



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Bexley Fostering

Howbury Centre

Slade Green Road

Erith

Kent

DA8 2HX

28 February – 9 March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Bexley Fostering

Address

Howbury Centre, Slade Green Road, Erith, Kent, DA8
2HX

Local Authority Manager

Tina Coburnl

Tel No:

0208 303 7777

Address

Howbury Centre, Slade Green Road, Erith, Kent, DA8
2HX

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

26.01.04

Date of Inspection Visit		28 February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Elizabeth Brunton	096116
Name of Inspector	2	Susan Grindlay	136395
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

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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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

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 London Borough of Bexley 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.

Bexley Social Services fostering service is provided by an integrated Children's Placement Service. The Children's Placement Service functions as a single team. It is staffed by a manager, four senior social workers, nine (full-time equivalent) social workers and administrative staff. The manager reports to the Head of Commissioning and Resources. The Children's Placement Service provides both the fostering and adoption service for the council. Included within its fostering remit is long and short-term fostering, respite fostering and kinship care. A short-breaks family placement scheme for children with disabilities is provided by the Children with Disabilities Team. The manager of this team also reports to the Head of Commissioning and Resources. The Children's Placement Service also arranges placements with independent fostering and residential providers.

Bexley Social Services has a three-star rating. Its fostering service was awarded Beacon status by the Department of Health for the year 2002. A high proportion of children looked after are placed in foster care. At time of writing, there are approx. 214 children and young people looked after by Bexley Council, some of whom are cared for by their families. There are 117 registered foster carers and 180 children in foster placement.

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.)

This announced inspection was carried out by two inspectors who were on-site for three and six days respectively. The manager and team administrator provided the inspectors with a great deal of written information before and during the inspection. The inspectors interviewed staff from the Children's Placement Service and from elsewhere in the department. Inspectors attended a foster carers' support group and a meeting of the fostering panel. Staff and foster carers' files were inspected and four foster homes were case-tracked. Of the twenty-five standards inspected, three were exceeded, thirteen were fully met and eight standards were almost met. Case tracking was a key part of the inspection. The scope of this was inevitably limited and the inspection was therefore a sampling exercise, to some extent. This must be borne in mind in making comparisons between the outcome of this and previous inspections.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was almost met.

The statement of purpose was comprehensive and had recently been reviewed. A children's guide was in place but the provision of more information about fostering was recommended.

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

One of the 2 standards inspected was exceeded. The other standard was fully met.

The manager impressed the inspector as being competent, experienced and committed to providing a high quality service.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4 – 5)

Both of the 2 standards inspected were fully met.

The service was well managed and monitored by the manager and four senior social workers.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

Two of the 8 standards inspected were exceeded. 3 standards were fully met and 3 standards were almost met.

Children's health care, educational and family contact needs continued to be well met by foster carers, with support from the department's resources. Foster carers were providing a safe and nurturing environment but the inspector was concerned by one room sharing arrangement. Children's views were being sought and represented very effectively by the children's rights officer. Children were mostly appropriately matched with foster carers but copies of placement agreements and exemptions to foster carers' approval were not retained on file in the fostering service. Efforts were being made to recruit more black and ethnic minority foster carers. Training on diversity and caring for children from different racial/cultural backgrounds had been provided.

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

(Standards 15 – 23)

Two of the 5 standards inspected were fully met. 3 standards were almost met.

The staff group impressed the inspectors as being competent, committed, experienced and knowledgeable about the work. Staff and foster carers were well supported and supervised. Staff recruitment records were generally sound, though some additions were required. Recruitment of additional foster carers had continued and the assessment of foster carers was thorough. Additional assessment was needed when foster carers wished to change the number/ages of children to be placed. Pre and post-approval training programmes had been provided. Clearer expectations regarding attendance at training courses and support groups was recommended. Annual reviews had been carried out but some were late, due to staff changes.

Records (Standards 24 – 25)

One of the 2 standards inspected was fully met.

Foster carers reported that they were normally provided with sufficient information on children placed. Copies of care plans and other LAC forms needed to be retained by the fostering service. Foster carer's records were comprehensive but some recommendations were made relating to the content, organisation and monitoring of files. Administrative staff had worked hard to provide the records required by regulation. Some additions to these records were needed.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was fully met.

The premises used by the fostering service were appropriate for the purpose. It is recommended that a computer should be provided for each (assistant) social worker.

Financial requirements (Standards 27 – 29)

The one standard inspected was fully met.

Payments to foster carers were said to be adequate and generally promptly made, apart from some one-off payments.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was fully met.

The membership of the fostering panel was diverse and experienced and all members had been CRB checked. The panel was well managed. It dealt with cases thoroughly and made appropriate decisions. Recommendations were made regarding additional checks on prospective panel members, the provision of additional information on some cases presented to panel and on foster carers' annual reviews.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was fully met.

This service had continued to gradually expand. Recruitment and other processes remained in line with those of the mainstream fostering service and there were good links between the staff running the two services. Parents had been maintained as central to meeting children's needs. Further recruitment of black and ethnic minority carers was needed.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was fully met.

The importance of kinship carers was recognised. All kinship carers had supervising social workers and annual reviews were held. A survey of kinship carers' support and training needs and interests is recommended.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	34(3)	FS8	The provider must ensure that copies of foster placement agreements are retained on file within the fostering service.	1.05.05
2	30(3)(a)	FS25	The provider must ensure that the record of placements with each foster carer, required by regulation, is fully completed. These need to include the circumstances of the termination of each placement.	1.08.05
			The provider must provide an action plan, with the response to this report, showing how and when the above requirements will be met.	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Regulation Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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	34(1)	FS8	The provider must ensure that the placement of children and young people is consistent with the terms of approval of foster carers. Evidence of agreed exemptions to this must be retained on file.	1.05.05
2	12	FS9	The provider must ensure that fostered children and young people do not share rooms with adults.	1.04.05
3	20	FS15	The provider must ensure that all the documents and checks listed under schedule 1 to the regulations are obtained/carried out before an applicant is appointed to the staff of the fostering service.	1.04.05
4	20	FS15	The provider must ensure that CRB checks are carried out on the administrative staff working in the fostering service.	1.05.05
5	28	FS17	The provider must ensure that some reassessment work is undertaken with foster carers who wish to change the age range/number of children who they care for. This must be presented to the fostering panel.	1.05.05
6	29(2)	FS21	The provider must ensure that the approval of all foster carers is reviewed annually.	1.05.05

7	31	FS25	The provider must ensure that the register of foster carers includes the dates of annual reviews.	1.07.05
			The provider must provide an action plan, with the response to this report, showing how and when the above requirements will be met.	

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	The provider should ensure that fostered young people are provided with more information about what the fostering service provides.
2	FS6	The provider should ensure that any transport provided by foster carers for looked after children is safe and secure. It is suggested that this is included in the health and safety audit of homes and gardens, currently completed by foster carers.
3	FS7	The provider should ensure that further training for foster carers in diversity is provided.
4	FS7	The provider should ensure that foster carers support young people in practising/following their chosen religion.
5	FS8	The provider should ensure that young people are always matched with foster carers who can meet their needs.
6	FS9	The provider should ensure that safe caring guidelines are developed with each foster carer household.
7	FS10	The provider should ensure that all social work staff working in the fostering service are knowledgeable about issues relating to young people's contact with their birth families and that they receive the necessary training.
8	FS16	The provider should arrange for the division of responsibilities between the social work and administrative staff to be reviewed.
9	FS16	The provider should ensure that foster carers' CRB checks and medicals are regularly updated.
10	FS17	The provider should ensure that competency based assessment of potential foster carers is further developed

11	FS21	The provider should ensure that attendance at foster carers' support groups is monitored. It also needs to be clarified whether (minimal) attendance is compulsory.
12	FS22	The provider should ensure that records of supervising social workers' visits to foster homes demonstrate the purpose of visits and the work undertaken with foster carers.
13	FS22	The provider should ensure that foster carers are provided with support and written information when an allegation is made against them, as planned.
14	FS23	The provider should ensure that the training record maintained for each foster carer includes dates of training and details of which partner attended. Clear training plans should be made at annual reviews. It is also suggested that foster carers should be expected to attend specified core training courses within their first year of fostering.
15	FS24	The provider should ensure that care plans and other LAC forms are retained on children's files in the Children's Placement Service.
16	FS25	The provider should ensure that the type of file used for foster carer records, the organisation of records in files and the expectations regarding the recording of supervising social workers' visits to foster homes are reviewed.
17	FS25	The provider should ensure that the date and terms of foster carers' approval, together with any changes, are clearly set out at the front of files.
18	FS26	The provider should ensure that consideration is given to providing each social worker in the Children's Placement Service with a computer.
19	FS29	The provider should ensure that one-off payments to foster carers for items such as equipment, young people's clothing and hairdressing are promptly made.
20	FS30	The provider should ensure that all necessary checks on the suitability of prospective panel members are made.
21	FS30	The provider should ensure that the fostering panel is provided with sufficient information about each case presented to it.
22	FS30	The provider should ensure that the fostering panel is provided with management information on the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews.
23	FS32	The provider should seek to obtain more information about the training and support needs of kinship carers.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B	INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS
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The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	9
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?

2

There was a comprehensive statement of purpose. The inspector was told that this had been reviewed and updated in December 2004. Looked after children had been provided with a copy of the booklet 'Being looked after by Bexley'. It is suggested that young people are provided with more information about fostering. **(see recommendation 1)**

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?
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	4
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The manager of the Children's Placement Service had been in post since April 2004. She was a qualified and experienced practitioner and had recently the diploma in management studies award. The inspector was impressed by the manager's ability and competence and her commitment to maintaining and developing a quality service.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	3
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Records showed that all the necessary references and checks had been obtained for the manager.

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

Procedures and systems were in place to monitor the activities of the fostering service. These were to be further expanded with the full introduction of the Carefirst 21 IT system. Roles and lines of communication and accountability between senior management, the manager and staff of the fostering service and foster carers were clear.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The service appeared to be well managed. There were four senior social workers, who carried management responsibilities and deputised for the manager. The manager's remit was wide and attempts were being made to recruit a practice manager. Staff and foster carers spoken to expressed confidence in the management of the service.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence that foster carers were providing warm, comfortable and safe environments for children. Foster carers were required to complete extensive health and safety audits of their homes and gardens prior to approval and at each annual review. It is again suggested that the safety of foster carers' cars and other transport used for foster children should be included in this audit. The foster carers' Good Practice Guide included information on health and safety. **(see recommendation 2)**

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A number of initiatives had been put in place across the department, in order to improve the council's service to black and ethnic minority residents. The Children's Placement Service was aware of the shortfall in foster carers from black and ethnic minority groups and a number of children were placed transracially/transculturally. The staffing of the Children's Placement Service was more diverse than at the previous inspection. There had been some targeted recruitment and black and ethnic minority applicants had come forward. Training for foster carers in diversity had been provided in June 2004. However, it was not well attended and will need to be repeated. Foster carers had also been provided with training and written guidance on the practical aspects of caring for children of different racial backgrounds. In a recent survey conducted by the children's rights officer, nearly half the responding young people stated that they were not helped to practice their religion in foster homes. **(see recommendations 3 & 4)**

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
Feedback from social workers and foster carers and inspection of records confirmed that children were generally, appropriately matched with foster carers. However, there was evidence of some inappropriate matching due to pressure on resources. The long term matching of children was approved by the fostering panel. Issues relating to the placement of black and other ethnic minority children have already been mentioned. All placing social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaires considered that foster carers were caring for children in line with their care plans. Placement planning meetings were said to be held for all placements, where the LAC form Placement Plan – Part 1 was completed. However, there was no evidence on file of these meetings being held and few copies of the form were seen on file. The inspector was also concerned that evidence of managerial agreement to placements outside foster carers' terms of approval was also not evident on file. The inspector was told these were retained elsewhere. (see requirement 1 from the previous inspection, requirement 1 and recommendation 5 from this inspection)		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
All placing social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaire considered that children were safe in their foster homes and that foster carers used acceptable methods of behaviour management. Foster carers spoken to were aware of the importance of safe caring and of appropriate behaviour management. . Placements were monitored by placing social workers and foster carers' supervising social workers. Foster carers had been provided with written information and training on safe care and behaviour management. Safe caring guidelines should be developed for each foster home. The inspector was concerned that, in one foster home, a thirteen-year-old boy was sharing with a nineteen year old. This was raised with the managers involved. (see requirement 2 and recommendation 6)		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Those foster carers interviewed by the inspectors were very supportive of young people's family contact and had worked hard to facilitate this. Those placing social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaires shared this view. Carers had written guidance and training had been provided before and after approval. The inspector was concerned about comments made by a member of staff in the Children's Placement Service about birth family contact in foster homes. This was said to be being taken up by the manager. (see recommendation 7)

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

There was evidence that foster carers and social workers listened to children, took their views into account and acted as advocates for them. Foster carers also confirmed in pre-inspection questionnaires that they were consulted about important decisions concerning children's lives. The inspector was impressed by the work of the children's rights officer. She had facilitated groups and projects for looked after young people and had surveyed young people's views. These activities had provided valuable feedback on young people's views about the fostering service. The children's rights officer had also advocated for and supported young people in making complaints and allegations. However, a number of young people who completed both the pre-inspection questionnaire and the children's rights officer's survey said that they did not know how to make a complaint. The inspector agreed with the children's rights officer that better information was needed.

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?**

4

There was evidence that foster carers were doing well at meeting people's healthcare needs. And written information had been provided. Valuable support and input had been provided by the two looked after children nurses, employed in the Children's Planning Unit.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

There was also evidence that foster carers were doing well at meeting young people's educational needs, by supporting and encouraging young people in their education, liaising with schools and attending PEP meetings. A number of departmental initiatives were in place to improve the educational attainment of looked after young people. Education liaison officers advised foster carers, liaised with schools, worked to prevent school exclusion and undertook some direct 1:1 teaching. Foster homes had been provided with computers by the Children's Placement Service.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not specifically addressed on this occasion.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

As at the previous inspection, staff in the Children's Placement Service impressed the inspectors as competent, committed, experienced and knowledgeable about the work. A sample of staff recruitment records were inspected. The required documents and checks were generally in place. However, on one file there was no evidence of a reference having been verified. On another file for an agency social worker, there was no ID/photograph or documentary evidence of qualifications. CRB checks were outstanding on two members of the social work staff. It was not possible to identify from the record what action had been taken in relation to this. CRB checks had not been carried out for the administrative staff in the Children's Placement Service. **(see requirements 3 & 4)**

Total number of staff of the agency:

21

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

4

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

Staff appeared to be organised and managed so as to provide an efficient and effective service. Social workers spoken to welcomed the opportunity to undertake both adoption and fostering work. Workloads appeared to be manageable and there was a caseload management system in place. There was an administrative team of four staff. The inspector was surprised to learn that social work staff were undertaking administrative tasks, such as filing and setting up continuation files. It is suggested that the division of responsibilities between the social work and administrative staff is reviewed. Social workers in the Children's Placement Service and the children's teams appeared to be generally working well together. This was confirmed by most of the children's team social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaires. Some foster carers' annual reviews, update CRB checks and medicals were out-of-date. The inspector was told that these would soon be prompted by the Carefirst 21 IT system. **(see recommendations 8 & 9)**

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The Children's Placement Service appeared to be adequately staffed. There was one vacancy, which was to be temporarily filled by an agency social worker. As previously mentioned, the staff group was now more diverse in terms of racial and cultural background. This trend should be continued, partly in order to promote the recruitment of more black ethnic minority foster carers. There had been a number of foster carer publicity/recruitment initiatives during the past year. However, there had been less recruitment than usual, due to changes in the senior staff group. Some foster carers had also resigned during the past year, leading to the shortfall in resources referred to under standard 8. Records showed that the assessment of potential foster carers had been thorough and focused on competencies, to some extent. It is suggested that this approach is further developed. The necessary references and checks had been made in those records inspected. Reassessment of foster carers who wished to apply to take a different age range/number of children was needed. This must be presented to the fostering panel. (see requirement 5 and recommendation 10)</p>		

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?	0
This standard was not specifically addressed on this occasion.		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This standard was not specifically addressed on this occasion.		

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

Staff confirmed that they received regular supervision and appraisal. Records were not checked on this occasion. Staff team meetings were also said to be held regularly. Staff confirmed that they were well supported by an accessible manager and senior staff group.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

As at the previous inspection, foster carers reported being well supported, both by social workers from the Children's Placement Service and from the child care teams. All foster carers had supervising social workers. The 'buddying' scheme and foster carers' executive had continued to provide valuable support to foster carers and liaison with senior management. There were two support groups for foster carers. Attendance at these was said to be limited and was not monitored. It was not clear whether attendance was compulsory. Firmer expectations are recommended, compliance with which should be monitored. The inspector agreed with suggestions made by some staff and foster carers, that additional support groups could be developed, such as local groups and a men's group. A support group for the children of foster carers had been provided. Records showed that comprehensive annual reviews with foster carers had been carried out, chaired by senior social workers. However, a number of these were out-of-date. This was said to be due to recent gaps in the senior staff group. First reviews had been presented to Panel, along with any subsequent reviews, where there were issues or concerns. **(see requirement 6 and recommendation 11)**

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?****2**

Records showed that supervising social workers visited and made contact with foster carers on a regular basis. Records showed that an unannounced visit had been made to most foster homes during the past year. Few records seen of supervising social workers' visits to foster homes demonstrated the purpose of the visit or the work undertaken with foster carers. Records showed that new foster carers had signed the foster carer agreement and had been given a copy of the good practice guide. The Children's Planning Unit, Children's Placement Service and childcare teams seemed to have worked well together in dealing with allegations against foster carers. Those records examined showed that allegations had been fully investigated and the necessary action taken. Support and written information for foster carers was needed. However, the inspector was told that a new protocol was being developed which would address these issues. Records showed that complaints made

against foster carers had been properly dealt with. **(see recommendations 12 &13)**

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A senior social worker took lead responsibility for the provision of training for foster carers. The publication of an annual programme had been delayed, due to the change in the occupant of this post. All fostering applicants were said to have attend a training/preparation course and a range of post-approval training courses had been offered. However, records showed that attendance at training courses was variable and that few male carers attended. Most files seen included a record of training attended since December 2003, although dates of training and details of which partner attended were needed. Firmer expectations in relation to training are recommended, compliance with which should be monitored. Clearer training plans should be made at annual reviews. An expectation that foster carers attend core-training courses within their first year of fostering should also be considered. **(see recommendation 14)**

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Each child's main case record was maintained in one of the childcare teams or in the leaving care team. Some information on children placed was also held on file in the Children's Placement Service. Records of statutory reviews were seen but few care plans or other LAC forms. The inspector was told that staff in the Children's Placement Service made every attempt to get copies of these. Foster carers reported that they normally received sufficient information about children placed. (see recommendation 15)

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?

1

There were comprehensive files in place for each foster carer. However, some files were unwieldy and it was difficult to extract papers, due to the type of file used. It was also not easy to find particular papers, as there was no front index sheet and the sections were not directly relevant to the documents retained. Most records of supervising social workers' visits to foster homes were hand written, often in note form and sometimes illegible. Details of past placements were gradually being added to foster carers' files. These needed to include the circumstances of the termination of each placement. The date and terms of foster carers' approval and any changes this was not clearly set out at the front of all files. There was a section in files for complaints. Papers relating to allegations also needed to be retained in this or another separate section. There was little evidence that files had been regularly monitored by supervisors and senior managers. Records were stored securely. A data protection policy was in place and information had been made available to staff and foster carers. A register of foster carers had been maintained but the addition of dates of annual reviews was needed. (see requirement 2 from the previous inspection, requirement 7 and recommendations 16 & 17 from this inspection)

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			130
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 11 months:			117
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 11 months:			111
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			19
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			22
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

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 premises used by the fostering service appeared adequate. The duty room was very small but staff said they found it manageable. As previously mentioned, a new IT system Carefirst 21 had recently been introduced and training was being provided for staff. Social work staff currently shared computers, there being one computer for two staff. The need for each member of staff to have their own computer will become more pressing as the reliance on electronic communication and storage of information increases. As previously mentioned, confidential information was seen to be stored securely in lockable filing cabinets. **(see recommendation 18)**

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?
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	0
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This standard was not specifically addressed on this occasion.

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?
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	0
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This standard was not specifically addressed on this occasion.

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

Fostering allowances covered the cost of caring for a child and included a reward element. Kinship carers were not paid a reward element. Allowances were said to have been regularly reviewed. Holiday payments, retainers and loyalty bonuses were in place. Foster carers reported that allowances were adequate and promptly paid. The exception to this was some one-off payments for items such as equipment, clothing and hair dressing costs. Payment of these was said to often be subject to delay. **(see recommendation 19)**

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

The membership of the fostering panel was diverse and covered a wide range of knowledge and experience. Panel membership was reduced from eleven to ten on the day of inspection. Records showed that all panel members had satisfactory CRB checks and that the most recently recruited independent member had been interviewed. All prospective members should be interviewed and all necessary checks on their suitability made. The fostering panel observed by the inspector was well managed. Cases were considered fully, pertinent issues raised and appropriate decisions made. Minutes of previous panels seen demonstrated that this had also been the case at these panels. However, the inspector considered that the panel was provided with insufficient information in relation to one case. This is referred to under standard 17. Training on diversity had recently been provided for panel members. The fostering panel was not currently provided with management information on the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews. **(see recommendations 20, 21 & 22)**

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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The short-breaks family placement scheme for children and young people with disabilities had continued to expand gradually. Close links had been maintained with the Children's Placement Service. It was recognised that more black/ethnic minority carers were needed. The same assessment format, pre-approval checks, fostering panel and foster-carer agreement were used, as in the mainstream fostering service. The short-breaks scheme was set up with the clear aim of maintaining parents as central to meeting their child's needs.	3
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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?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Records showed that the assessment, approval and support of carers recognised the importance of carers who were part of a child's network. All such carers were said to have supervising social workers and annual reviews. Information on training courses was said to have been sent to these carers but few had attended. A specific support group had also been organised for kinship carers in the past but there had been no response. It is suggested that the fostering service surveys, either through annual reviews or through the fostering executive, the training and support needs of kinship carers. (see recommendation 23)	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 28th February 2005 of inspection here and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

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 21st 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

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

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