aged 16~18. It was evident that systems were not in place to monitor skills development at the transition in to adulthood. It was reported that Connexions were not supported by the care leavers team, an example of this was that Further education attendees were not being monitored. However, the service had recently held an open evening and invited 28 young people with a view to encouraging to apply to university in line with the Higher Peninsula Programme. Over all it was repeatedly reported that the care leavers team was seen to be in need of increased funding and re structuring in order to meet the demands of the young people leaving care. No evidence was found that foster carers had received training or specific support to enable them to prepare a young person for independence. Young person files sampled provided some evidence of pathway planning although no evidence could be found that these were being actioned or reviewed.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

Staff files did not contain the required information as set out in Schedule 1. Of the six staff files sampled, five did not contain copies of certificates of qualification, None had photographs or proof of identification; copies of CRB checks for permanent staff were not seen although files acknowledged that these had been undertaken. Not all contained the required two references. No documentation regarding the interview process could be found. These files were held centrally by the Personnel team and all appointments were said to be made in line with the Councils recruitment and selection procedure. The file structure was found by the inspection team to be unstructured and disorganised. There had been campaigns to recruit overseas social workers to address the local shortage in social workers although feedback from these suggested that they felt unsupported.

Total number of staff of the agency:

18

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?

2

Link workers were clear about lines of accountability and confirmed that the supervision of link workers occurred in line with requirements. The Manager said that training for link workers was to be devised at a level appropriate to their role and that the contracted company - Reconstruct were aiming to address this issue.

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**

Foster carer questionnaires reflected that 98% of foster carers felt that the service was under staffed.

Staff reported that the loss of the Referral Coordinator post had impacted on their time considerably and that this was not a positive change although it is recognised that plans had been implemented to recruit to this vacant post.

The current staff team were a stable group who between them had varying and considerable skills and experience in this field of work. It was to the teams credit that they had managed to maintain a good team spirit through considerable change. They remained a supportive group who expressed positive views about the future plans for the service.

The foster carer service had a group of designated "specialist carers", who were seen to have additional skills to care for children with specific and special need. However, the inspector could find no evidence of how the team had come to the decision that a particular foster carer should be deemed as special and why they could meet particular needs.

This could not be explained by team leaders or link workers

Whilst the initial Form F assessment was completed to a good standard, no evidence could be found through documentation or through discussions with link workers or carers that these issues were re visited or re assessed on an on going basis.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

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

The fostering service appeared to be a fair and competent employer as evidenced from documentation, staff files and discussions with staff. At the time of this inspection, the service was supported by the newly formed CAST team, although discussions with CAST team members confirmed that late night and weekend support was not offered at the time of this inspection and that carers continued to be supported by Social Services Out of Hours Team.

Evidence seen on file regarding Out of hours placements indicated persistent use of the same foster carers who were at times over numbers.

Since the last inspection the service had developed a carer supervision pro forma. This had been a recent introduction and because of this none of the files examined contained completed forms .

A new health and safety policy for carers had been devised for carers since the last inspection

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>At the time of this inspection, the services' training programme was being redeveloped by an outside agency called Reconstruct. Whilst the impact of this appeared as if it would make a positive impact for the future, at the time of inspection, improvements could not be evidenced.</p> <p>Foster carers attended a basic induction programme and whilst this incorporated basic child protection training a more comprehensive child protection course was available post approval. Carers and link workers reported that over the past year carers were in competition with all social care staff for places on this training programme and as a result evidence was seen that many carers had received no training last year. It was also evident that predominantly one carer only, from each household attended training. In discussions with foster carers it was reported that part of the difficulty in attending training was attributed to difficulties in arranging child care.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Evidence was seen of regular supervision through supervision minutes and this was also confirmed by Team leaders and Link Workers. Regularity of supervision had only been achieved more recently due to one team leaders absence, however, all link workers reported feeling well supported by both Team Leaders and the Manager.</p>		

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

1

All foster carers spoken with felt that their respective link worker provided support above and beyond their role

Observations and discussion indicated that the role of the link worker focused on support of carers rather than professional supervision of the carers role and accountability.

The Inspectors found it difficult to establish clarity with regard to the relationship between the foster carer, link worker and the child. There was no clear evidence to define the role of the Link Worker in terms of ongoing assessment of the foster carers performance, particularly in relation to providing care and meeting the specific needs of children placed .

Questionnaires received from children's social workers provided a mixed view of the fostering service. Many questionnaires reported poor communication between the link worker and the social work team and a lack of focus and understanding over the differing social work roles. On examination of link worker and young person files, evidence was found to confirm sporadic communication between fostering service and the social work teams. There was little evidence to suggest that foster carer annual reviews were undertaken in a timely fashion.

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

1

Foster care agreements were seen on files and foster carers confirmed their understanding of this document. Foster carer feed back was mixed in terms of how frequently they met with their link worker, although all link workers felt well supported by the fostering team and re assured that should they have an issue to discuss this would be addressed speedily .

There was very little evidence from documentation, link workers and foster carers that unannounced visit to the foster carers home were taking place.

Complaints were handled centrally by the local authority. There was no evidence to confirm that the outcome of complaints had been evaluated to inform future practice.

A record of complaints made was seen, although this was inaccurate as one complaint was shown to be resolved when discussions with the complainant and documentation indicated otherwise. It was also noted that complaints had not been dealt with in a timely fashion.

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?**

1

There was no evidence that foster carers who were designated as “specialist” had received training specific to the needs of children placed with them. There appeared to be no threshold or criteria for these carers. All staff spoken to were unable to define the skills, knowledge and experience required in order to achieve the status of specialist carer. At the time of this inspection, the services training programme was being redeveloped by an outside agency called Reconstruct. Whilst the impact of this appeared as if it would make a positive impact for the future, at the time of inspection, improvements could not be evidenced. Foster carers attended a basic induction programme and whilst this incorporated basic child protection training a more comprehensive child protection course was available post approval.

Carers and link workers reported that over the past year carers were in competition with all social care staff for places on this training programme and as a result evidence was seen that many carers had received no training last year. It was also evident that predominantly one carer only, from each household attended training. In discussions with foster carers it was reported that part of the difficulty in attending training was attributed to difficulties in arranging child care.

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

Since the last inspection the fostering service had modernised their file structures. Children's files were kept separately and related clearly to the relevant carers file. This new file structure was in its infancy and the team leader had developed an audit tool for this process to be completed and reviewed.

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?

2

Records were seen to be held securely and confidential information was appropriately protected. Young person questionnaires indicated that a large percentage of young people did not know that they could access their records and files.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	207
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Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	X
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Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	X
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Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	13
--	----

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	1
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Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	70	Maximum £	215
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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

The fostering service had relocated since the last inspection. The building appeared conducive to purpose and all spoken to welcomed the change in location, improved parking and more spacious facilities.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
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Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
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Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster carer payments were clearly an area for improvement as identified at the previous inspection.

On this occasion carers and link workers reported significant improvements. This was partially due to the payment team being based with the fostering team and had eased communication, speed and accuracy of payments. Feedback gleaned from questionnaires and interviews did however, indicate that any late payment were due to the child's social worker not completing the appropriate documentation and the link workers having to chase paperwork in order to process the claim.

Rates of payment appeared to be in bands according to the age of the child. However home based carers received £400 per week and Specialist carers received payment depending on the needs of the child and training completed by the carer.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

It was noted from previous panel minutes (25th January) that for half of the panel process the meeting was not quorate. It appeared a fifth member arrived later.

Minutes from the panel of the same date acknowledge that one young person was not visited by their social worker between November and January and the chair appropriately made an action point to follow this matter up.

One case observed at panel demonstrated panel members discussing whether to approve a placement despite incomplete information including no CRB check on the foster carer. After much time consuming discussion, the Chair decided that the panel could not approve despite pressure from and imminent court hearing.

One form F presented to panel on March 29th had not been updated for four months. Several more examples were seen of incomplete form F's with essential information missing.

A Link worker presented a risk assessment on a carer review, following a specific incident and this was very limited and did not examine the issues comprehensively. The panel recommended that this be completed by an independent link worker. The inspection team agree that this was the appropriate course of action to take given the circumstances, but would state that this should ordinarily not be necessary.

There appeared to be no evidence that documentation presented to panel was monitored by team leaders in term of quality and accuracy .

One carer who attended panel clearly needed training in specific training and this was only partially recognised by the linkworker and panel.

Evidence was seen that kinship approvals brought to panel continued to be significantly delayed. Evidence was seen of a young person beginning a kinship placement on April 2004 yet the form F process had not started until November. The process of kinship placements needed significant improvements although it was recognised that the service had allocated 1.5 posts to be filled to concentrate sole on kinship arrangements.

Overall the panel were not provided with sufficient or comprehensive information on the child from the child's social work or on form F's from which to make decisions. Clearly this hampers the effectiveness of the panel.

The inspection team felt the panel members would benefit from specific training of their role remit and boundary of their focus. In addition, district social workers would equally benefit from some training in to the role of the panel and ultimately the value of information they hold which should be presented to panel.

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?
	9

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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At the time of the inspection there were 63 Friends and Family carers registered with the service. As stated in the body of this report the area of kinship carers has not been an immediate priority for the redevelopment programme.

However it is anticipated that this service will soon be overhauled due to the appointment of dedicated members of staff and Team Leader.

As part of the inspection process some kinship carers were interviewed and it became evident that they had no idea of the existence, role or function of a link worker. This appears to be an area identified as needing future attention.

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 14th March 2005 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

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 7th July 2005, 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

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 Plymouth City Fostering 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 Plymouth City Fostering 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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