



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

West Berks District Council Fostering Services

Avonbank House

West Street

Newbury

RG14 1BZ

8th December 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

Promote improvement in social care

Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors

Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market

Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services

Hold performance statistics on social care

Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services

Register and inspect services against national standards

Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)

3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)

2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)

1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

West Berks District Council Fostering Services

Address

Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury, RG14 1BZ

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

01635 42400

Address

Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury, RG14 1BZ

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

08/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th December 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Nikhil Dave	129989
Name of Inspector	2		
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			

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of West Berks District Council Fostering Services. 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.

West Berkshire family placement team is part of the Children and Families Services provided by West Berkshire Council. This inspection was conducted alongside the inspection of adoption services, and some of the interviews were done jointly. Since the last inspection the team has moved to Avonbank House in Newbury town centre joining the Children's and Families Services under one roof, alongside education.

At the time of this inspection the service offered:

- Short term placements
- Long term placements
- Emergency placements
- Respite care to support disabled children and young people and their families
- Supported lodgings for young people aged 16 plus
- Mother and baby placements.

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 was the third inspection in three years of the West Berkshire fostering service since the Care Standards Act was implemented in 2002. The CSCI service inspectors inspected the Children's service in the summer of 2004 and the service was assessed as serving most people well with excellent capacity to improve.

In 2004 West Berkshire Council and the Local Strategic Partnership jointly agreed to a Children and Young People's Service Plan. The plan has broad strategic remit that places importance on delivery of quality service and adherence to legislative requirements through the Children and Young Persons Directorate that will integrate education, children's services, youth and culture services.

The key objective is to achieve better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated service through partnership. The stated key outcome of the policy is a community where 'children grow up healthy, safe, achieving, employable and able to make a positive contribution as citizens; within this the priority focus being those children most at risk of negative outcomes'. The Corporate Director defined these children as being accommodated or most at risk of such. Fostering service was seen as an integral part of service that alleviated effects of negative outcomes.

The inspector considered that this was a positive inspection that had come just after a period of low staffing levels that had required assistant team leaders to take on cases requiring court work. At the time of inspection the team was fully staffed and overall providing a good service.

This inspection took place between the 8th and 15th December 2004. There was an Adoption service inspection at the same time, and some of the interviews with managers and staff were conducted jointly.

Questionnaires were sent to young people, foster carers and placing authorities.

As part of the inspection the inspectors met with:

Four young people and foster carers in their homes and the birth parents social workers of these young people.

Attended annual Christmas party for the carers.

A group of staff from the fostering service.

A group of placement officers.

A group of Children's Managers.

A group of professional support staff with the service managers.

The management staff of the fostering service.

The panel chair.

Observations were made of the panel and the agency decision-making process.

The fostering service had made considerable progress in implementing the requirements of

the previous report and had finalised some of the policies and procedures as recommended at the last inspection and implemented them.

The manager demonstrated a clear vision for the fostering service and identified the areas in which there were shortfalls and was considering ways to address these issues.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was partially met. There is a clear system for review of the statement of purpose. The children's guides were available. The information provided for children and young persons is being reviewed and updated to make it more age appropriate.

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

Both standards were evaluated as met. The manager is well qualified to undertake the role. This was evidenced through evaluation of the personnel file. The fostering service produces an annual business plan that had been developed in line with the changing legal requirements. The plan reflected the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose and the wider departmental objectives.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4 & 5)

Both standards were evaluated as met. There was a clear management structure in place, which was known by the foster carers. In the pre-inspection information and in interview the manager demonstrated a good awareness of the strengths of the fostering service and areas for improvement. Each assistant team manager has assigned responsibilities. Both assistant team managers have case managed a couple of complex cases over the past year that has had an impact upon their availability to the team. One of the assistant team managers takes the lead for adoption whilst fostering management is shared.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6 – 14)

All nine standards were evaluated. Eight were met and there was a shortfall in Standard 10.

Placing social workers interviewed and sent a questionnaire that presented a very positive picture of care and commitment by the foster parents. On the sample of cases inspected there was evidence that this standard was appropriately met. One of the placements looked at in detail on this inspection was cross-cultural. The foster parents had handled the placement of this young person sensitively. The questionnaires also provided a few examples where the carers felt better planning may have been helpful, but at the same time a majority of carers felt that they were adequately informed about the backgrounds of children they foster.

The fostering service has Safe Care policy and practice guidance. Foster carers interviewed were aware of the policy. An incident of bullying was successfully resolved with the involvement of the school liaison officer. Regular health checks are overseen by the Looked After Children's Nurse.

Children and young persons also have access to the independent visitor scheme and

advocacy scheme as well as the children's participation officer. Foster carers and young people advised that they were well supported by their respective workers and that communication systems were good and listened to at reviews.

The ethos of the department now gives considerable importance to family linkage for vulnerable children and the carers understand and support this. Difficulties were experienced in contact arrangements for birth parents in one of the out of borough cases tracked. The parent contacted was concerned at not being given adequate information and access to the child.

Ensuring that children accommodated receive appropriate education is clearly a priority for the department and the number of liaison teacher posts is to be increased. Foster carers confirmed that they are involved in school meetings and reviews of education.

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

All standards were evaluated and apart from standards 15 and 22, all other standards were met.

There are clear vetting and recruitment and selection procedures in place. The Inspectors viewed the personnel records for 6 members of staff, including the manager. Some shortfalls were identified that will need rectification.

The service is well structured with senior managers that are supportive and knowledgeable and accessible according to workers and known and appreciated by foster carers. The comments by Children's Team managers and placing social workers leads the inspector to believe that the relationships between teams are good and improving. Staff spoken with individually and as a group confirmed that they received regular supervision from their line manager, and were positive about both the formal and informal support networks in place. There are regular team meetings.

Initial enquiries for placements and prospective carers are responded to speedily with good clerical support. The department has developed a local performance indicator to measure efficiency of response.

New workers have been recruited, and at the time of this inspection it appeared that there were sufficient staff to carry out the fostering assessments required. A recruitment officer for foster carers is now in post. A foster carers recruitment strategy is to be implemented next year and appears to have set realistic targets for recruitment and retention of carers.

Assessments seen on files and in panel minutes were generally thorough and detailed; although an issue of vetting of assessments that were presented to the panel was raised with the manager, the panel chair and the decision maker. The audit of foster carers reviews found that all reviews are not being completed within the timescales (and hence the reporting mechanism for the manager). Reports of reviews for some of the existing carers have not been presented to the panel as required under Regulation 29(5). Arrangements need to be made for this to be done.

Records showed that each foster carer was allocated a supervising social worker who visited the foster carers on a regular basis both announced and unannounced. All files sampled contained foster care agreements. Since the last inspection new safe caring agreements have been developed. Foster carers confirmed that they did have a handbook; very few said that they referred to it. The inspector was informed that a new handbook would be issued when the revision of fostering procedures was complete. The inspector viewed policies and

noted that the service had a whistle blowing policy and a health and safety policy for carers, children and staff.

All carers and children interviewed and replying to the questionnaire were aware of the complaints policy. The carers' questionnaire also elicited the information that 5 carers complained on behalf of the children. Most complaints were resolved quickly and efficiently.

Overall, carers considered that the department provided a good level of support or very good level of support, but as related above there were a few exceptions.

From discussion and from information provided prior to the inspection it is evident that good training opportunities exist. A range of internal and external courses is available and some of the training offered is also open to foster carers but the take-up at these courses has been poor, although a few foster carers have attained NVQ Level 3. Following a conference held in November 2004 of departmental managers and staff, foster carers and Fostering Network, the foster carers have taken the initiative and formed an independent organization that they hope will revive interest in training from all foster carers. The West Berkshire Foster Care Association newsletter setting up the group was sent to all foster carers with the departmental newsletter from the fostering team.

The foster carer group accepted the recent finding of CSCI Children's Service inspectors that they also had a responsibility for managing their own learning.

Records (Standards 24 & 25)

Both standards were evaluated, with standard 25 being met, and some shortfalls identified in standard 24. A sample of children and foster carers files were examined.

File audits were evidenced on some of the files. Foster carer files sampled contained appropriate information in relation to the children cared for – placement plans, essential information records, and individual records kept by foster carers were seen. The shortfalls identified in case records and service records identified have been outlined in the text.

Foster carers contacted were generally satisfied with the level of information given to them about young people prior to, or at the point of, placement, by those interviewed and in the questionnaire. Occasional problems were noted with emergency placements of previously unknown young people, but carers confirmed that link workers were usually diligent in chasing up placing social workers for any outstanding information.

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

The fostering service is based in the main social services headquarters building and shares a large open plan office with other social services staff that allows for great ease of contact and communication with other childcare teams and key departmental staff.

Financial requirements (Standards 27- 29)

Standards 27 and 28 were not evaluated. Standard 29 was met. Foster carers confirmed that allowances were paid promptly.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

From observation of one Panel meeting and scrutiny of recent panel meeting minutes and discussion with the Independent Panel Chair, Inspector formed the view that the panel was appropriately rigorous in its scrutiny of assessments and reviews. Positive feedback on the

panel was provided on the day to the panel chair, the decision maker and the manager; and that the Panel Chair is clear about his responsibilities and effective in this role.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not evaluated at this inspection.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was evaluated as met. The fostering service has a kinship care policy. The authority is committed to placing children within the extended family or with familiar adults, if this is possible and in the best interests of the child. This is evidenced by the increase in number of placements with family and friends that have gone up from 6% to 13% of placements. All family and friends carers for looked after children are approved via the Fostering Panel, but with recognition of the existence of previous relationships etc. The assessment reports of family and friends carers for children who are not 'looked after' are designed to take account of their special position and are considered by a special parallel kinship care panel. Those family and friends carers interviewed as part of this inspection or who returned questionnaires felt that assessment was fair.

(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:

--

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.

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	14	FS10	The manager to ensure that there are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed and that attention is paid to supporting contact where the child is placed outside of the area.	7/6/05
2	20	FS15	The manager must ensure that all required information and checks are carried out in respect of all members of staff working for the fostering service.	14/04/05
3	29(5)	FS22	Ensure that Panel has considered a review undertaken since 1.04.02 for all carers.	01/10/05

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	That the fostering service develops an improved children's guide with suitable allowance for the varying ages and abilities of the children being supported by the service.
2	FS17	The manager should consider possibility of providing added supervision and consultation for social work staff presenting reports to panel
3	FS5	The manager should consider introducing a workload management system.
4	FS24	The manager to ensure that up-to-date, comprehensive case records and service records are maintained.

* 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	6
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
Directors of Social services	YES
Child protection officer	YES
Specialist advisor (s)	NO
Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
Interview with children	YES
Interview with foster carers	YES
Interview with agency staff	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

8/12/04

Time of Inspection

10 AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

X

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

The Statement of Purpose was clearly written and had been presented and approved by the elected members in September 2004; the next review is planned for September 2005.

The children's guides were available but not all children spoken with could confirm receiving a copy, although the fostering workers and placing workers informed the inspector that a copy was always given on placement. The information provided is being reviewed to provide information to children based on their age and level of understanding. In the new guide the manager must ensure that the information includes the address and telephone number of the commission and the name, address and telephone number of the Children's Rights Director for England.

The inspectors were also informed that information could be provided in a range of languages and formats so that parents with learning difficulties have access to an advocate.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The manager holds both a social work qualification and an NVQ 4 in management. Copies of these qualifications were found on the manager's personnel file.</p> <p>The manager has considerable experience and knowledge in the field and uses this to exercise clear leadership of the team. The 2 assistant team managers are also suitably qualified and experienced in working within children's services.</p> <p>Members of the team spoken with all said that they felt well supported by managers at every level.</p> <p>The fostering service produces an annual business plan and the inspector was provided with a copy of the most recent plan. The inspector noted that the plan had been developed in line with the changing legal requirements and overall the plan reflected the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose.</p>		

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
<p>The personnel file of the manager evidenced that all the requirements of schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 were met.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager outlined clearly the range of activities undertaken by the fostering service. In the pre-inspection information and in interview she demonstrated a good awareness of the strengths of the service and areas for improvement. The manager has been pro-active in setting up systems for direct reports to her and auditing systems for health and safety and reviews were evidenced.

There are clear lines of communication and accountability between managers and staff. It was evident from the meeting with members of the staff team that they had a clear understanding of lines of responsibility. It was evident from discussions with foster carers that supervising social workers monitor their records.

Although Local Authority fostering services are not statutorily required to notify the Commission of the incidents listed below, this information is requested annually as part of the pre-inspection information.

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

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.

1

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.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

X

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

5

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

The manager and all members of staff in the team have job descriptions and, on interview, were clear about their roles and any areas of particular responsibility. Both assistant team managers have case managed a couple of complex cases over the past year that has had an impact upon their availability to the team. Work in both cases is in its last stages, but residual responsibilities remain. Each assistant team manager has assigned responsibilities, with one of them taking lead for adoption whilst fostering management is shared jointly.

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
<p>There was evidence on the carer files seen that an annual health and safety audit had been undertaken. New system developed to ensure that health and safety recommendations was evidenced, with recommendations being followed up.</p> <p>Four foster carer homes were visited during the course of the inspection. The homes provided warm, comfortable accommodation for the children.</p> <p>As part of this inspection Inspectors 'tracked' the care of four children and young people. Each of their foster homes was visited. The homes were all warm and furnished and communal areas decorated to an acceptable standard.</p> <p>Placing social workers interviewed confirmed that children were placed appropriately and that most of them were making good progress. The placing officers questionnaire also presented a very positive picture of care and commitment by the foster parents.</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?	3
<p>The inspectors were informed that staff had attended training on valuing diversity. On the sample of cases inspected there was evidence that this standard was appropriately met. The new placement information and agreement record addresses issues relating to diversity.</p> <p>One of the placements looked at in detail on this inspection was cross-cultural. The child had been placed with carers who were of different race and culture. The young person interviewed had settled well in this home, where the foster parents had experience of settling abroad themselves. The foster parents had handled the placement of this young person sensitively. They had encouraged the young person to become more culturally and religiously aware of his own faith. The support from the department and (his own) community leaders had assisted in this process. Another placement inspection of a child with disabilities considered his needs were met well and the county of residence had supplied the required equipment and aids that were needed.</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?	3
<p>There was oral evidence from young people in long-term placements that they had been provided with opportunities for introduction to the foster carers prior to placement as part of the matching process.</p> <p>Referrals for placements are discussed at team meetings and efforts are made to match children with carers able to meet their particular needs at the placement information and agreement meeting. The placement referral form contains a matching grid that social workers use to make placements. There was evidence from records, observation and minutes of the Panel meetings, of the Panel being involved in matching, particularly for children for whom a long-term placement was under consideration.</p> <p>According to placing social workers they take the carers' strengths and weaknesses into account when considering placements. Less formal matching processes are in place for children placed in an emergency or for short-term care. The questionnaire also provided a few examples where the carers felt better planning may have been helpful, but at the same time a majority of carers felt that they were adequately informed about the backgrounds of children they foster.</p>		

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
<p>There are clear processes for dealing with allegations of neglect or other abuse of a child in foster care, and processes for managing allegations against carers. According to the manager issues arising from such a case last year had been satisfactorily resolved. There is a system in place that provides for the monitoring of child protection issues.</p> <p>The fostering service has Safe Care policy and practice guidance. Foster carers interviewed were aware of the policy. Carers spoken with were clear that corporal punishment was unacceptable and this is included in the foster care agreement.</p> <p>Policies and procedures on bullying and children missing from care have been implemented. An incident of bullying was followed up with the foster parents and the young person concerned. The matter had been successfully resolved between carers and the school, with input from the school liaison officer.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The ethos of the department now gives considerable importance to family linkage for vulnerable children. Foster carers interviewed exhibited full understanding of the children's need for contact and appeared to be most supportive of this need. Through interviews and records it was established that some foster carers facilitated contact either by way of providing transport and/or utilizing their homes where appropriate.

The young people spoken with were very clear that they were well supported and were encouraged by carers to maintain family contacts and the wishes of the young people were taken into account when arranging contact. Resources are made available to ensure contact happens, and a parent confirmed this.

Birth parents have experienced difficulties in maintaining contact in two of the out of borough cases. Two of the birth parents contacted were concerned at not being given adequate information or consulted and one over access to the children. In one instance, the birth parent felt that the decisions on contact had been made on outdated information. The mother has not been invited to any reviews and was recently sent twelve previous reviews. It appears very little support has been offered to this parent who has moved away. In another case the decision was based on a court ruling that needed clarification in light of changed circumstances and the indirect request of a young person for contact.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The department has a children's participation officer whose task it is to communicate with young people in care and to assist young persons accommodated to express their views. Children and young persons also have access to the independent visitor scheme and advocacy scheme. The views of the young people are actively sought through a questionnaire that can be completed on-line, as part of the new system for the annual review of foster carers. Responses to the confidential questionnaire of children indicated that they do feel listened to by their carers, and that they were aware of what to do if they had concerns. This was confirmed in individual interviews and two of the young persons spoken to knew how to make a complaint. The questionnaire response supported this finding.

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
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Case files provided essential information on health of children. This is supplemented by annual health checks which are overseen by the Looked –After Children’s’ Nurse. The foster carers have access to services provided by CAMHS. Access to NHS dentists is an issue that has been referred to the local Primary Care Trust for resolution.

It is the responsibility of the LAC Nurse to ensure that the health care records for the young people that are maintained by foster carers are appropriately transferred when the young person moves on.

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
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The Corporate Director articulated his vision on how education should assist in creating greater life chances for vulnerable young people. Ensuring children accommodated receive appropriate education is clearly a priority for the department. The department has published a booklet ‘Bridging the Gap’ that provides support information for professionals working with looked after children.

A 'Looked after Children' liaison teacher post has been established for 2 years and is considered to have been very successful. This has led to plans to establish a similar post with the two post holders now having separate responsibilities for primary and secondary education. This section will also be recruiting a part-time youth worker, a part of whose time will be available to Children’s Services. The inspector was informed by social workers that the post holder is also involved in the development of Personal Education Plans for children. These plans were evidenced on young persons files. He is also assisting in arranging for three young persons to return to school following their exclusion.

In the sample of tracked children, three were in full time education. Foster carers confirmed that they are involved in school meetings and reviews of education. Young people and foster carers spoke positively about the good links that are in place with education and an example provided of how extra tuition was arranged to help a young person. Although the department aims for all young persons in foster homes to have a computer this was not always the case.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Authority has policies and procedures in place in respect of young people leaving Local Authority care. The fostering team has improved its links with the Adolescent team. The manager identified the need for more joint working between the teams and foster parents, and from the questionnaire returns it is a topic that appears to need attention.

Pathways' planning was not directly evidenced, but it was evident in discussions with carers and young people. Carers confirmed that they were involved in making plans affecting a young person's future after care. One young person was able to relate how the planning had assisted him in making a decision on further training and planning for the future.

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
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Standard inspected by Adoption Inspectors.

There are clear vetting and recruitment and selection procedures in place. Staff who are involved in the interviewing process receive appropriate training in this area.

All workers are expected to have had a satisfactory CRB check prior to taking up their post.

The manager informed the inspectors that there is a system in place in respect of updating CRB checks on a 3 yearly basis. The Inspectors viewed the personnel records for 6 members of staff including the manager. Overall the files met regulation and standard but the inspectors noted that there was the lack of consistency as had been noted in adopters files in respect of the information held about CRB checks. Also,

- For one member of staff it seemed that she had been checked against the Protection of Vulnerable Adults list but not the Protection of Children Act 1999 list.
- And that there were some discrepancies in respect of another member of staff in terms of her employment history.
- Telephone calls to referees to verify the reference were not carried out in all cases.
- Records of the interview were not on file in every case.

A requirement has been made in respect of the above issues.

All social workers are qualified at DipSW or equivalent.

The service is on track for 40% of social workers employed within the team having obtained a PQ1 by April 2006.

System is in place for less experienced members of staff to jointly work a case with a more experienced member of staff.

The manager informed the inspectors that specialist advisers are appropriately qualified in West Berks District Council Fostering Services

their respective fields.

Support workers employed within the children's teams and who carry out specific pieces of work for the adoption process are supervised by qualified workers.

Total number of staff of the agency:	19	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	2
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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
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There is a shared commitment to provide better than average care (excellent care, according to the service manager) in line with the ethos of the department. Service is well structured with senior managers that are supportive and knowledgeable and accessible according to workers spoken to. That the management is known and appreciated by foster carers became evident at a Christmas party held by the department, and in the questionnaires returned.

Initial enquiries for placements and prospective carers are responded to speedily with good clerical support. The department has developed a local performance indicator to measure efficiency of response.

The comments by Children's Team managers and placing social workers leads the inspector to believe that the relationships between teams are good and improving. One of the comments by a Children's' Team manager was that over the past year the fostering service had been able to find a placement when requested – although not always in-borough.

The ATMs are responsible for undertaking the annual foster care reviews. The manager reported that the improvement in the quality of administrative support to the fostering service in the past year had been sustained with the addition of extra administrative hours that has assisted the review process.

Following last year's inspection, a protocol has been devised to address any difficulties that may arise between social workers, placing officers and foster parents. Foster parents were involved in drafting the protocol that does not replace anyone's rights to access the Authority's complaint procedure.

Staff spoken with individually and as a group confirmed that they received regular supervision from their line manager, and were positive about both the formal and informal support networks in place. There are regular team meetings.

All members of staff have job descriptions that clearly set out their roles and responsibilities. All social workers employed by West Berkshire are in the process of registering with the GSCC.

There was evidence from discussion with staff and foster carers, and from an examination of files, that assessments of prospective carers are carried out by suitably qualified workers.

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?**

3

New workers have been recruited, and at the time of this inspection it appeared that there were sufficient staff to carry out the fostering assessments required as the team was now fully staffed, although it was due to lose an experienced member of staff soon.

The manager identified both in discussion and in the pre-inspection information that the recruitment of foster carers was an area to be addressed. A recruitment officer for foster carers is now in post. A draft for foster carers recruitment strategy was seen. This strategy is to be implemented next year and appears to have set realistic targets for recruitment and retention of carers.

The Assistant team managers raised the point that if there was a successful recruitment campaign, they may not have sufficient staff to complete all the assessments. The service manager was aware of this issue. The manager noted that prioritisation of work may be needed to accomplish possible increase in assessments.

There was an appropriate assessment framework in place for potential new carers covering all relevant areas listed under this standard. Assessments for fostering permanency placements are currently carried out by the same staff, and this work was subject to separate CSCI inspection in respect of its adoption work and as a result was not inspected as part of this inspection.

Assessments seen on files and in panel minutes were generally thorough and detailed; although an issue of vetting of assessments that were presented to the panel was raised with the manager, the panel chair and the decision maker. This is normally the task for assistant team managers who have carried extra responsibilities over the last 12 months as related elsewhere in the report.

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

Staff advised that they were aware of the Authority's personnel policies and considered the Authority to be a fair employer.

Records showed that each foster carer was allocated a supervising social worker who visited the foster carers on a regular basis both announced and unannounced with all visits being recorded on file. Social workers advised that they carried out visits to ensure that foster carers received supervision, appraisal and support. The inspector viewed policies and noted that the service had a health and safety policy for carers, children and staff. Since the inspection last year the department has introduced a whistle blowing policy that encourages staff to raise any issues of concern without fear of intimidation. Staff reported they were aware of the policy.

Levels of support and advice to carers were generally seen as good and there was praise for the support offered by some family link workers who, if not immediately available, were reported to respond promptly and effectively to any arising concerns.

The establishment of out-of-hours duty service staffed by managers has increased support to carers out of office hours. Foster carers can now access a member of the family placement team by telephone during the evenings and at weekends. Carers spoken with were all aware of this new service, and those who had used it spoke very positively about it. The inspector was advised that a record is kept of all calls and of the times when the worker needs to respond by going out to the carer. The service is being monitored and evaluated.

The questionnaire response on support varied from excellent to poor and a number of carers revealed instances where they felt unhappy about the support offered by the department. Overall, carers considered that the department provided a good level of support or very good level of support, but as related above there were a few exceptions.

All carers (except one) and children interviewed and in the questionnaire were aware of the complaints policy. Surprisingly (in the questionnaire) most of the placing officers did not profess similar awareness of the policy. The carers' questionnaire also elicited the information that 5 carers complained on behalf of the children and 3 complaints were resolved quickly and efficiently, and of the other two, one is at the resolution stage. The complaints policy has been reviewed and revised recently, and will be disseminated to the carers by the complaints officer.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
From discussion, and from information provided prior to the inspection it is evident that good training opportunities exist. A range of internal and external courses is available and all internal courses are open to foster carers. All qualified staff are encouraged to undertake post-qualifying training, and 1 member of staff has completed post qualification training and three others are working towards it. New staff confirmed that induction training had been made available to them.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All staff reported that they were well supported, both formally through regular monthly supervision and informally. Newer staff reported that more frequent supervision is offered to them. Staff meetings are held fortnightly. The manager reported that all staff had received an annual appraisal. There was evidence on files of managers reading and signing files in line with the departmental policy.		

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

Generally the foster carers in discussion described working relationships positively, and this was reflected in the questionnaire response. Majority of carers in the questionnaire felt they were getting excellent to adequate support, but there were a couple who felt they did not get enough support. Some of these difficulties appear to be related to the lack of information provided by the placing social workers to some of the long-term foster parents.

All carers spoken with felt well supported by their link workers, and spoke positively about these relationships. In the questionnaires a slightly different picture emerges, where the carers sometimes feel that they are not always treated as partners in care.

All foster carers also have a membership of the Fostering Network paid for by the local authority. This gives them access to independent advice and support.

The inspectors also met with the service manager and the team of 'support professionals' for all looked after children in care, and it is evident from the meeting and documentation provided that West Berkshire sees support to carers and children as an important plank in its support strategy for vulnerable children.

Formal respite care for existing foster carers is somewhat limited at present although there was clear evidence of respite/holiday breaks being arranged where required, usually supported by other carers within the service.

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**

Every carer is supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker and all files sampled contained foster care agreements. There was also evidence on files of supervisory visits undertaken by support staff e.g. health & safety. Since the last inspection new safe caring agreements have been developed. The new format fulfils the requirements of the legislation. Not all foster carers have signed these agreements, and one carer interviewed wished to discuss some of the terms with the department.

Foster carers confirmed that they did have a handbook; very few said that they referred to it. The inspector was informed that a new handbook would be issued when the revision of fostering procedures was complete. It was referred to as 'works in the making'. It is advised that foster carers are involved in the process and there should be a target date set for the issue of the new handbook.

The majority of carers spoken to at the time of the inspection reported meeting regularly with supervising social workers. The recording of supervisory meetings was variable. The quality of supervision was an issue referred to positively in most instances in the questionnaire. However, one respondent quite pointedly stated that what she required when discussing difficult placements was a 'bit of TLC, not counselling'.

The authority has clear expectations of the role of supervising social workers, including the requirement for unannounced visits that are a vital part of the monitoring of the service provided.

Assistant team leaders chair annual reviews of foster carers. Almost every carer and all West Berks District Council Fostering Services

children in the survey responded that they took part in reviews. The audit of foster carers reviews found that all reviews are not being completed within the timescales (and hence the reporting mechanism for the manager). Reports of annual reviews for existing carers have not been taken to panel, as required under Regulation 29(5). Arrangements need to be made for this to be done.

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?

3

Enhancement of fostering skills was seen as partly a process of identification of skills gaps and partly a process of ongoing supervision. Some skills training through this process was acknowledged by one of the kinship carers.

As previously stated, the department makes courses available for foster carers. The take-up at these courses has been poor, although a few foster carers have attained NVQ Level 3. On a positive note a similar question (in the questionnaire) elicited a reference to at least one course attended by three-quarters of respondents. The foster carer group accepted the recent finding of CSCI Children's Service inspectors that they also had a responsibility for managing their own learning. Following a conference held in November 2004 of departmental managers and staff, foster carers and Fostering Network, the foster carers have taken the initiative and formed an independent organization that they hope will revive interest in training from all foster carers. The West Berkshire Foster Care Association newsletter setting up the group was sent to all foster carers with the departmental newsletter from the fostering team.

Apart from the above there are joint arrangements in place with other unitary authorities for pre-approval training.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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A sample of children and foster carers files were examined. File audits were evidenced on some of the files. Foster carer files sampled contained appropriate information in relation to the children cared for – placement plans, essential information records and records of visits to carers where children were seen. Care plans detailed necessary information in relation to health, education and contact issues. The fostering service makes clear to all carers the need to record significant events in the life of a child and carers confirmed that they kept all records securely. Individual records kept by foster carers were seen and where these had been examined by supervising social workers were also looked at. The following issues were identified:

- There should be an accurate record of (external) placing authority's social workers responsible for a looked after child (one placing officer's questionnaire was returned with a statement the person no longer worked there. However, the worker had left the authority almost 12 months back).
- Chronologies on children's files were not up-to-date.
- The e-mails on files were not always relevant, and in one instance contained details of another case.

The fostering service has a policy on retention of files, and a new secure facility for records storage has been identified.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service held records appropriately. The department is in the process of changing its software database.

The records seen were clear, mostly legible and the information was accessible.

Foster carers contacted were generally satisfied with the level of information given to them about young people prior to, or at the point of, placement, by those interviewed and in the questionnaire. Occasional problems were noted with emergency placements of previously unknown young people, but carers confirmed that link workers were usually diligent in chasing up placing social workers for any outstanding information. One particular area of concern for one of the carers interviewed and in response to the questionnaire was the occasional lack of information over potential risks that might be faced by themselves or their own and other children in the home.

Carers are given a lockable storage facility to store records.
 Records they make about a child are seen, and signed by the supervising social worker on each visit.
 Complaints about the service are passed to the Complaints Officer for the Authority.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			73
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			157
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			140
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			7
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			13
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	116.84	Maximum £	289.92

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service was based in the main social services headquarters building for the local authority.

The fostering staff team shares a large open plan office with other social services staff, which although not ideal in terms of providing a quiet working space, does allow for great ease of contact and communication with other childcare teams and key departmental staff.

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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This standard was not evaluated.

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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This standard was not evaluated.

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

The fostering administration section has one person responsible for the fostering allowances. The carers consulted during the course of the inspection confirmed payments were accurate and received on time. There is a written policy on fostering allowances of which foster carers are all made aware. The allowances are reviewed annually in line with the budgetary developments of the local authority. The foster carers expressed no concerns about the allowance scheme or payment.

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 panel procedures are outlined in West Berkshire Fostering Panel Handbook, which is a comprehensive document detailing relevant regulations and standards and giving guidance to Panel members. The constitution of the panel is in line with Regulation. Inspector was informed that efforts are continuing to recruit a person who has been in foster care, or has the experience of the care system. The panel will also be inviting an educational psychologist to join them following resignation from the panel of a member of the education department.

Panel members attended a training day earlier this year. Panel business meetings take place twice a year. Since the last inspection the panel is provided with information about needs of children waiting for placements and the types of carers needed. This forms part of the Panel's Quality Assurance function.

From observation of one Panel meeting and scrutiny of recent panel meeting minutes and discussion with the Independent Panel Chair, Inspector formed the view that the panel was appropriately rigorous in its scrutiny of assessments and reviews. Positive feedback on the panel was provided on the day to the panel chair, the decision maker and the manager; and that the Panel Chair is clear about his responsibilities and effective in this role.

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?	0
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This standard was assessed the previous year, and was not evaluated on this occasion.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector met with staff, foster carers and young people and viewed policies, procedures and other documentation to gain evidence for this standard. The authority is committed to placing children within the extended family or with familiar adults, if this is possible and in the best interests of the child. This is evidenced by the increase in number of placements with family and friends that have gone up from 6% to 13% of placements. All family and friends carers for looked after children are approved via the Fostering Panel, but with recognition of the existence of previous relationships etc. The assessment reports of family and friends carers for children who are not 'looked after' are designed to take account of their special position and are considered by a special parallel kinship care panel.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that (child's own) family settings present particular challenges to the consistent application of standards especially in respect of the expectations of carers in areas such as supervision, training and record-keeping. The service does however recognize the need to tailor training to meet their differing requirements and ongoing support that must respect pre-existing relationships.</p> <p>Those family and friends carers interviewed as part of this inspection or who returned questionnaires felt that assessment was fair but felt intrusive. They also stated that they understood the need for a thorough assessment. They believed that they had benefited from the support of link workers and other carers at training events.</p>		

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 <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We should like to record our thanks for the attention paid to our previous very full feedback.

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"/>

Note:

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

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

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

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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
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