



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Cumbria County Council Family Placement Scheme

**Social Services Department
Somerset House, Duke Street
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7SQ**

Lead Inspector
Helen Humphreys

Announced Inspection
2nd May 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service Cumbria County Council Family Placement Scheme

Address Social Services Department
Somerset House, Duke Street
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7SQ

Telephone number 01946 852830

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Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Cumbria County Council

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Janice Reynolds

Type of registration Local Auth Fostering Service

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 3rd March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Cumbria Social Services Fostering Service currently has approximately 223 approved Fostering households and this includes 49 'Friends and Family' carers and 34 carers who are part of the family Link Services offering short breaks to families with children with disabilities and 8 specialist carers who look after young people who are on remand or are 'difficult to place'. At the time of the inspection Cumbria had approximately 460 children looked after. In the previous year Cumbria had approved 23 new fostering households, of which 6 were for 'kinship carers'.

The service has temporary carers offering placements in an emergency and medium to long-term care. The Service has permanent carers who provide long term care as an alternative to adoption. The Friends and Family carers provide care to children who are known to them and this may be on a short or long-term basis.

The Service is managed overall by an 'acting' Service Co-ordinator for children looked after, who in turn manages two service managers, one with operational responsibilities, which was vacant at the time of the inspection and one for standards and development, who had recently returned after a period of long term sickness. These two managers normally would manage the office managers who manage local teams based in Kendal, Carlisle, Workington and Barrow in Furness. These teams are part of the Divisional structure, which divides the county into three geographical areas of South, (Kendal and Barrow) West (Workington) and East (Carlisle). Each of these areas has a Divisional General Manager, the structure and names of all these teams within each Division varied.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over 6 days and included an interview with the acting head of Service and the newly appointed head of service, the acting Co-ordinator manager for Children Looked After and the Service manager from Fostering (Standards and Development). Three offices were visited where family placement teams are located, Kendal, Workington and Barrow in Furness. A case tracking exercise of 8 young people was undertaken in each of these offices, which included visits to carers and young people, interviews with fostering staff, social workers and the reading of files.

The office managers and acting manager in each office were interviewed about a range of matters. The inspector had conversations with the Acting head of LACES (Looked after children Education Service) one of the appointed LAC Nurses, a manager from NSPCC local office, a group of carers in Carlisle and a group of fostered children in Kendal.

The personnel files of the staff appointed in the last 12 months were inspected and a sample of complaints and allegations were viewed.

All carers, fostered children over 8 and social workers were sent a questionnaire and there was a good response from young people and carers.

One specific case was referred to the Head of Service for consideration.

This service had a full inspection in 2005 and a 'follow up' day visit in March 2006. This inspection was a key inspection combined with an inspection of the adoption services and a review of the private fostering arrangements. Both these services are reported in separate reports.

Throughout the inspection managers and staff at all levels were helpful in facilitating the complex arrangements.

What the service does well:

All the staff and managers, who were met from the fostering teams presented as skilled, committed and experienced in family placement. Most staff were aware of the present deficiencies within the service and were committed to the present programme for change. Most managers were working extremely hard within the limited resources they had at their disposal to ensure that the service they could offer was maintained.

All of the young people who either returned a questionnaire or who spoke to the inspector were satisfied with their present care arrangements. Young people who were visited appeared to be making progress in their placements. Comments from young people included, 'I am happy' and 'I've lived here so

long it just feels like home' and ' I have had my ups and downs when I first came but I love it here now'

Some carers were very satisfied with the service they received from the fostering staff but not necessarily with all social workers and Cumbria SSD. Their comments include, 'We are very grateful for the professional service we have received from our FPO who has given us real support, practical help and sound advice' and 'I have enjoyed my ten years of fostering, enjoyed the many training opportunities I have been given and the feeling of being part of a good team'.

The foster carers met at this inspection were providing a good service and presented as competent to carry out the task. They were aware of the needs of the young people placed and appeared to be committed to the work of fostering. Most carers remained committed to working for Cumbria SSD but were aware of the alternatives open to them.

The arrangements for the recruitment and selection of staff, which is undertaken by an external agency, were appropriate.

Throughout the inspection the inspectors found examples of good practice undertaken by individual members of staff, based on their previous experience or initiative.

The LACES team provide a good service to children looked after and was respected by carers and young people.

The LAC nurses provide a good service and take part in a range of training opportunities and other projects to improve the health of children looked after.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Due to vacancies and sickness within the senior management team little progress has been made on the requirements and recommendations made at the inspection in 2005.

A new service manager for fostering has been appointed and was due to commence her appointment at the beginning of July. A permanent Head of Service commenced employment during the inspection and these two appointments will bring to the end a period of temporary and acting appointees and provides opportunity for development and change.

Cumbria Social Services has embarked on an 'Invest to Save' programme and staff were aware of this the potential impact it should have on the fostering services and children Looked After generally. This programme includes the appointment of a placements manager, which should help to plan more appropriate and timely placements and 'free up' fostering staff who are

involved presently in finding placements for all children irrespective of whether it is a fostering placement which is required.

Cumbria Social Services have introduced a scheme for young people to chair their own statutory reviews. Carers, young people and staff said that where this had been handled well the reviews had been more effective and young people said that they felt 'in more control of the meeting'. All young people said that their carers listened to them, their comments include, 'My current carers always ask if I need help with anything and will never act without my opinion' and 'I know they listen because they look at me'.

Some carers said that in their opinion the support they receive had improved over the last 12 months, however this was not felt by all carers, many of whom were critical.

What they could do better:

The majority of managers and most staff were aware of the difficulties facing the service and had a good understanding of the impact this was having on staffing and children looked after.

Although there was a commitment to improving the health and development of young people, no health care plans were seen on file, carers said that they did not always have sufficient health care information about young people placed and although access to CAMHS had improved recently young people were not always receiving a timely service.

Cumbria SSD have an insufficient number of staff employed within the service and they are aware of the reasons why it is difficult to recruit staff. The level of vacancies varied across the county with one team actually fully staffed. This has led to most teams having some carers unallocated to a specific member of staff and not receiving regular visits, annual reviews and any monitoring of the work they were carrying out. In all teams the majority of 'kinship' carers were unallocated which had been a previous policy decision. Due to staff shortages some carers have not had the same access to training as others. There was no consistent policy for undertaking unannounced visits to carers.

Cumbria SSD have an insufficient number of carers to meet the needs of the children requiring placements. They also have an insufficient number of carers with specific skills and experience to meet the needs of 'hard to place' young people or sibling groups. There is little consistent management information to inform where the carers are based who have specific skills, this knowledge is held locally in each area office. A number of siblings had not been placed together due to a shortage of carers even though the care plans indicated that this was the best outcome of these children.

Although staff do try very hard to 'match' children appropriately, the pressure on the service and the overall shortage of carers means that some young people are inappropriately placed. Some staff and carers said that some young

people are in 'risky' placements. Placement breakdown for young people who join the service as teenagers was noted as frequent.

Cumbria SSD has not developed any appropriate commissioning strategy to develop relationships with private agencies to ensure that young people are appropriately matched or that they are gaining 'value for money'.

Due to shortage of staff there is no robust recruitment strategy based on the needs of the service in place and in at least one office, recruitment of carers is 'on hold' as there are no staff to undertake assessments.

Although staff were aware of the arrangements for obtaining exemptions and changes, some carers were looking after more children than they had been approved for and some outside the age range. In at least one household this was causing over crowding.

The style and quality of the Assessment of Carers (Form F) which, were read, varied and there was little evidence of interviews with ex-partners, exploration of all issues and some language was inappropriate.

Although some work had been undertaken the policy on equality and diversity was under developed and not well known.

The arrangements for short break carers is under developed and is not consistently managed.

The arrangements for contact varied with some areas having good access to facilities for young people to meet their families. However some offices were restricted in what they could offer and some families have to travel many miles including on a daily basis to see children and in particular babies.

Carers and young people knew how to make a complaint, however some were not confident that their complaint would be thoroughly investigated and had little faith in the system. On reviewing a number of complaints there was some evidence that complaints had moved to the 'second stage' because of lack of activity at the initial stage.

Carers said that they often encountered difficulties with payments particularly for additional amounts and there appeared to be little consistency on when a carer was entitled to an additional payment.

A number of managers at all levels were in 'acting up' roles or had been recently appointed. Up until recently due to vacancies and sickness the Co-ordinator manager for Children Looked After was in charge of the day to day management of the service, which at times had included finding an appropriate placement for young people. The overall management systems need reviewing to ensure that the service is being managed more effectively and to ensure that there is consistency in practice across the whole county. In respect of a

lack of consistency one carer explained her frustrations 'They move the goal posts all the time, one week you are playing football, next week it's rugby'

The service has five fostering teams across the county. All work in different ways, with their own systems in place. Although the present manager has tried to bring about greater consistency and sharing of good practice, there remains a stark difference in the way the teams were managed and delivered the service to carers and young people. There is a need to capitalise on the areas where there is good practice and where staff recruitment is not a problem.

Cumbria has a number of resource allocation panels held across the County, which are all chaired by different managers. This means that there is inconsistency in 'gate keeping' and no one manager had a true picture of what the needs of the service were across the county. There was some evidence that these panels were becoming planning arenas rather than used for their original purpose.

The arrangements for notifications need revision in that there was no common system in place, with good practice being observed in some areas. This must include notifications to the LAC Nurse, CSCI and senior managers in the event of significant incidents.

Cumbria does not have any consistent systems for monitoring the service, including review of allegations to carers, supervision, matching, risk assessments and unannounced visits.

The Register of Carers was not 'up to date' and did not contain accurate records of carers, which means that the service did not know properly how many carers they had and what their availability was.

The practice in Cumbria is for there to be one file for each child placed located with the social worker. In some offices information about children including LAC documents were held on the carers' files. No Action and Assessment Records on young people were found and inspectors were advised in at least one office that these documents are not undertaken. The standard of the young people's files varied.

Although all the carers who were met were delivering a good service to the young people placed with them, many overall said that they were unhappy with Cumbria Social Services in that they did not feel valued for the work that they did. They cited many examples where simple gestures in time of need would have made a real difference. One wrote, 'I also feel that as carers we juggle our jobs, our own families and our foster children with mostly good results. It would be nice to think the fostering teams realised this and verbally acknowledged it'

Many carers commented on poor communication and lack of allocated workers and the high turnover of staff.

The standard and frequency of staff supervision varied across the County as did access to training.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The quality in this outcome area is adequate because it is left to carers to promote the good health and development of young people. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

Cumbria SSD has the services of two LAC Nurses who work with carers and young people, including delivering of training and health care assessments. The overall number of young people undertaking their health care assessments had improved over the last 12 months. However the LAC nurses did not routinely get advised when young people were accommodated and the obtaining of consent for medical treatment was inconsistent.

Carers and young people were aware of the principles of health promotion and healthy eating.

Young people who were seen looked well and said that their carers take care of them when they are ill. All children seen were registered with GPs, dentists and other health care professionals. One family had received excellent care from health care professionals, who they said 'had been a honour to meet and work with'.

Carers said that they did not always get sufficient health care information about the young people placed.

There was no evidence of health care plans on files or Action and Assessment Records being undertaken.

Cumbria SSD report that access to CAMHS had improved but that not all young people received a timely and appropriate service.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

The quality in this outcome area is poor due to inconsistent management practices; shortage of staff and carers, which means that some young people may not be placed safely in Cumbria and their care, is not robustly monitored.

The arrangements for the recruitment and selection of staff and the Fostering and Adoption Panels are good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

At the time of the inspection the service for children looked after was being managed by a service co-ordinator who was in an 'acting up' position, who whilst well experienced in social work and management had no previous direct experience of family placement. Until very recently following the resignation of the previous operational service manager in June 2005 and the long term sickness of the standards and development manager for all Looked After Children, he had been in 'day to day' charge of the family placement service, along with all other responsibilities for children looked after services, including children's homes and leaving care services. He was therefore limited in the changes he could bring about.

A team manager, who has at their disposal a variable amount of resources, including office space, staffing, access to external organisations and contact facilities, manages each local team. Each team has developed over time their own systems for managing the service and in effect operate like small county councils or 'fiefdoms'. There is little sharing of good practice across the various teams and until recently little sharing of resources including the register of carers. Dependant of which area of Cumbria a carer or young person lives determines what level of service they will receive.

The style of management within each of the teams visited varied with some good practice noted.

Cumbria has an insufficient number of carers to meet the needs of children looked after. There is no written recruitment strategy based on the overall need and until recently there had been no analysis of the placement needs of the looked after population. Following budget constraints there is little opportunity to purchase external placements and as there is no commissioning strategy there is no opportunity to analyse the effectiveness of any placement purchased with regards to 'value for money'.

The carers who were met through the inspection or contacted the inspectors presented as skilled, competent carers who were caring appropriately for the young people placed. However many talked about the pressure they felt to accept placements and the inconsistent level of support they received particularly from children's social workers.

Where there was evidence of staff completing 'matching reports' for placements these were good and there was evidence of some good placements being made. However this practice was not consistent and some staff indicated that on some occasions the pressure to place children means that little attention can be paid to matching appropriately. There was evidence of placements being made in an emergency or quickly, to carers who had been not approved for the number placed or the age range. One carer who had been approved for respite said 'this is not what I signed up for'. Some young people discussed previous placements where they had been unhappy and some of this related to inappropriate matching. Carers said that they have to become very adept at 'saying no to placements'-one carer said 'never say I'll think about it- if you really mean no, because you are never left alone'. Cumbria reported that they had a number of siblings who could not be placed together due to a shortage of placements even though their care plan indicated that this was the long-term plan.

The level information provided to carers varied and carers could provide evidence of where information had been lacking for them for many months. There appeared to be inconsistency amongst children's social workers as to how much information carers needed in order to care for children placed.

Appropriate and individually written Health and safety policies and safe caring policies are not routinely obtained for all carers to establish risk in relation to placements, although some good examples were seen in one office.

There was no consistent policy on undertaking unannounced visits to carers and these are not recorded separately as such.

Carers receive training in child protection during their initial training and this is followed up through the core training where this can be delivered.

Allegations or concerns made about carers are dealt with by the local office and there is no overall scrutiny for consistency. Although managers were aware of how to deal with allegations against carers, staff were less aware of processes and the role of the Safe Guarding Unit as a whole.

Some staff and carers said that in their opinion some children are not safely placed due to the pressures already in the placement. Due to staff vacancies not all carers have allocated workers so some are not being regularly visited or having their care monitored. In at least one office there had been no analysis based on risk as to which carers would not be allocated.

The arrangements for the recruitment and selection of staff are satisfactory.

The staff who were seen as part of the inspection presented as skilled competent workers who had the interests of children looked after central to their work. Many were frustrated with the situation of a lack of resources, the on-going vacancies and the lack of strategic direction for the development of the service. All who were met were committed to change and were aware of the 'Invest to Save' strategy and were hopeful that 'things could only get better'.

The arrangements for the Fostering and Adoption Panels, which are held across the County, were satisfactory.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13, 31

The work on the equality and diversity is poor because it is under developed.

The arrangements for the education of children looked after are good with an appropriate team in place, which is well respected.

The quality of short breaks provided are good but this service is under resourced and inconsistently managed.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

There was general agreement from managers and staff at all levels that the work on equality and diversity is underdeveloped. Work undertaken previously to create 'diversity champions' is not well known and is under resourced. The number of children looked after who are not 'White British' is extremely low and their needs are diverse. There are an insufficient number of carers available who can meet their specific needs and resources within Cumbria are limited.

The LACES team is well known and have a range of resources available to them to support young people. Only a small number of young people are without an appropriate educational placement. The number of young people with a PEP is improving, although not all carers were aware of these. Some young people had moved schools as a result of their placement and for some

this had been positive-but not always. Carers were aware of the need to support young people in education and some good practice was noted.

The arrangements for the short break service are inconsistent and they have an insufficient number of carers to meet the demand. The quality of respite care provided appeared to be good.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10, 11

The quality outcome for contact is adequate because there are inconsistent practices.

The quality outcome for consultation is good because there are opportunities for young people to contribute to their reviews and day to day lives.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

Young people said that generally they could see members of their family they wish to see. Carers were aware of the need to support and promote contact.

However facilities for supervised contact are inconsistent with little suitable accommodation available. Carers described arrangements where they have had to drive many miles for young people to see their families. Social workers reported that it was often difficult to be creative and flexible with contact arrangements.

Some young people have had the opportunity to chair their own statutory reviews and it was reported by young people, carers and social workers that this had generally been successful. Young people said 'it's good to be in control'.

Young people who were visited could give examples of where their carers talk to them about their daily lives and are given choices. However few young people had choice over placements, due to the pressure of availability

Some carers and young people had made complaints, their opinion of the complaints procedure was poor in that the outcome to the complaint had been in their opinion been 'foreseen'. From the review of complaints made there was evidence that they are investigated thoroughly, however some complaints had moved to the 'second stage' as the timescales had been exceeded at the initial stage. At least one young person had complained because she could not be placed in Cumbria. Although some young people had no 'faith' in the official complaints procedure, most said that they would talk to their carers if they had a problem, which is good.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

29

The quality in this outcome area is adequate, because although carers receive payments, which are consistent with payments made by other local authorities, arrangements for allowances are inconsistent.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

Carers said that there was confusion about the way payments are made which is confirmed by managers. From evidence provided it was clear that carers are frustrated by the inconsistent arrangements for the payments of allowances.

Some carers had found their own methods of ensuring that they receive their payments on time.

The carers met during the inspection said that they were often 'out of pocket' when they had to wait for payments, particularly for example when paying for clothes or school uniforms.

Some carers said that they did not always feel valued by Cumbria SSD as 'professional carers' and the confusion over payments contributed to this.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2, 4, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 32

The quality outcome is poor because there is no clear strategic direction and inconsistent management practices exist across the County.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

Throughout the inspection there was evidence of good practice undertaken by individual managers and staff at all levels. However this was not consistent and not backed up by any overall strategic direction and plan which had been thoroughly implemented.

There were no formal methods of monitoring and reviewing the service as a whole or the work of carers. Carers were not routinely notifying staff of matters in Schedule 7 of The Fostering Service Regulations and there was no creation of monitoring reports (Regulation 42) on a regular basis for scrutiny. The Register of Carers was not up to date and accurate.

The system for notifications at all levels was haphazard.

The service was understaffed and some staff vacancies had existed for a long period of time, although one office was fully staffed. Cumbria SSD had changed the conditions and service for family placement staff so that they were consistent with other social work staff and it was hoped that this would aid recruitment and retention. Some staff indicated though that it was the lack of clear management and related frustrations, which was leading to the high turnover of staff.

Although there is a written strategy for working with carers and carers are supplied with appropriate information in the handbook, the shortage of staff means that not all carers are allocated and some do not receive visits, some said for many months. Most carers who had an allocated worker were satisfied with the support they receive from their worker. Some offices provide support groups and some carers said that they found these helpful, most carers were dismissive of the out of hours service and had formed informal methods of support with each other. The revised Foster Care Agreement, which would meet the Regulations, had not been implemented.

As some carers were not allocated and in some offices this was 50% of the carers on the register they were not receiving any regular supervision. The standard and method of supervision varied across the County. Where it was being delivered consistently the standard was good.

Cumbria SSD has in place an appropriate training plan however due to staff vacancies this is not consistently delivered. Carers said that the quality of training they receive is good. Some carers were undertaking additional qualifications including NVQ and BTEC and some had access to an 'E learning package'.

The range of information held on file about a young person varied and in some offices information about young people were held on the carer's files. The

Fostering Service does not hold their own files on young people placed and rely on the case file. The standard of recording in children's files varied but there was evidence of auditing of files but not necessarily monitoring of decision making.

The range of office facilities available to staff varied. However at least 2 offices were not suitable for staff with a physical disability in that there was no lift and the offices were located above the first floor. Some offices were cramped and there was a lack of storage facilities for equipment.

Until recently the policy of Cumbria SSD was that kinship carers were not allocated, offered training, access to support groups or regular visits. Although in some offices some of these carers were now allocated, this was not consistent.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	2
6	2
8	1
9	2
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
13	3
31	2

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	2
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	2

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	2
4	1
5	X
16	X
17	2
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	2
22	2
23	2
24	2
25	x
26	2
27	X
28	X
32	2

YES

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS12	17	Cumbria SSD must ensure that all appropriate health information on each child is obtained, shared with the carer and a health care plan is created.	30/10/06
2	FS17	19	Cumbria SSD must ensure that they have a sufficient number of staff employed within the service.	01/01/07
3	FS6	28	Cumbria SSD must create a robust recruitment strategy to ensure that they have a sufficient number of carers to meet the needs of the service.	30/10/06
4	FS8	11	Cumbria SSD must ensure that appropriate matching, processes and procedures are followed and recorded when making placements and that they meet the needs of the children placed. (Original timescale of 01/07/05 not met)	30/10/06
5	FS8	34	Cumbria SSD must not place any child with a carer for whom they have not been approved to accommodate unless appropriate procedures have been followed.	30/09/06
6	FS6	27	Cumbria SSD must ensure that	30/10/06

			there is consistency in the approval of carers and that good practice is followed.	
7	FS10	24	Cumbria SSD must improve the arrangements and facilities for contact.	30/05/07
8	FS5	5	Cumbria SSD must review the management arrangements and systems to ensure that this service has clear strategic direction and delivers a service, which is consistent.	01/01/07
9	FS4	34	Cumbria SSD must implement systems to monitor all activity within the service including, allocation of staff to carers, allegations and complaints, supervisory visits, annual reviews and unannounced visits to carers.	30/09/06
10	FS9	43	Cumbria SSD must create a system so that notifications to relevant authorities and personnel are made.	30/09/06
11	FS24	22	Cumbria SSD must ensure that they keep comprehensive records on all young people placed. (original timescale of 01/07/05 not met)	30/08/06
12	FS9	17	Cumbria SSD must ensure that carers receive all relevant information on the young people placed with them. (original timescale of 01/07/05 not met)	30/09/06
13	FS8	28	Cumbria SSD must implement the revised Foster care Agreements. (original timescale of 01/07/05 not met)	30/09/06
14	FS20	21	Cumbria SSD must ensure that all staff receive timely supervision and training which meets their developmental needs.	30/09/06
15	FS25	22	Cumbria SSD must ensure that the register of carers is accurate at all times.	30/10/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS12	Cumbria SSD should continue with plans to improve access to CAMHS.
2	FS8	Cumbria SSD should develop a commissioning strategy for the purchase of external placements.
3	FS7	Cumbria SSD should continue to develop the work on equality and diversity.
4	FS31	Cumbria SSD should develop the short break service so that it is meeting the needs of the service.
5	FS11	Cumbria SDD should ensure that carers and young people receive a timely and appropriate response to their complaints.
6	FS29	Cumbria SSD should ensure that carers receive appropriate allowance and this is consistently applied.
7	FS9	Cumbria SSD should create health and safety policies, risk assessments and safe caring policies for all carers.
8	FS26	Cumbria SSD should review the office facilities for staff, particularly in line with legislation.

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