



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Foster Care NCH: Wessex Community Projects

213 West Street
Fareham
Hampshire
PO16 0EN

25 February 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?

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

Foster Care

Name of Agency

N.C.H Wessex Community Project

Tel No 01329 225720

Address

213 West Street, Fareham, Hants, PO16 0EN

Fax No 01329 225721

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA H030001174

Name of Registered Provider NCH Action for Children

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable) Barbara Russell

Date of first registration 9-01-04

**Date of latest registration certificate
9-01-04**

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

20-03-03

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		25-02-04 10:00 am	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Brian McQuoid	
Name of Inspector	2	Bridgette Lowe	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)			
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)			

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 2001 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of NCH Foster Care. 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 2001 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 NCSC 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 2001. 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

The NCH Wessex Community Project offers family based placements as an alternative to custody, for young people up to the age of 17. Carers provide stability and security for young people awaiting sentencing, and for some who have been released on licence. The project also provides supported accommodation for young people where homelessness contributes to the risk of re-offending, and an emergency placement scheme.

The project operates in partnership with Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight Social Services Departments, the National Probation Service and the Youth Justice Board. Referrals come predominantly from the Wessex Youth Offending Team and the service provides for up to ten carers at any one time. At the time of the inspection there were six carers active with some ongoing assessments and a recruitment campaign in progress for more carers.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

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

The inspectors were impressed with the quality of the service provided at the project and the child-centred manner in which it operates. It was however disappointing to note the project had not further developed since the previous inspection, and had lost some carers. The fundamental principles upon which the project is based are unquestionable and the outcomes for young people seen to be positive. The inspectors would hope that the service receives due recognition of its work and that the potential for development highlighted at the previous inspection does not remain unrealised.

Statement of Purpose

This standard was assessed as fully met. The project provides a range of information to carers and young people within which the aims and objectives of the service are clearly stated.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service

Both standards were assessed to be fully met. The manager of the service and her deputy both possess suitable skills and experience and manage the project both efficiently and effectively.

Management of the Fostering Service

One standard was assessed to be fully met, while the other was exceeded.

The service has well established monitoring procedures in place that operate effectively in ensuring a high quality service is maintained.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

Eight of the standards were fully met and one was exceeded.

There are well established processes for ensuring young people are provided with a suitable environment and suitable training and information provided to carers to help them keep young people safe. Information gathering is good and supports the matching process effectively. Contact arrangements for young people are clearly recorded and suitably encouraged and facilitated. The project is very child-centred and routinely seeks the views of young people on a regular basis. Workers also support carers well and act as advocates for young people in respect of health, education, and moving towards independent living.

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

Five of the standards were assessed to be fully met and four to be exceeded.

The project has clear staffing structure, staff are recruited and selected appropriately, and at the time of the inspection there were an adequate number of staff to operate the service

effectively. NCH have sound employment practices, which encourage staff development, and the project was seen to provide excellent support for its staff and carers.

Records

This standard was assessed to be fully met.

Comprehensive care records are maintained for carers and young people and these were seen to be well organised and up-to-date.

Fitness of Premises for Use as Fostering Service

This standard was assessed to be fully met. The premises are well equipped and suitably secure, and there is good administrative support for workers.

Financial Requirements

All three standards were assessed to be fully met.

The project was seen to be financially sound and to be meeting its financial obligations to carers.

Fostering Panels

This standard was assessed to be fully met. The panel was considered to be operating effectively and to be properly constituted with suitable training provided to its members.

Short-Term Breaks

This standard was assessed to be fully met.

The project provides short-term respite within the service for young people in placement already and has introduced allowances for carers in relation to these arrangements.

Family and Friends as Carers

This standard did not apply to the service.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection 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 2001.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission 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		

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 and recommendations 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 2001, 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	

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 proposed 'Children's Guide' contains explicit information concerning contact for young people with their family and friends.
2	FS11	That young people are provided with details of how to contact the commission as part of the projects complaints procedures.
3	FS17	That NCH seek ways of addressing the problem of recruiting qualified staff in the light of the projects uncertain funding.

* 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	4.0
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• 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	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	25/02/04
Time of Inspection	10.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	16

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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.

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 project has a Statement of Purpose and associated literature that clearly describe its aims and objectives and details of the services provided. These are reviewed on an annual basis. A “Children’s Guide” has been produced by NCH and was seen in draft form at the time of the inspection. The inspectors would recommend that the guide contain more explicit information concerning contact for young people with their family and friends. The project fully recognise the corporate nature of some of the literature produced by NCH and are able to provide additional material more relevant to the project if necessary.		

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

The manager of the project and her deputy are both suitably qualified and possess knowledge and experience relevant to the service. The service is extremely well managed and staff and carers provided supporting evidence to confirm this.

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

The projects manager has been registered with the NCSC and as such has been deemed a suitable person to manage a fostering service.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

There are clear processes in place that ensure effective monitoring of the service. Regular meetings take place with the project's partners where reports produced contain statistical data in relation to placements and provide clear evidence of the project's performance. In addition there are regular team meetings, individual supervision for all staff, and frequent contact with carers and young people. Carers are supervised on a regular basis and there are post-placement meetings held for all placements.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to NCSC 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

All staff have job descriptions, there are clear lines of accountability within the project and suitable arrangements in place for when the manager is absent.

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

Carers' households are subject to a comprehensive check prior to approval and as part of the annual review process thereafter. Carers receive appropriate training and information relevant to their health and safety responsibilities and workers from the project visit households regularly, including one annual unannounced visit. Carers are made aware that they may be visited and interviewed as part of the Commission's inspection process. Households visited as part of the inspection were seen to provide suitable environments for young people.

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

Valuing diversity and promoting equality are principles that are integral to the philosophy of NCH and are clearly stated within literature provided to carers and within supporting policies and procedures. Carers confirmed they receive relevant training in this area and information is also contained in the carers' handbook.

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

The project has clear referral procedures and records provided evidence of thorough information gathering as part of the process prior to placement. Risk assessments are also carried out at this time and there are clear criteria to consider as part of the matching process. The nature of the service means that introductory visits are not always possible but carers are able to visit young people or make contact prior to post-custody placements, and confirmed that they do. Workers at the project are good at ensuring carers are as fully informed as possible prior to a placement commencing and in chasing up the relevant agencies when information is not forthcoming.

Placement meetings are held as soon as possible after placement and care planning meetings within 72 hours.

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

Carers confirmed that they receive appropriate information and training relevant to the protection of young people. This includes covering child protection procedures; guidance on bullying as an issue and information on managing behaviour that states explicitly that corporal punishment is not acceptable. Safe-caring plans have been introduced since the previous inspection and are now being completed for all new carers. These were seen as a positive development.

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

The importance of maintaining contact with family and friends for a young person was something carers were well aware of and which they facilitate and encourage appropriately. Contact arrangements are clearly recorded and workers at the project are good at supporting carers and young people during the sometimes difficult process of maintaining and developing relationships with family members.

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?****4**

Seeking the views of young people is an integral part of how the project operates and there was clear evidence on case records to support this. Carers clearly understood the importance of listening to young people and this was a reflection of the child-centred manner in which the service is conducted. Young people are made aware of and provided with information on how to complain. The inspectors would recommend young people also have details of how to contact the commission as part of the complaints process.

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**

Young people's health-related needs are identified as part of the care planning process. Carers are made aware of their responsibilities in respect of young people's health and confirmed that they ensure young people placed with them are registered with a GP and dentist. The project's workers and Youth Offending Team workers provide support for carers concerning health issues. First aid training is available to carers; there is access to a Consultant Child Psychiatrist and helpful advice and guidance in the foster care handbook.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Carers confirmed that the project places a high priority on maintaining young people's educational placements and provides them with good support in relation to this and any education issues. Educational resources can be difficult to access, but the service has a good record in enabling young people to return to education and alongside carers are the main advocates for young people in this respect.

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**

There are clear expectations of carers in respect to this standard and these are fully supported by workers from the project with suitable information, advice and training. The child-centred ethos of the project ensures that young people's views are sought regularly concerning their future and appropriate action taken when possible. The project has a 'Rough Guide to Living Independently' that assists carers and young people in identifying and working together to achieve life-skills. In addition to this a joint project between NCH and Norwich Union has produced a helpful financial guide for young people in the 'care system. This should be available shortly. One young person confirmed that his carer and the project had given him valuable help in preparing for independence.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

NCH have clear procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of staff and there was evidence at the project of these being implemented in practice. Staff at the project are suitably qualified for their roles by virtue of professional qualifications and extensive knowledge and experience of work in this field. A senior practitioner provides suitable supervision and was overseeing a student social worker carrying out an assessment at the time of the inspection.

Total number of staff of the agency:

7

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The project has a clear management structure and lines of accountability. Workloads are managed effectively; there is regular monitoring of the service and monthly supervision for staff. Administrative support is good and there is access to the wider network of NCH as a national organisation for consultation and advice. Workers have a clear understanding of their roles and that of workers from their partnership agencies and liaise effectively with them.

Staff are required to be familiar with NCH policies and procedures and these are freely accessible.

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
At the time of the inspection the project had an adequate number of suitably qualified and experienced workers to meet the needs of carers, and were using sessional staff to address any shortfall. There is an issue for the project in being able to recruit suitably qualified staff because of the nature of the project and the uncertainty of continued funding from year to year. The inspectors would recommend NCH seek ways of addressing this dilemma. The assessment process for carers was seen to be carried out rigorously and to be well evidenced. The projects deputy manager is shortly to attend a 'Skills to Foster' course and this will bring the pre-approval process up-to-date.		

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?	4
NCH as an organisation have sound and established employment practices and the project was seen to provide excellent support for staff and carers.		

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
Staff at the project receive NCH induction training and are subject to a six-month probationary period after which they are appraised. Monthly supervision and annual appraisals help identify individual training needs and the South East Region of NCH have a training calendar with ongoing training that staff can access. This is not a prohibitive process however and the project's supports staff on internal or external training opportunities. Training is linked to the needs of carers, and supervision training and the proposed NVQ assessor training were examples of this. The organisation's training department reviews the NCH training calendar. Joint training with carers takes place regularly.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
All staff at the project have clear job descriptions and are provided with access to all relevant policies and procedures. Formal supervision is carried out monthly, annual appraisals take place and there are regular minuted team meetings. Group supervision takes place and the project was felt to provide excellent informal and formal support for its staff.		

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?	4
The service has a clearly, defined strategy for supporting carers that includes training, supervision, a comprehensive handbook, 24 hour support, regular reviews and arrangements for respite. In addition workers provide support and advice for carers that is wide ranging and includes health and education. All those carers spoken to during the inspection were very positive about the support provided for them. Annual reviews of carers were seen to be thorough and all are considered by the panel.		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10) The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
The expectations of carers are explicitly stated within the 'Foster Care' agreement and carers were well aware of what was expected of them. All carers have a named worker who provides them with supervision and support on a regular basis. Carers are provided with a comprehensive handbook that contains details of policies and procedures as well as helpful information and guidance. Procedures for complaints and dealing with allegations are included in the handbook.		

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**

All new carers receive an induction and pre-approval training that involves existing carers. The newly recruited carers to the project were very positive about this process and how beneficial it had been. Ongoing training is provided for carers and this includes regular sessions on solution-focused therapy from a consultant adolescent and child psychiatrist. These sessions are much valued by the project's carers and provide excellent opportunities for group support. Carers at the project are in the future to have the opportunity to undertake NVQ Level 3 in 'Caring for Children and Young People'. Two staff members are shortly to undertake training as NVQ assessors in order to facilitate this process.

Safe-caring training is routinely provided to carers and family members. The inspectors felt the project to be responsive to the needs of carers and to provide training that supported them in meeting the needs of young people placed with them. Annual reviews are thorough and with regular supervision taking place there are sound processes for identifying training needs.

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

Case records for young people were seen to be well maintained and up-to-date. There is an established policy on case recording for workers, and carers receive relevant guidance and information on recording and the need for safe storage and confidentiality of information.

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

The project maintains separate records for young people and carers and these are stored securely with a clear policy on access. These were seen to be well organised and provided easy access to information. 'Looked After Children' documentation was in evidence on all files viewed. The service maintains those records as required by Schedule 2 of the Fostering Regulations. At the time of the inspection there had been no complaints against the service or allegations against carers received.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

5

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

44

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

39

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

2

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

2

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

Maximum £

360

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 project are entirely suitable for the purpose. They provide for adequate office space for workers, suitably secure storage of records, and have a room available for meetings and training sessions for staff and carers. There is good administrative support with IT systems in place and the premises are suitably insured.		

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The project has service level agreements in place with all of its partners and quarterly meetings are held to which the project provides detailed reports. These agreements are renewed annually. The project itself is reviewed annually by NCH with a business plan drawn up for the forthcoming year. At the time of the inspection the project had received its budget forecast from NCH for the forthcoming financial year.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are well-established systems in place that govern the financial operation of the project and accounts are audited by a registered accountant.

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**

Carers are fully informed about the allowances and expenses payable to them and confirmed that they received these promptly and that they adequately covered the cost of caring for young people placed with them.

NCH review allowances paid on a regular basis and recently introduced respite allowances for carers.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There are clear operational procedures in place for the projects panel which was seen to be properly constituted. There is appropriate access to relevant professional advice and panel minutes reflected a rigorous process in operation. The project had recently recruited a young 'care leaver' who is to become a panel member. This was yet another example of good practice and initiative within the project.

Panel members receive appropriate training in relation to the panel's operation, and their responsibilities.

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?

3

The service does not provide short-term breaks as part of its primary functions, but does provide respite arrangements for carers and young people. There are clear procedures in place for these and recently introduced allowances. Carers within the project provide the respite care.

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?	9
Standard not applicable.		

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor** _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____**Lead Inspector** _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 25 February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

YES

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 15 April 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

☐

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

☐

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

☐

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

☐

Other: <enter details here>

☐

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC 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 Foster Care NCH: Wessex
Community Projects 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 Foster Care NCH: Wessex
Community Projects 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 _____