



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Middlesbrough Council Fostering**

Sandringham House

170A Overdale Road

Parkend

Middlesbrough

TS3 7EA

21st, 22nd, 23rd & 24th February 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**

Middlesbrough Council Fostering

**Address**

Sandringham House, 170A Overdale Road, Parkend,  
Middlesbrough, TS3 7EA

**Local Authority Manager**

Jane Wilson

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01642 300870

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

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

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

13/10/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		21st February 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Darren Hobson	073895
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Stephen Smith	073899
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Tony Kerr (Acting Manager)	

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**Inspection visits**  
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**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**  
**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**  
**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**  
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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**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
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- 10. Short-term breaks**
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**Part D: Provider's Response**

- D.1. Provider's comments**
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- D.3. Provider's agreement**

## 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 Middlesbrough Council Fostering. 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.**

Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service is based at Sandringham House, Middlesbrough. At the time of inspection the team comprised the Acting Manager, three Supervising Social Workers, two Support Workers and a Team Clerk. The team supports circa 105 registered carers who have 109 children placed with them. The service has approved four new foster carers in the 12-month period preceding the inspection and deregistered six carers.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### **Inspector's Summary**

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

Middlesbrough Council provides an effective fostering service, which is well managed and held in regard by the carers' it supports. It is considered a valued resource by children and families social workers. All of 65 placing officers who returned questionnaires reported that the foster carers with whom they had children placed looked after children 'Very well indeed'.

**The outcomes for children have been identified below in accordance with the five outcomes in 'Every Child Matters' published in 2004 by the Department for Education and Skills.**

#### **Being Safe:**

Middlesbrough Council fostering service undertakes comprehensive Form F assessments of all prospective carers and robust recruitment checks including enhanced CRB disclosures are undertaken in respect of all staff and prospective carers. It was noted however, that one set of carer's only had a police check in place. Training in safe caring practice and child protection is good. An examination of foster carers files found that not all carers have a safe caring policy or health and safety assessments in respect of the placements they offered. Guidance available to carers in the form of the 'Foster Carers' Handbook' is very comprehensive and includes information on health and safety, diversity and promoting equality, identification of abuse, drug and alcohol awareness, sexual exploitation and managing challenging behaviour including permissible and prohibited forms of punishments.

All of the 20 children who had completed questionnaires indicated that they 'Felt Safe' in their particular foster placements. One child said, 'No one in the house takes drugs. No one is hitting me' and 'Being in a nice home and living in a nice family', while another child said, 'I have never been happier in my life. I love my foster family; they are my family and never let me down. I am grateful for all their help and support for me'.

Children and carers interviewed demonstrated an appropriate knowledge of the complaints procedure. The service has a robust system for managing complaints and dealing with child protection referrals in respect of carers.

#### **Being Healthy:**

An examination of foster carers and children's files confirmed that appropriate health information is maintained in respect of children's health needs. Children receive annual health assessments and information about children's health is available to carers and children in placement. Although supervising social workers make checks of accidents and incidents within carers' homes, the supervision record does not sufficiently record this information. Most carers have undertaken first aid training.



**Achieving and Enjoying:**

School aged children who were case tracked as part of the inspection were found to have personal education plans (PEP's) in place. One carer commented, 'The PEP's programme is the best thing since sliced bread. You are fully involved. We all have computers. I have had support from the department when my child was out of school. I got support and backing from my link worker'. Children interviewed said that they received support from their carers in respect of doing homework and school attendance. Carers are offered a personal computer for the use of children in order to raise achievement. All of the 28 children with whom the Inspectors had contact indicated that they were happy within their placements and were engaged in social and leisure activities.

**Making a Positive Contribution to Society:**

Children interviewed indicated that they were involved in a number of community activities including attending out of school activities and leisure pursuits. The level of consultation between children and the local authority is good, and most children considered that they were able to contribute towards decisions regarding their care and future. The local authority has constituted a looked after children's consultation panel which is used to seek children's views on the services they receive.

All of the children interviewed commented positively on their fostering experience. Comments included, 'I go out often. I go on holiday on weekends in the caravan and I have my own bedroom' and 'My carers are kind and now I have new friends'.

Children who are of an age whereby they are preparing for independence had pathway plans in place, and guidance in respect of health issues, drug and alcohol awareness, keeping safe and sexual health is available to children, although the fostering service has not produced any specific guidance in respect of preparing children for adulthood and independence.

**Social and Economic Well-being:**

Comments made by children which demonstrated positive outcomes for children in placements included, 'My life in social services is good. The social workers are really nice and give you lots of advice and my carers' are great' and 'I have never been happier in my life. I love my foster family; they are my family and never let me down. I am grateful for all their help and support for me'. It is the view of the Inspectors that children placed in foster care with Middlesbrough Council fostering service are well supported and provided with care and nurture, which will aid their personal and social development.

Training provided to carers is good and the quality and professionalism of the fostering service staff is recognised by foster carers and other professionals. Children's records maintained by the Authority and examined during the inspection are clear and would if they were to be examined by a child contribute to the understanding of the individual's life events.

It is the considered judgement of the Inspectors that Middlesbrough Fostering Service significantly contributes towards positive outcomes for the children placed with foster carers by the service.

## **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:**

Not Applicable.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

**Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

**Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<b>Darren Hobson</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<b>Stephen Smith</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Regulation Manager</b>	<b>Christine Wharton</b>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March 2005</b>		_____

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements 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	22 & 27	FS24FS8	The fostering service must maintain up-to-date looked after children's documentation including Essential Information parts 1 & 2 and Placement Plans Parts 1 & 2 and ensure that all carers are in receipt of these documents	To be met by 01/06/2005
2	34	FS10	The fostering service must ensure that all of the information listed within Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 is included within the foster placement agreement	To be met by 01/08/2005
3	12 & 27	FS6	All carers must have a current safe caring policy and health and safety audit in respect of the placement offered by them  The fostering service should maintain a copy of the safe caring policy and health and safety audit on foster carers files	To be met by 01/08/2005
4	22 & 27	FS25	The fostering service must maintain a foster carers and children's register in accordance with those matters listed in Schedule 2 (a) and 2 (b) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	To be met by 01/08/2005

### 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	FS5	The fostering service should identify an individual from within the fostering service to deputise in the absence of the manager
2	FS14	The foster carers' handbook should have guidance for assisting young people with preparing for adult living (This recommendation is outstanding from the last inspection)

\* 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	8
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	21/02/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	64

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

### Key Findings and Evidence

### Standard met?

3

Middlesbrough Council has produced a clear Statement of Purpose, which reflects the fostering service. The Statement of purpose includes the aims and objectives of the services and includes details of the information listed within Standard 1.4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The Local Authority's Members' have approved the Statement of Purpose. A number of placing officers confirmed within their questionnaires that they had access to the Statement of Purpose and this was additionally confirmed during interviews carried out with children's and families social workers.

The children's guide is given to all children who are fostered. The children's guide meets with the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Children interviewed confirmed that they had received a copy of the guide. In addition most carers have their own guide, which gives children information specific to the foster placement.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

At the time of the inspection, the manager of the service was seconded to another post within the children and families service. An acting manager who was temporarily appointed from within the fostering team held responsibility for the day-to-day management of the fostering service. The acting manager who had been in post for 4 week prior to the inspection met with the requirements of Standard 2.2 in respect of qualifications and experience.

Foster carers interviewed reported that the service is well managed. One comment made which was typical in response to questions about the service was: 'Our total experience has been positive over the last three years and it is difficult to find any fault in the system'. The fostering service is held in high regard by placing officers. The 65 placing officers who returned questionnaires all stated that children in placements were 'very well cared for' and considered the service to be well managed and a valuable resource.

### 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

There is a robust recruitment procedure in place for the recruitment of the manager and of placement team staff based on the recommendations of the Warner Report, which fulfils the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. An examination of staff personnel records including the acting manager confirmed that the Local Authority had undertaken all appropriate statutory employment checks including a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check at enhanced level and references taken up of all new recruits to the service.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

**Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

Middlesbrough fostering service has in place a system to make statutory notifications to the Commission for Social Care Inspection, although at the time of the inspection there had been no notifiable events. Information and data is collected through a number of reporting mechanisms including staff and carer supervisions, notifications made by carers, reviewing panel decisions and children and carers' reviews. Information from visits made to carers is reported at team meetings and this is collated and reported in a format, which is readily accessible by senior managers and therefore meets with the requirements of Schedule 7 and Regulation 42 (1) of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

The manager receives regular financial updates on service expenditure, which is managed centrally by the Local Authority. Suitable arrangements are in place to deal with payments to foster carers and purchasing of equipment. Carers interviewed in respect of payments expressed no complaints or concerns.

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

0

**Death of a child placed with foster parents.**

0

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

0

**Serious illness or accident of a child.**

0

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

0

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

0

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

0

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

0

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

0

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

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

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

The acting manager of the service has a job description and clear lines of accountability are defined and in place. Arrangements are in place to cover for the manager in his absence, although this is undertaken by the manager of the permanency team, which means that no one within the fostering team maintains direct management control in the absence of the manager. It is recommended that a nominated deputy be identified.

## 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?	2
<p>During the inspection a number of visits were made to foster carer homes. In all cases the Inspectors' confirmed that the carers homes provided appropriate and environmentally safe accommodation, which met the assessed needs of the children placed.</p>		
<p>An examination of foster carer training programmes and interviews with carers confirmed that carers receive support and training in safe caring practice, child protection and health and safety. However, it was noted during the examination of carers files who were case tracked as part of the inspection, that not all carers had drawn up a safe caring policy and/or a current health and safety audit. The 65 placing officers who completed questionnaires reported that they considered placements in which they had children placed to be safe.</p>		

### 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?	4
<p>Information provided to carers in the form of the carers' handbook regarding valuing diversity and promoting equality is comprehensive and gives information in respect of different cultures, ethnicity, religions, customs, meals and celebrations of the different cultures. The guidance is also comprehensive in respect of gender and sexuality. Carers within interview confirmed that they had received training in promoting equality and diversity. Carers interviewed demonstrated an appropriate knowledge of this area.</p>		
<p>A visit made to one foster carer's home, demonstrated the high level of support provided by the fostering service in assisting this carer to make applications to have major adaptations made to the carer's home, in order that the assessed needs of the children with disabilities placed with the carers could be met.</p>		

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

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

2

It is clear from interviews with foster carers and placing social workers that efforts are made to ensure a suitable match between children and foster carers takes place. Where children are placed outside of carers' approvals, over the registered number of children, the fostering service issue an exemption notice. The service has a system for monitoring the notices issued on a service wide basis through the Schedule 7 monitoring process.

All of the nine sets of carers who attended the group meeting with the Lead Inspector reported that children currently placed with them were within their approvals. Foster carers interviewed said that they were involved in the matching process and generally the process worked well but some said that they did not always get sufficient information about children before their placement. It was also apparent that foster carers providing respite do not always have access to placement plans for the young people they care for and do not always receive a copy of the placement agreement.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

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

3

An inspection of training records and interviews with foster carers, supervising social workers and placing officers confirmed that carers receive child protection/safe caring practice training as part pre-approval training. Policies and procedures are in place in relation to the management of child protection referrals, and carers during the group and individual discussions with Inspectors' demonstrated an appropriate level of understanding of their role and responsibilities in dealing with child protection issues and referrals. An example given by a carer was, 'The first thing I would do is write it in the diary and then contact the social worker. I would listen, but not ask questions, you can only listen to what they want to tell you. If it was serious you could not keep it to yourself and I would say to the child that I couldn't'.

Safe caring information and guidelines are in place in the foster carers handbook as is information relating to bullying and unauthorised absence and the organisation has clear policy and procedural guidance relating these issues. However, as previously stated in Standard 6 not all carers are in receipt of a safe caring policy in respect of the placement they offer. None of the eight children interviewed or the 29 children who has completed questionnaires reported being bullied within their placements.

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

100

%

**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?**

2

Information in children's records contained clear information about contact arrangements with families and the foster carers interviewed were aware of this information and complying with it. In some instances foster carers said, however, that they did not have copies of the young person's placement plan within the foster home.

Information given to foster carers and training during induction covers issues relating to contact with families. Placement agreements, however, did not always cover in detail all the specific arrangements for contact with family as required in Regulation 34 of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

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

3

Of the 29 completed questionnaires received from children, 18 reported that their carers ask for their opinions, 7 reported that they were asked sometimes and only 1 child reported that their carer never asked their opinion. 24 children reported that the fostering service has sought their views about the service they received. Only one child who had completed this part of the questionnaire said that they had not been asked their opinion. All of the children interviewed said that they attended their reviews and are consulted about their lives.

Children's records viewed evidenced their involvement in reviews and records showed that visits to the foster home by staff of the fostering service include talking to the children in private.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

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

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

3

Evidence from discussion with children, foster carers, placing social workers and staff from the fostering service as well as examination of children's files showed that the health care needs of children placed are given satisfactory consideration by the fostering service. Information is in place in the carers' handbook relating to the health needs children. An examination of the training programme confirmed that carers receive training in health awareness including, drug, alcohol and sexual awareness, personal hygiene and reporting procedures in respect of children's health. It was noted that recent training organised included training in children's mental health provided by the children and adolescent mental health service (CAHMS) team. The children case tracked as part of the inspection were registered with appropriate health professionals and had attended annual health assessments.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

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

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

3

Children within foster placements are given the opportunity to have a personal computer, which can be used for supporting education software. The education service provides a small team of education professionals who are responsible for supporting children looked after by the Local Authority. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) were in place for all of the children of school age whose cases were tracked as part of the inspection. The foster placement agreements (Placement Plans) examined did not clearly set out the arrangements to meet the educational needs of the young person placed but evidence was available in the young people's files inspected of work carried out with other professionals to arrange educational services. One carer commented, 'The PEP's programme is the best thing since sliced bread. You are fully involved. We all have computers. I have had support from the department when my child was out of school. I got support and backing from my link worker'.

**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?**

2

Guidance in respect of assisting young people with preparing for independence is not available within the foster carers handbook. This was a recommendation made at the last inspection and is still outstanding. An examination of children's records confirmed that Pathway Plans are in place for those young people who are of an age, which requires the formulation of such a plan. Carers interviewed spoke knowledgeably about the work being carried out to prepare young people for adulthood and evidence was available in young people's files of work being carried out with other professionals and agencies.



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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

As previously stated in this report the Local Authority has robust procedures for the recruitment of both staff and foster carers which includes a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks at enhanced level being carried out. It was noted, however, that one set of carer's were only in receipt of a police check and not an enhanced CRB check. The local authority maintains appropriate information for all staff employed within the fostering team and its carers'. It is evident from the inspection that the organisation operates within a thorough and comprehensive recruitment policy. This policy and procedural document contains full details of the recruitment process including the setting out of how the organisation applies the Warner Codes of Recruitment Practice.

Examples of the foster carer assessment reports (Form F's) sampled demonstrated that supervising social workers undertake comprehensive assessments. Training provided to prospective foster carers is relevant, appropriate to their needs and is of good quality.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

1

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service team are sufficiently skilled and experienced and are clear about their responsibilities and the management structure within the organisation. Current vacancies and secondments have resulted in heavier caseloads being maintained by fostering staff. Copies of the departments policies and procedures are in place and accessible to staff. Evidence of regular, structured and minuted team meetings taking place was available at the inspection, as was evidence of a formal and well documented supervision system.

The fostering service has clerical and administrative support and staff reported that administrative systems are effective, however, information maintained on the IT database is not readily available in appropriate formats i.e. foster carers and children's registers.

**Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)**

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

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

4

As previously stated in Standard 16, the fostering service staff are currently carrying a higher caseload level due to vacancies and staff secondments, however, a new supervising social has been appointed and is due to start in the near future. None of the foster carers interviewed reported adversely in this respect. A number of staff either hold or are undertaking post-qualifying awards in childcare. The fostering service provides a duty system to ensure that all calls and referrals are received and recorded, and to ensure that there is always a member of staff on hand to give support and advice to foster carers.

The quality of Form F assessments and reviews is very good and comprehensive. An examination of foster carers case files demonstrated that the service undertakes robust and in-depth assessments of prospective foster carers and the quality of pre-approval training is good. Comments made by foster carers included, 'All my supervising social workers have given a high level of support and have always been a phone call away' and 'I think they do a good job as they can with the resources. I personally think it is well managed I think they do a good job as they can with the resources'. All foster carers spoken to said that they thought the recruitment and assessment process was thorough and appropriate.

**Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)**

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

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

3

The local authority has appropriate disciplinary and grievance procedures and a whistle-blowing policy was in place. An examination of staff personnel files, policies and procedures confirmed that the local authority has sound employment practices. The service does not provide an out of hour service. Currently guidance is available to carers via the Emergency Duty Team. However, most carers interviewed reported that this level of support was insufficient, although most carers interviewed said that their supervising social worker had contacted them on a weekend following a new placement or if there had been problems. One carer said, 'My supervising social worker is always available 24/7'. Systems are in place to provide regular supervision of foster carers and evidence was available to confirm that this supervision is taking place on a regular basis. The Local Authority has appropriate public and professional indemnity insurance cover for staff and carers.

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>All social work practitioners within the service hold an appropriate social work qualification. A number of staff have undertaken post-qualifying training in childcare and other development courses. Evidence from the inspection demonstrates that the Local Authority operates within its own sound employment procedures. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place for staff. Carers confirmed that there are opportunities for them to undertake joint training with social work staff and indicated that joint arrangements are very productive.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Staff interviewed commented positively about the management and support they received from both the acting manager and the fostering manager who is currently seconded to another post within the department. It is clear from the inspection that a formal, structured supervision system exists for all staff. This takes place regularly, is minuted and records include the agenda and details of the discussion. All staff have clear job descriptions and their duties, responsibilities and caseloads are discussed during supervision. Team meetings occur regularly and include all staff members and a formal staff appraisal system is in place.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The service maintains effective procedures and has a clear strategy for supporting carers. Guidance is available to staff contained with the Local Authority's policies and procedures, some of which are specific to the fostering service. Guidance is available to carers in the form of the very comprehensive and detailed foster carers handbook, and both carers and staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the supervising social worker.</p>		

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**

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

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

4

Support for carers is a strength of the service. Of the 20 carers who returned questionnaires, 12 report being 'very satisfied' with the level of support, the remaining 8 carers being 'quite satisfied'. Comments made by carers in the group discussion included, 'I have had calls on weekends from my link worker. They take an interest in your own kids as well as the foster kids, they see the carers as the backbone of it all' and 'I am very happy with the support given by my supervising social worker, she is excellent'.

The quality of guidance available to carers is very good. The carers' handbook is in an easily accessible format. Carers interviewed demonstrated a sound understanding of their responsibilities and had an appropriate level of awareness in how to make complaints and deal with allegations of abuse.

Most carers receive six-weekly supervision, however, frequency of visits may change dependent upon need and the experience of the foster carer. Records of visits are maintained and a format for the recording of carer supervisions is in place, although it is recommended that matters relating to children's health and accidents be included in the recording format. Some carers commented at the lack of communication, however, such comments generally related to social workers within the children and families teams.

Comments made by children about their fostering placements included, 'My life in social services is good. The social workers are really nice and give you lots of advice and my carers are great' and 'I have never been happier in my life. I love my foster family; they are my family and never let me down. I am grateful for all their help and support for me'.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

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

4

Pre-approval training for foster carers is good and meets the needs of new carers. An examination of the training programme confirmed that this training provides a solid foundation and introduction to fostering. Carers interviewed commented, 'They do listen to what training we want and they have a questionnaire asking what we want'. It was noted that as a consequence of this questionnaire the service had set up training in children's mental health, which had been identified by carers as a high priority. The supervision programme in place is used by the service to identify training needs and foster carers stated in their group meeting that the training offered to them is generally of a high standard. The 20 carers who had completed questionnaires further confirmed this. Ongoing training covers a range of practice issues and carers are offered the opportunity to undertake NVQ Level 3 in childcare. The service has a significant percentage of its carers who hold this qualification.

## 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?	2
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An examination of children's case files confirmed that the Local Authority maintains appropriate case records in respect of children and young people in foster care. The children interviewed during the inspection said that they had received information regarding access to their personal files. The files of the children case tracked as part of the inspection were found to hold all relevant LAC documentation. Children's review documentation was particularly good. All children with whom Inspectors had contact confirmed that they had received copies off their LAC documentation.

Inspectors were of the view that the recording arrangements for children's information would if examined by a child contribute to their understanding of their life events. However, the records maintained by the fostering service in respect of children did not include all of the LAC documentation. Shortfalls were identified in respect of placement plans parts 1 and 2 and essential information parts 1 and 2. It was also noted that some carers, mainly those providing respite did not have full LAC documentation.

### 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
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The children's and foster carers' register do not meet with the requirements of Schedules 2 and 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Additionally, foster carers' records were not well structured and the location of information within the files was not clear and files would benefit from the inclusion of a basic information sheet at the front of the file. Foster carers' files examined did not contain full Looked After Children (LAC) documentation regarding to their current placement. The service uses the LAC placement plan parts 1 & 2 as the foster placement agreement; however, this does not meet with the requirements Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			105
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			117
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			138
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			4
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			6
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	88.20	<b>Maximum £</b>	326.27

## 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 service operates from Sandringham House a former older persons home and has appropriately furnished offices shared with staff from children and families services and the permanency team. The offices have facilities for the storage and retention of records. There are efficient administrative systems, including Information Technology (IT) systems in place.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

At the time of the inspection the acting manager of the fostering service was able to provide a detailed annual budget for the agency that showed that it operates on a secure financial footing. Evidence from interview with the acting manager and examination of the services budget statements showed that the financial situation is monitored and reviewed by the organisation regularly.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It is clear from the inspection that the financial procedures of Middlesbrough Council are extended to the fostering service and there is a clear set of principles and standards governing the financial situation and satisfactory management oversight of the services finances to ensure satisfactory operation of the service.



**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**

Evidence gained during the inspection showed that foster carers receive an allowance that covers the cost of caring for the young person placed with them and that foster carers are banded based on experience, qualifications and the complexity of children's needs. Discussion with foster carers showed that this allowance is generally paid regularly and promptly.

Clear information is provided in the foster carer agreement about foster carer payments though information about who is responsible for additional items of expenditure such as bus fares, school uniforms and trips is not made specifically clear within the foster placement agreement.

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service's panel is constituted in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The panel observed as part of the inspection demonstrated that the fostering panel gives detailed consideration to the information presented to it and ensures that it has sufficient information upon which to make recommendations. It is commendable that all foster care reviews and recommendations made by the review panels are discussed and confirmed by the fostering panel. Additionally it is evident that the panel considers the quality of the information with which it is presented and provides feedback to the fostering service about this quality. Policies and procedures are in place governing the function of the panel and full recordings of minutes of meetings are taken. The agency decision maker who is the Director of Children, Families and Learning ratifies recommendations made by the fostering 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?
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Shared care arrangements are not undertaken by the fostering service. Responsibility for the shared care scheme is held within the Middlesbrough/Redcar & Cleveland joint service for Children with Disabilities. This standard was therefore not inspected.	
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## 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?	0
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This standard was not inspected.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

There was no lay assessor available for this inspection.

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**PART D**

**PROVIDER'S RESPONSE**

**D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 21 February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Provider's comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.**

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

**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 15 April 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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

**Public reports**

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

**Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.**

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of Middlesbrough Council 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 Middlesbrough Council 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.



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