



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Barnardos North West Fostering Service

5 Lineside Close
Liverpool
Merseyside
L25 2UD

17th March – 23 March 2004 and 31st
March 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?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Barnardos North West Fostering Service

Tel No

0151 488 0822

Address

5 Lineside Close, Liverpool, Merseyside, L25 2UD

Fax No

0151 488 1100

Email Address

julie.dugdale@barnardos.org.uk

Registered Number of IFA

F020000762

Name of Registered Provider

Barnardos North West Fostering Service

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mr John Hardy

Date of first registration

10th September 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

10th September 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

?

Date of last inspection

24/02/03

Date of Inspection Visit		17 March – 23 March 2004 and 31 March 2004	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Beate Roth	103343
Name of Inspector	2	Marian Denny	
Name of Inspector	3	Not applicable	
Name of Inspector	4	Not applicable	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not applicable	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		Not applicable	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr John Hardy, Registered Manager	

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Barnardos North West Fostering Service. 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 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 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.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's premises are of a high standard and well furnished. There is access to meeting rooms, as well as training rooms within the building. The offices are well equipped and support staff, in the effective delivery of a fostering service.

The fostering service consists of a service manager, who oversees the operation of the service, one deputy children's service manager, who deputises in the absence of the children's service manager, and one team leader, seven Barnardo's social workers and five administrative staff.

The fostering service functions are divided between two teams, comprising of long-term foster care and short-term breaks, which also include contract care and the befriending service.

At the time of the inspection, there were 62 short-break and long-term foster carers and 1 contract carer, providing care to children looked after by a variety of local authorities. The service works closely with the child/young person's local authority social workers, health, education, cultural services and other appropriate agencies.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's main function is to provide a range of fostering placements for children with severe learning difficulties, who are looked after by the local authority.

The services provided are as follows: -

- Planned, structured, family based short – term break support to children residing with their birth families.
- Planned family based short – term breaks for long – term foster carers, in order to provide appropriate respite care.
- A befriending service to support long – term carers, in ensuring older children/young people access the local facilities in their community.
- Long – term care to meet the needs of children, who are no longer able to live in their families.

In providing the above fostering placements, Barnardo's North West Fostering Service recruits, assesses and approves foster carers. The service also trains, supports and carries out annual reviews of foster carers.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering service was providing placements for 45 children, from several local authorities.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

The inspection of Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's took place in March 2004. The inspection found that the majority of the National Minimum Standards were met and that the overall quality of service was good. Where any shortfalls were identified action was already in place to address them. Action had been taken to address the requirements and recommendations made following the last inspection.

2 relatives of children fostered contacted the National Care Standards Commission during the inspection to give their views on the service. 29 foster carers and 20 social workers from placing authorities returned questionnaires to the National Care Standards Commission. In addition the inspectors met with a group of foster carers to elicit their views about the service and visited four foster care services. In general, very positive views about the service were conveyed.

Following discussion with the registered provider and the service manager it was decided that questionnaires would not be sent to the children who are being fostered. This was not considered to be an appropriate method of seeking the children's views. The inspectors observed positive interactions between the children and foster carers in the four services visited and were of the opinion that the foster carers create a warm, caring environment, the children appeared happy and relaxed in their interactions with their carers. Positive responses regarding children's placements were received from the children's local authority social workers.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was partially met.

The Statement of Purpose has been revised since the last inspection. Some further information is needed and suggestions have been made around some additional information that could be included.

Since the last inspection considerable work has gone into developing Children's Guides. Barnardo's is currently in the process of providing each child with an individualised Children's Guide that meets their communication needs and level of understanding. A sample of the completed Children's Guides were seen. These are creative and well thought out and demonstrate the consideration and respect afforded the children receiving the service.

Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standard 2 - 3)

One standard was exceeded and one standard was met.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's management team are all professionally qualified and have considerable professional, as well as managerial, experience and skills. This is Barnardo's North West Fostering Service

clearly evidenced by their organisation and management of the service, which was effective and efficient.

Barnardo's places a great emphasis on safeguarding the well being of children and its child protection operating standards underpins all the organisation's work with children. In accordance with these standards, Barnardo's has a robust, recruitment and selection policy and closely adheres to these procedures.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Both of these standards were met

In relation to these standards, the inspectors were of the opinion that the Barnardo's fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

From the inspectors' examination of managers, staff, carers' files and interviews with them, it was evident that the service ensures all staff have job descriptions and carers have foster carer agreements, which outline the tasks and responsibilities associated with their role. Both staff and carers are supervised, on a regular basis and this is recorded.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a well - developed financial system, which has clear and proper financial procedures. This system also has a reviewing procedure to ensure the system is kept up-to-date.

Barnardo's has a quality assurance system. This system ensures that both internal and external, announced, as well as unannounced audits take place in relation to the service's professional practice, financial and management information systems. The information provided from these audits is used in the service's annual quality assurance development plan.

Securing and promoting welfare Standards 6-14

7 standards were met and 2 were partially met

Barnardo's core value of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child is clearly reflected in all the policies, procedures and agreements of the North West Fostering Service.

Similarly, the recruitment, assessment and approval processes, as well as the training provided to all foster carers' is designed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and ensure all foster children are provided with safe, healthy and nurturing environments. A requirement has been made around ensuring that a hazard identified at a foster carers home is attended to. The service manager reported that this would be addressed without delay.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service values diversity and promotes equality; all staff and foster carers have the opportunity to participate in such training.

The service ensures comprehensive assessment information, as well as the care plan and any other relevant information is received, in relation to a child referred to their service. Considerable care is taken to ensure that a careful matching takes place between the child and foster family. Careful planning and attention to detail is given to the introductory process, as well as to the timing of the child's placement with the foster child/young person, in order to maximise the maintenance/stability of the placement.

The children/young people fostered by this service generally have multiple and complex special needs. The service uses a variety of communication systems to engage the child/young person in a consultative process regarding issues affecting their every day life and future. The service is continuing to explore individual communication systems, with a view to more effectively engaging the foster child or young person in the consultative process regarding issues likely to affect their every day life and future.

The service promotes contact between the child/young person's family and friends, if this is in accordance with the child/young person's care plan. Foster carers are provided with training and support in relation to contact issues.

The service actively promotes the education and health needs of all children and young people fostered by the service. It continues to be recommended that a foster child's written health record is provided to a foster carer and this is up-dated during the child's placement and moves with the child.

Preparation for adulthood is discussed at reviews and planning meeting in accordance with the needs of the young person. Plans are put in place to support young people to make the transition to adulthood.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers **Standards 15-23**

8 standards were met and 1 was partially met

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has clear written recruitment and selection procedures for the appointment of staff, which follows good practice in safeguarding children and young people. In accordance with this practice, there is also a robust, assessment and approval process in relation to foster carers.

Both staff and carers have a range of qualifications and experience, which well equips them to achieve the purposes and functions of the service. All staff and carers receive appropriate training and supervision to enable them to undertake their respective roles in a competent, effective and efficient manner. An annual staff appraisal system is also in place and foster carers' receive an annual review.

A large number of carers spoke highly of the staff working in the service, identifying their dedication, commitment and helpfulness, as being key factors, in enabling them to undertake their demanding and at times challenging role. They informed the inspectors that the service provided invaluable support, which was available whenever needed. However, some foster carers identified a limitation to this support, indicating that the service needed to provide short term break care more quickly. The inspectors are aware that the managers of the service recognise this shortfall and are addressing the matter.

Overall, the inspectors were of the opinion that the service places a great importance on the support provided to both staff and carers, in order to maintain foster children/young people in stable placements and ensure they receive the best possible outcome to their lives.

In respect of standard 22, a requirement has been made around the need to ensure that all foster carers are provided with a foster care agreement, which covers all matters, identified in schedule 5, of the Fostering Services regulations 2002.

Records Standards 24-25

Both standards were met

The inspectors noted that comprehensive, up-to-date records are maintained for children/young people in foster care, which detail the nature and quality of care provided. The information contained in these records could usefully contribute, to an understanding of the child/young person's life, whilst in foster care.

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

Fitness of premises Standard 26**This standard was met**

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's office premises are of a high standard and well furnished. The accommodation provides adequate space for staff, is comfortable and has sufficient IT and other necessary equipment to support staff in the effective delivery of a fostering service. The service has security in place to safeguard all information contained in the IT system. All manual records are stored in lockable filing cabinets, which are kept in a lockable room. The premises have an appropriate security system in place to prevent inappropriate access to the building.

Financial requirements Standards 27-29**All three standards were met**

Barnardo's has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing its financial management. There are clear documented financial arrangements for the control and supervision of its financial affairs. Currently, the fiscal budget statement is provided to the registered provider on a monthly basis. An annual, detailed fiscal budget statement is also forwarded to Barnardo's Head Office. An unannounced annual financial audit is carried out. The financial system is also, periodically, subject to an external, financial audit by an accountancy firm.

The North West Fostering Service has a clear policy on foster carer's allowances and expenses, which are reviewed, on an annual basis, a copy is provided to each carer within the service.

Fostering panel Standard 30**This standard was met**

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a clear, detailed and well written policy, which outlines the panel's role, constitution, including the appointment of panel members.

One fostering panel was observed during the course of the inspection. The chairperson, the medical adviser and two panel members were interviewed. The information obtained, led the inspector to conclude that the panel members had a good understanding of their roles, as well as those of the chairperson and decision maker.

The panel was well organised, and conducted in an appropriate and professional manner. The panel was chaired well and there was evidence that all panel members' views were taken into account. The decision making process of the panel was clear. Panel members are provided with on going training to ensure that they are kept up to date with any changes to the service.

Short-term breaks standard 31

This standard was partially met

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has short – term break carers, who provide respite, care to the services' long – term carers. At the present time, the service acknowledges a short fall in the number of short–term carers and is addressing this, by way of a recruitment campaign.

The service has developed a contract carers' service, which provides respite care, to children/young people with severe learning and physical disabilities, who are living in the community, with their families.

A befriending service is also available to support long – term carers, in ensuring older children/young people access the local facilities in their community.

The inspectors were advised that all short – term carers receive assessment, approval and induction training in the same way as the long – term carers in the service.

Family and friends as carers standard 32

This standard was not assessed

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has no kinship carers in this service and as a consequence the inspectors did not assess this standard, during this inspection.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Not applicable

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	3	FS1	The manager of the service must ensure that the statement of Purpose contains all the information contained in Standard 1 and Regulation 3, of the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations, 2002.	29/09/03
2	3(3) (a) (b) (c) & 4	FS1	The manager of the service must provide a written Children's Guide containing all the information in Regulation 3(3) (a) (b) &(c) Of the Fostering Regulations, 2002. A copy of this Children's Guide requires to be given to each foster parent, approved by the fostering service provider and (subject to his age and understanding), to each child placed	29/09/03
3	28 & schedule 5	FS22	All foster carers are to be provided with a foster care agreement, which covers all matters, identified in schedule 5, of the Fostering Services regulations 2002.	29/09/03

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		

Lead Inspector**Signature****Second Inspector****Signature****Locality Manager****Signature****Date**

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 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	3	FS1	The manager of the service must ensure that the statement of Purpose contains all the information contained in Standard 1 and Regulation 3, of the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations, 2002.	31 June 2004
2	3(3) (a) (b) (c) & 4	FS1	The manager of the service must provide a written Children's Guide containing all the information in Regulation 3(3) (a) (b) &(c) Of the Fostering Regulations, 2002. A copy of this Children's Guide requires to be given to each foster parent, approved by the fostering service provider and (subject to his age and understanding), to each child placed.	31 December 2004
3	28 & schedule 5	FS22	All foster carers are to be provided with a foster care agreement, which covers all matters, identified in schedule 5, of the Fostering Services regulations 2002.	1 January 2005
4	11(a)	FS6	The registered person must ensure that the welfare of children placed is safeguarded and promoted at all times.	31 March 2004

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	It is recommended that the Children's Guide be produced in different formats, to meet the differing needs of the children fostered.
2	FS12	It is recommended that a foster child's written health record is provided to a foster carer and this is up-dated during the child's placement and moves with the child.
3	FS16	It is recommended that documentary evidence to be kept on the carer's file, all training undertaken and completed, whilst working for Barnardo's North West Fostering Service.
4	FS23	It is recommended that the service gives attention to the training needs of particular groups of carers, such as single or male carers.
5	FS24	It is recommended that the service's expectations, in relation to carers record keeping, is made more explicit and detailed in a record keeping policy for carers.
6	FS24	The inspectors would recommend that the service provide carers with training on record keeping and recording.
7	FS31	It is recommended that all foster carers receive full information regarding the child or children placed with them in order that appropriate care can be provided and their needs effectively met.

* 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	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• 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	17/03/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	93

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.

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose has been revised since the last inspection. Some further information is needed. The date that the document was produced, the age range of the children who receive the service and more detailed information around the reviewing process and procedure for foster carers registration is required. There is information, appertaining to the statement of purpose, contained in other documentation relating to the service. However the inspectors advised that the Statement of Purpose must include all the matters, as outlined in the National Minimum Standards, 1.1-1.6.

It is suggested that additional information be included in the Statement of Purpose around the educational psychological support provided to children and foster carers, the training provided to foster carers (including number of days) and that clarification is provided around the assessment tools used.

Since the last inspection considerable work has gone into developing Children's Guides. Barnardo's is currently in the process of providing each child with an individualised Children's Guide that meets their communication needs and level of understanding. A sample of the completed Children's Guides were seen. These are creative and well thought out and demonstrate the consideration and respect afforded the children receiving the service.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The manager of the fostering service has been involved in all aspects of the fostering service since 1977 and has been involved in the provision of arranging foster placements, for children with severe learning disabilities since 1979. The manager holds a relevant social work qualification, has held a variety of management positions, and for the past nineteen years, has held a senior management position. During his employment with Barnardo's, the manager has undertaken 'in – house' training in management and is currently undertaking the NVQ, level 4, in management.

The responsible individual has been employed in the social care field for nineteen years and during this time has held a variety of managerial positions in childcare services. The responsible individual holds a relevant social work qualification and also has a masters degree, in Business Administration. The responsible individual commenced employment with Barnardo's, as assistant director of children services and remains in this post to date. Since 2002, she has also undertaken the role of senior manager and consultant, in relation to other Barnardo's projects that have developed in the Northwest Region.

From an examination of a sample of personnel files, as well as from interviews with a number of staff, the Inspector's were of the view, that the management team posses the requisite managerial skills to manage the service.

During the inspection, the inspector's were advised that managers are encouraged to develop their skills and are given any training and support, that is considered necessary, to manage the fostering service, in an efficient and effective manner.

It was evident through a review of the personnel files and discussion with staff during the course of the inspection, that all the members of staff employed within the fostering team, hold a variety of appropriate qualifications that are relevant to their positions and they are able to demonstrate considerable experience in the social care field. Staff advised the inspectors that their management team support them in their continued professional development.

The inspectors were of the view that the considerable managerial, childcare and fostering experiences within the staff group, ensured staff were highly experienced and well able to carry out their roles in the fostering service.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

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

Barnardo's Quality and Development Unit have developed a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Manual. This manual contains Barnardo's Child Protection "core" operating standards, which underpins all the organisation's work with children.

In accordance with these standards, Barnardo's has a robust, recruitment and selection policy and closely, adheres to its procedures. During the inspection a sample of personnel files were examined. These contained all the information required in Schedule 1, of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

There is a system in place to ensure that CRB checks are renewed every three years. Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcome.

At the last inspection it was recommended that telephone enquiries be made to follow up written references. The responsible individual reported that there is a system in place to enable this. At this inspection no new staff have been employed. This system will therefore be reviewed at the next inspection.

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
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An examination of a sample of personnel files indicated that all files contained a job description, outlining the tasks and responsibilities of staff. Similarly all carers' files contained the Foster Carers Agreement form, which outlined their tasks and the responsibilities associated with their role. From discussion with staff and carers, as well as an examination of files, both inspectors concluded that there was a clear understanding of managerial, staff and carers' roles and responsibilities, with clearly defined lines of accountability.

Barnardo's has a supervision policy for all staff employed by the organisation. The staff interviewed indicated that supervision takes place on a regular basis and is recorded in accordance with Barnardos supervision policy. It is understood that an annual appraisal is provided.

There is a system for auditing foster carers' files. From the sample of files seen by the Inspectors, there was evidence confirming this system is operating and effective.

A further quality assurance system that is in place is the unannounced corporate audit, that is carried out by head office and which focuses on the organisation's policies and "core" operating standards of the service. On completion of this audit, a report is completed and forwarded to the director of children's services for the northwest for her consideration and that of the senior management team. This report, together with subsequent managerial discussions, informs the service's annual quality assurance development plan.

Barnardo's fostering service has a well - developed financial system. The organisation provides information regarding the charges for each of its fostering services. The precise components and wider services being provided, in this weekly service charge, are also clearly and fully detailed to purchasers of the service.

The service has proper financial procedures, with a reviewing procedure, to ensure the system is kept up-to-date. The manager of the service produces a monthly budget review and financial management report. An unannounced annual financial audit is carried out. The financial system is also, periodically, subject to an external, financial audit by an accountancy firm.

During the inspection, the managers and staff advised the inspectors, that team meetings take place every two weeks and that they are recorded. It is understood that a " Conflicts of Interests " policy is provided to all staff and carers.

Since the last inspection the National Care Standards Commission has been informed both verbally and in writing, of all notifiable events and incidents as outlined in Schedule 8, of the fostering Regulations, 2002.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:	3
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.	1
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.	2
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
Barnardo's North West Fostering Service is managed effectively and efficiently. An examination of personnel files appertaining to managers both at this and the last inspection indicated that there are clear job descriptions, which fully outline their respective duties and responsibilities. The inspectors' interviews with managers at varying levels of the fostering service, as well as with a number of staff, confirmed that managerial responsibility, levels of delegation and lines of accountability are clearly well defined. There are clear arrangements identifying who would deputise, in the absence of the manager of the service and all staff were fully aware of this arrangement. A discussion with foster carers indicated that they are clear about the roles of Barnardos social workers. The foster carers interviewed understood who they are to make contact with in the absence of their designated social worker.		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The foster carers visited provided suitable living environments for the children/young people being cared for. The foster carers homes were maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene, were warm and in general well decorated, the decoration was in the process of being attended to in two of the homes visited.

The children who were being fostered in the foster carers homes visited had their own bedroom and accommodation arrangements reflected the child's need for space and privacy.

In general, the foster carers homes visited were free from avoidable hazards and provided any necessary safety equipment. The arrangement of a piece of furniture in one foster carers house visited may have posed a hazard. This was brought to the attention of the foster carer and the manager concerned who agreed that this would be addressed without delay.

A hazard risk checklist is used to assist carers in maintaining and promoting the health and safety of children in their care. This checklist is used during the preparation and training of carers raising the issue of health and safety to prospective foster carers from the outset. Examination of the document revealed that it is a comprehensive checklist and enables families to identify health and safety issues in every room of the house, in the garden, grounds and in the routine family activities.

The manager of the service informed the inspectors that once a child is placed with foster carers, a social worker from the fostering service completes a hazard risk checklist and a safe caring document. Long term carers have this safe caring document reviewed by the Barnardo's social worker, every six months and short term break or contract carers have the document reviewed, on an annual basis.

The inspectors were advised that as part of foster carers' assessment training, several training sessions are held on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child. Carers are also given the "Safeguarding and Protecting Children, Barnardo's Policy Manual (2002) and the North West Fostering Service's "Safeguarding Children Guidelines for Foster Carers and Volunteers".

The files examined indicated that the necessary documentation relating to the foster carer's vehicles and insurance are seen and checked by the Barnardo's social worker. In the foster carer agreement, the organisation also requests that the foster carer notifies their household and motor insurance companies of their fostering activity and Barnardo's receives a copy of the acknowledgement of this notification.

The foster carers visited and who were met with during the inspection understood the role of the National Care Standards Commission and that they may be visited or interviewed as part of the inspection. This information is now included in the foster carer agreement.

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

The fostering service has an Equal Opportunities Policy statement and action plan, which promotes diversity and anti - discriminatory practice. The inspectors were advised by the manager of the service and staff that promoting equality and managing diversity training is provided for all carers and staff. The manager of the service stated that where carers cannot reflect the child's religious, cultural, racial, linguistic (communication) background and needs, additional training and support is given.

The service has a black development worker who has undertaken research on the service's practice and recruitment of black and ethnic carers. This research has influenced and is continuing to influence the services planning to develop provision for black children and their families with key objectives being identified as working to improve accessibility to services, to improve staff awareness of relevant practice issues and to encourage staff ownership in the planning and delivery of work to support black and minority communities.

Many of the children fostered by this service have profound multiple learning difficulties and often physical disabilities. Consequently, if their needs are to be met, they require a variety of appropriate equipment, as well as adaptations to the carers' home. Whilst Barnardo's North West fostering service will advocate on behalf of the carers and liaise with the responsible authority, over any difficulties that arise in relation to the placement, it is ultimately the local authority that has the responsibility for the provision of such equipment and adaptations. Both the manager of the service and carers indicated, that this can cause some tensions amongst carers, the fostering service and local authority concerned.

From the inspectors' discussions with several foster carers, it was clear that the difficulties in obtaining appropriate equipment/adaptations can place considerable pressures on foster carers. Difficulties and delays in acquiring equipment and adaptations to carers' homes also seriously impacts on the services' ability to recruit and obtain short - term break carers and deprives long - term carers of obtaining the necessary short term break support.

A booklet ("getting to know you") is provided to foster carers prior to a child's placement, this is an innovative way of describing a child's needs and how the child would like them to be met. This includes information around a child's interests and activities that they enjoy. The examples of these booklets that were available on the files inspected were well presented and provided a great deal of information in a succinct and clear manner.

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 manager and deputy manager of the service advised the inspectors that all children, placed with carers in this service, have received a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive assessment of their needs. They were also advised that the service takes great care to ensure that a child is matched and placed with a carer or carers capable of meeting his/her assessed needs. To achieve this, at the stage a child is referred to Barnardo's North West Fostering Service, the referring local authority is required to provide a written comprehensive assessment of the child's needs, a care plan, all relevant looked after children documentation and any other documentation appertaining to the child that the local authority considers necessary to enable a foster carer to care for a child. The manager and deputy manager of the service reported that in general the referring authority provides all the necessary documentation, prior to the child being matched to a carer or carers. There has been a delay in the placing authorities providing this information for some children, however this has eventually been obtained.

In the matching of child to foster carers a great deal of sharing of information and consideration takes place between the relevant professionals, the child and family, potential carers, their families and other children in placement. Consideration is also given to the child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic (communication) needs, with a view to matching these to those of the carers. The inspectors were informed that where carers are unable to reflect some of these needs, additional training and support is given. There was evidence of this in one of the foster carers files that was examined.

At the last inspection the manager of the service was advised that any additional training and support that is provided to carers must be identified, in the written foster placement agreement. This had been written into a new foster placement agreement that was seen and is to be incorporated into subsequent agreements.

The manager of the service stated that with the exception of the occasional emergency placement, each child placed with a carer, is afforded the opportunity of a period of introduction to a proposed foster carer. From the inspectors' discussions with the manager of the service, staff, carers and an examination of a sample of files, it was evident that this introductory period is planned carefully, in detail and is regularly reviewed. The timing of the child's placement with the carer is carefully considered and only takes place, when all concerned in the placement arrangements are of the opinion that the child is comfortable and happy in the foster carer's home and it is a well-matched placement.

In the main, this service does not provide emergency, unplanned placements. However it is understood that from time to time long – term carers require emergency support, which is provided by experienced carers within the service. The carers interviewed who had experienced caring for a child on an emergency basis reported that they received all the necessary information needed and had been introduced to the child beforehand or had already known the child. Information provided by the service manager also supported this.

During the inspection, the inspectors' examined a sample of carers and children's files. They

also interviewed managers, staff, carers, and received information from parent/guardian and placing social workers. From this information, the inspectors were able to evidence that the service ensures that comprehensive assessment information is received regarding children's needs and that considerable and careful attention is given to the matching process, to ensure that a child/young person is matched, with a carer capable of meeting their needs. The same careful consideration, planning and attention to detail are given to the introductions of child and carer and the timing of the placement.

The inspectors' concluded that these aspects of the service made a significant contribution to the maintenance and stability of the foster care placements.

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

Barnardo's has a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Manual, which informs staff and carers on the "core" operating standards of the organisation. In line with these standards, there is a robust, recruitment and selection policy and the service closely, adheres to these procedures.

The inspectors were advised that as part of foster carers' assessment training, training sessions are held on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child. The following training is also provided to carers: -

- Child protection
- Child Abuse
- Safe Caring
- Sexual Health Education

Foster carers are also given the "Safeguarding and Protecting Children," Barnardo's Policy Manual (2002) and the North West Fostering Service's "Safeguarding Children Guidelines for Foster Carers and Volunteers".

Once a child is placed with foster carers, a social worker from the fostering service completes a safe caring document, which is reviewed on a six or twelve month basis, dependent on the nature of the fostering service being provided. From an examination of a sample of carers files and subsequent interviews with a number of foster carers, the inspectors were able to evidence that carers have a safe caring document that is subject to a regular review.

Barnardo's North West fostering service makes clear to the foster carers that corporal punishment is not acceptable and this is clearly set out in the written Foster Care Agreement given to foster carers. It is also written in the Behaviour Management Policy – Project Practice Guidelines for both carers and staff.

Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care.

The foster carers interviewed and staff confirmed that foster carers are provided with full information about foster children to enable them to meet their needs and the needs of their own family.

There is a policy and procedure for “bullying.” Since the last inspection a management system has been put in place to collate and evaluate information on any incidents of bullying involving foster children.

There is a clear written procedure for use if a child is missing from home.

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

0

%

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 inspectors were advised that the service promotes contact between the child and his/her family, in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and other relevant guidance. Contact is therefore addressed at every stage of the care planning process, in the development of the care plan, at looked after children reviews, during the matching process, at foster panels and sometimes via the legal system. During these processes, the service makes every effort to ascertain the views and wishes of the child or young person in relation to contact with their family.

In the promotion of contact, foster carers are provided with an informative booklet, entitled, “Contact: Maintaining Links with Families.” This booklet covers a whole range of aspects relating to contact, which includes the nature of contact, its purpose, the effects of contact on children, parents, foster carers, the role of social worker’s, as well as practical and legal matters regarding contact.

The service also provides training to foster carers in the promotion and management of contact between the child and their families.

All contact arrangements are recorded in the care plan, looked after children documentation and in both the foster carer agreement and foster placement agreement, the foster carer agrees to adhere to the agreed contact arrangements and signs to this effect.

Financial support is provided to foster carers for transport or other costs involved in ensuring contact takes place in accordance with a child’s care plan.

Brief information around contact was recorded by foster carers. It is understood that this issue will be addressed to ensure consistency of practice when the policy and procedure regarding recording is introduced.

From the inspectors’ examination of a sample of carers and children’s files, together with the inspectors’ interviews with staff, carers, parents and information from the questionnaires provided by placing social workers, the inspectors were able to evidence, that this standard is met.

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**

Many of the children/young people, who are fostered by Barnardo's North West fostering service, have severe learning difficulties. The service uses a variety of methods to communicate which includes, utilising the Picture Exchange Communication system (PEC's) as well as Makaton sign language. These are used with a view to eliciting the foster child/young persons' feelings and wishes. The service also makes use of local advocacy services.

At the last inspection it was recommended that the service needed to continue to explore individual communication systems, with a view to more effectively engaging the foster child or young person in the consultative process regarding issues likely to affect their every day life and future. At this inspection there was evidence of this in the foster placements visited. An individual children's guide is in the process of being made available for all children and work is taking place to develop the complaints procedure in an appropriate format for the children and young people using the service.

Training is provided to staff and carers around the communication needs of children with disabilities. The psychological support service works with a number of carers and children around communication issues.

The fostering service has a complaints policy and procedures. All foster carers are provided with a leaflet, entitled, "Having your Say", which encourages users of the service, to comment upon or complain about, the service they have received. This leaflet also talks of the use of advocacy and provides brief information, regarding the 'formal complaints' procedure, directing the individual to obtain a booklet, entitled "Your Right to be Heard", which details the process of making a 'formal complaint'. The foster carers seen by the inspectors, during this inspection, clearly understood the complaints system.

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?****2**

The inspectors were informed that Barnardo's North West Fostering Service receives full details regarding the health needs of a child and that this information is taken into account, in the matching process and ultimately the placement of the child. The manager of the service confirmed that no placement would be made, which prevented a child from continuing to receive the specialist health care services that they needed.

The inspectors were advised that foster carers receive basic training on a variety of health and hygiene issues. This includes first aid, communicable diseases, invasive medical treatment and sexual health education.

The manager of the service informed the inspectors that the service promotes the health of the child/young person in ensuring G.P. and dental registration occurs. This is illustrated by

the fact that the foster carers' agreement clearly indicates that foster carers are expected to ensure that the child/young person has regular dental and optical check ups; access to a balanced diet and opportunities for exercise commensurate with their abilities. The service also ensures carers are supported to access any health services required.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service, would appear to have good links with health agencies, however it will and does act as an advocate for the child when needed, in securing services for the child.

Foster carers are expected to attend their foster child's 'looked after children' review, to provide information regarding the child/young persons' health needs and generally contribute to the planning and reviewing process, in respect of their foster child. Through examination of children/young people and carers' files, as well as in interviews with managers, staff, carers and parent/guardian the inspectors were able to evidence, most of the elements in this standard. However, the inspectors discussed with the manager of the service, the fact that a child's written health record that is updated on a regular basis and can move with the child needs to be provided for all children. It is understood that work is taking place to address this.

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**

Barnardo's employ three educational psychologists. As part of their responsibilities they work with the NWFS. They have an active role in working with schools and foster carers, to promote the education and development of the children and young people fostered by this service. The educational psychologists work with colleagues in local authority education, to access suitable equipment and support for the foster children/young people. The North West Fostering Service social work staff liaise with the educational psychologist in achieving these aims.

Both the educational psychologist and the Barnardo's social worker attend the educational reviews, which in some cases, are held in conjunction with the looked after children reviews. The provision of this package of care ensures the educational needs of the children placed are always routinely addressed and promoted.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's commitment in employing three educational psychologists emphasises the importance that this service gives to the promotion of the education and development of the children and young people, fostered by this service. This in turn is communicated to foster carers, who ensure that an environment is provided, where education and learning are valued.

During the inspectors' interviews with foster carers, several commented on the invaluable support that they had received from the educational psychologists, in meeting their foster children's educational needs. They also confirmed that it was packages of care such as this that supported them in managing the task of caring for a foster child with considerable, complex and at times challenging behaviour.

The foster carers agreement and foster placement agreement clearly, outlines the expectations of Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's, in relation to the foster carers' contribution to the assessment of the children's educational needs and progress, in the planning and review process.

The foster placement agreement clearly establishes the expectation of a foster child's regular attendance at school and this is supported by the foster carer's allowances, in relation to the child's educational needs.

Since the last inspection Barnardo's North West Fostering Service have introduced a management information system to demonstrate the educational attainment of those children fostered by the service.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The deputy manager of the service advised the inspector that Barnardo's North West Fostering Service does not have clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent and semi – independent living. The main issue for this service being the child/young person's transition to adulthood and ensuring the young people have a supported environment for their future lives.

The inspectors were advised that training has been developed and delivered to foster carers, regarding the transition of young people to adulthood. This training has involved helping foster carers to provide young people with the skills to manage the transition to adulthood.

Independent living skills are promoted in accordance with the needs of the young person concerned and are discussed at reviews and planning meetings. Discussions with and a visit to foster carers indicated that they are aware of the importance of providing children in their care with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities.

Plans are put in place to support young people to make the transition to adulthood.

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

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has clearly written recruitment and selection procedures for the appointment of staff, which follows good practice in safeguarding children and young people.

From one of the inspectors' discussions with a member of the personnel section, it was clear that all personnel, responsible for recruitment and selection of staff, are trained in, understand and operate the recruitment and selection procedures of the service.

The examination of six staff files indicated that individuals working in the fostering service are interviewed, as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability, before taking on responsibilities. No new staff have been employed since the last inspection. It is understood that there is now a procedure in place to undertake telephone enquiries as well as written references.

The service has records of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes. At the time of the inspection all staff working in the service had been the subject of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure. In respect of 3 staff employed by the service the registered provider reported that enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks are to be applied for. These 3 staff had been the subject of a police check over 5 years ago.

The recruitment files of staff working in the service that were inspected and interviews with staff indicated there was evidence that the qualifications experience, knowledge and skills of staff employed to work within the fostering service, meets the National Minimum Standards. The inspectors noted that all staff had knowledge of the roles of other agencies, in particular health and education. They also had a belief in promoting equality, diversity and the rights of individuals.

No students are currently undertaking a placement at the service. It is understood that when students undertake a placement they carry out assessments and approvals of foster carers, under the supervision of a qualified worker, who takes responsibility for their work.

The manager and registered provider of the service informed the inspectors that all educationalists, psychologists and other professional staff are professionally qualified and appropriately trained to work with children, young people, their families and foster carers, and have a good understanding of foster care. This was evidenced during an interview with one of Barnados Educational Psychologists employed by the North West Fostering Service.

Total number of staff of the agency:

16

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

The fostering service's functions are divided between two teams; the long - term care team and the short term break team. The latter team also has contract carers, who offer respite care to children residing with their families in the community.

Both teams have a clear remit and are managed by experienced, skilled and qualified staff. The levels of management delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and commensurate with the experience, skills and qualifications of the relevant members of staff. The staff interviewed by the inspectors, had a good understanding of the levels of management delegation and responsibility within the service and in the absence of the manager was fully aware of who deputises in the service.

The staff interviewed informed the inspectors that they had clearly defined job descriptions and that they are aware of their own and other's roles and responsibilities.

During the inspection, the inspectors' were able to confirm, through interviews with staff, as well as from information from placing social workers, that Barnardo's staff clearly understood the vital importance of the children's social worker and themselves, working effectively together, to ensure that the child's welfare and best interests are served. It was clear from discussions with staff that they had a clear understanding of the role of the children's social worker.

Team meetings take place on a two weekly basis. Staff informed the inspectors that there is clear, open and effective communication between the managers of the service and themselves and that their views are elicited regarding the operation of the service. They also reported that they are supported in continuing their ongoing professional development through the various training opportunities available.

During the inspectors' interviews with staff, they were informed that all staff are supervised on either a monthly or six weekly basis, dependent on their level of need and experience. All supervision meetings are fully recorded and a copy of this given to the member of staff. Supervision is also provided to staff, on a more informal basis, as and when the need arises. The service also has an appraisal system.

The management and supervision systems in place determine staff workloads, assist in prioritisation and ensure the work is monitored and tasks are assigned to appropriate staff. The service also has a work management system in place.

The service is well resourced administratively. Staff informed the inspectors that the administrative resources provided them, greatly assisted them in effectively carrying out their work and delivering an efficient service. The inspectors were able to confirm the service had appropriate administrative procedures to deal with enquiries from prospective foster carers and able to evidence that such enquiries were dealt with promptly.

All staff working in the service are provided with a Staff Handbook, which sets out staff's terms and conditions of employment; included in this booklet is the grievance and disciplinary, health and safety policies and procedures. The booklet also contains a section on promoting equality and diversity, which outlines the organisation's equal opportunities policy.

There are systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively.

The manager of the service provided a foster carers training programme. The carers seen by the inspectors' confirmed that a variety of training is provided. The inspectors' continue to recommend that documentary evidence be kept of all training undertaken and completed, whilst working for Barnardo's North West Fostering Service.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service ensures that there is access to the range of advice needed to provide a full service for children and young people and to support carers. This includes an "out of hours" support service, three educational psychologists, a welfare benefits adviser, access to medical and if necessary, legal advice. The inspectors' interviews with a sample of foster carers and information received from foster carers questionnaires, confirmed that the service was highly supportive and generally of an excellent standard. Many carers indicated, that without such support, they may not have been able to continue to care for their foster child/young person.

During the course of this and the last inspection, some carers in considering the support that could be provided, informed the inspectors' that the service needed to increase the number of short term break foster carers, so that respite services currently provided to carers could take place and in some cases be increased. This was discussed with the manager and deputy manager of the service who agreed that there was a shortfall in the number of short - term carers required by the service and as a consequence, the service have plans in place with a view to addressing this shortage.

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**

There was evidence, from the records inspected and staff interviewed, that the experience, skills and qualifications of the staff employed to work within the fostering service, meets the National Minimum Standards. The inspectors were advised that within the service staff are relatively stable, with generally, little staff turnover. No staff have left the service since the last inspection.

From the inspectors' examination of the service, it was clear that the terms, conditions of employment, staff policies, workloads, managerial support, supervision and the training opportunities afforded staff, encourage the retention of experienced, skilled and qualified staff within the service.

The services' internal auditing system, ensures that the service has precise knowledge regarding the shortfalls in the service. Consequently, this assist's in targeting its recruitment strategies in order to obtain the carers required to meet the needs of the children/young people being referred.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a clear assessment process for carers, which defines the fostering task, the qualities, competencies or aptitudes required. The stages, content and timescales of the selection process, are made clear and the carers interviewed by the inspectors, indicated that they were given and had understood the selection process.

The inspectors examined a sample of assessment reports of foster carers. These reports were detailed and indicated that the assessment process covers all the issues, outlined in the National Minimum Standards. Consideration could be given to obtaining information from the schools of children of prospective foster carers to further inform the assessment process.

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**

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has clear, comprehensive and sound employment practices in relation to both staff and carers. Out of hours support services are available for foster carers. All the carers spoken to were clear about the support services available to them, both during and outside office hours and spoke highly of the standard of support provided them. Similar information was provided in the questionnaires returned.

The service has a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers, children and staff, as well as a whistle blowing policy. These can be found in the staff and foster carers hand books. The registered provider reported that the child protection procedures are in the process of being re-written and the whistle blowing policy is to be revised.

The service has management systems in place, in respect of carer supervision, appraisal and support. These being clearly evidenced by the inspectors through their examination of a sample of carer files and in their interviews with carers. The service is currently looking at the most practical way of providing carers with a copy of their supervision record following each supervision session.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has public liability insurance.

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**

The inspectors were informed by staff that a variety of training opportunities are provided and that Barnardo's places a real value on the development of their skills, knowledge and experience.

Barnardo's North West has a learning and development manager, who plans training in accordance with a learning and development plan produced by the manager of the service. Both work closely together to ensure that the plan is effective.

The learning and development manager reported that all new staff receive induction training on commencing work with Barnardo's. On going training needs are identified via the supervisory and appraisal systems and ultimately, these link into the service and the region's training and development plan. There are opportunities for joint training between staff and carers to take place. The service manager is looking at developing further opportunities for this.

Two managerial staff are currently undertaking the NVQ Level 4 and there is a plan in place to ensure all managers have received this by 2005.

From the inspectors' examination of the training provided, it was evident that they are kept informed of changes in legislation or guidance that is relevant to their jobs. The training also reflected the policies of the fostering service.

The effectiveness of training for staff is evaluated and feedback informs future provision.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

The staff interviewed informed the inspectors that they had a contract of employment, clearly defined job descriptions and were aware of their own, as well as other's roles and responsibilities. A sample of staff contracts and job descriptions were examined and contained the appropriate information.

All staff interviewed by the inspectors' reported that they felt supported in their roles. An appraisal system is in place. Supervision is provided to staff on a regular basis in accordance with their needs. This information is recorded.

Team meetings take place on a two weekly basis.

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**

There are a number of systems in place for working with and supporting carers. The service has clear arrangements for the training and development of carers. The manager of the service advised the inspectors that there are local foster carer support groups, which are held three times a year. Barnardo's North West Fostering Service also has a foster carer forum, which meets on a regular basis to consider a variety of issues appertaining to the service.

The Barnardo's social workers interviewed were clear about their role and responsibilities in the fostering service and reported good communication with the children's social workers. The information received from the questionnaires provided by a number of the children's social workers, provided confirmation that there is clear and effective communication between them.

Supervision is provided to carers, by Barnardo's social workers, on a regular basis. There is a clear structure to these visits and evidence of actions identified being followed through.

During office hours foster carers can contact their social worker or in their absence team manager, or if necessary, the service manager. The inspectors were informed that "out of hours" support is also provided and that all foster carers have the telephone numbers of their Barnardo's social worker and the managers of the service. The inspectors were able to confirm this during their interviews with foster carers.

The inspectors were advised that foster carers are able to receive assistance from the fostering service, in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education. Barnardo's employment of three educational psychologists means that foster children/young people and carers, are able to easily access educational psychological support if required. During the inspection, the inspectors' were able to evidence the educational support provided by the service through an examination of files, discussion with carers and from the questionnaires returned. The carers indicated that they place great value on the support provided by the educational psychologists.

All the foster carers' interviewed by the inspectors had a clear understanding of the role of Barnardo's social workers and spoke highly of the support that was provided.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service also provides a variety of other supports such as external advice in relation to taxation and national insurance for foster carers. The service has also arranged for a welfare rights' officer to visit the office in order that foster carers can discuss and receive any advice required in relation to DHSS benefits and where appropriate in order to maximise relevant income.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service agrees, in their contract with long - term foster carers, to provide 28 days respite care. During this and the last inspection some carers indicated that this service was not being provided sufficiently to meet their needs. At the last inspection the manager reported that there had been a depletion in the number of short term break carers available and it was reported that active steps are being taken to improve this situation. At this inspection the action that is on going to address this situation was discussed with the service manager and the deputy manager.

The North West Fostering Service has clear arrangements for foster carers' reviews, which

take place annually. The sample of carers' files seen by the inspectors indicated that reviews had taken place on time and on an annual basis. However, in one file examined there had been an inordinate delay in the annual review minutes being completed and signed by the foster carers (a total of 9 months.) The inspector discussed this with the social worker at the time of the inspection and was advised that this delay had been due to the protracted dialogue that had taken place in reaching agreement with the carers regarding the review minutes.

The service ensures each foster carer's first annual review is presented to the fostering panel. Subsequent annual reviews are only taken back to panel, if there are major changes in the carers' circumstances. Any additional, significant reviews can also be taken back to panel, as requested.

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

Since the last inspection the foster care agreement has been revised and made available for all foster carers. The agreement does not cover all the issues listed in schedule 5, of the Fostering Services Regulations, 2002. The manager of the service needs to revise this foster carer agreement to ensure it meets the requirements, identified in Schedule 5. A copy of this revised foster care agreement must be provided to all the service's foster carers. It was agreed that the new agreement can be provided to foster carers following their annual review.

The foster placement agreements have been revised since the last inspection and these together with the partnership agreements cover all the required information.

The register of children was inspected and now covers all the matters identified in Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Supervision is provided to foster carers by the Barnardo's social worker; all are appropriately qualified and experienced workers. The timescales for undertaking supervisory visits, is in line with the statutory frequency laid down in Regulation 35, of the Fostering Services Regulations, 2002. From the inspectors' examination of a sample of files and their interviews with foster carers, they were able to evidence that visits were being made within these timescales. There is a clear structure to these visits and evidence of actions identified being followed through.

The support systems for foster carers have been discussed in standard 21.

Foster carers are provided with a handbook following their approval. This handbook contains some of the services policies and procedures relating to child protection, care and control, safe caring, legal information, insurance details, taxation and a variety of other information.

The service provides information regarding the complaints' procedure to foster carers and those foster carers interviewed were aware of how to make a complaint. The service keeps a record of complaints. Since the last inspection there have been 2 complaints to the service. The records in respect of this indicated that the complaint was being dealt with appropriately.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service provides comprehensive and detailed information

about safeguarding and protecting children, which includes procedures to deal with investigations into allegations. As already indicated the registered provider reported that the child protection procedures are in the process of being re-written. The inspectors were able to evidence, through an examination of the services child protection policy, procedures, the training programme, together with their interviews with staff and carers, that all personnel involved in this service, knew their role and responsibilities, in relation to an investigation into allegations of abuse.

The service keeps a record about allegations of abuse and has a clear policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

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

A discussion with the learning and development manager and an examination of the training programme and records confirmed that a variety of training is available for carers. Foster carers have an opportunity to undertake an NVQ, level 3, in childcare and several carers have already obtained this qualification.

The service manager has completed a learning and development plan of the fostering service, in order that the learning needs of the service can be identified and a clear training plan for the service formulated. The training needs of individual foster carers are identified through the supervision and annual appraisal systems of carers. The effectiveness of the training provided is regularly evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis. The service manager and the learning development manager work closely to ensure that the training plan is effective.

Training is provided, dependent on need, on both an “in-house” and “external” basis. The service ensures, that in both the pre – approval and induction training, carers have the opportunities to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing carers.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service provides opportunities for foster carers to undertake joint training with Barnardo's social workers. The service manager is looking at developing further opportunities for this.

The foster carer training fits in the framework of equal opportunities and anti – discriminatory practice. The practicalities for attending training for foster carers are considered. Some foster carers indicated that not being able to arrange child care has an impact on attending training events. The learning and development manager reported that research is currently taking place around this issue.

The service provides all carers with “safe caring”. Safe caring issues are addressed with all household members in accordance with their level of understanding.

In households where two adults have been identified as joint carers, the service makes training available to both carers.

The manager of the service advised the inspectors that consideration is given to any help and support required by the sons and daughters of foster carers. Consideration is also given

to the training needs of particular groups of carers and is to be discussed further at the next foster carers forum.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service ensures that each carer's annual review includes an appraisal of the carers' training and development needs, which is documented in the review report.

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
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Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a written policy on recording, which is contained in the policy "Access to Records". This policy establishes the purpose, format and the content of the respective children and foster carers' files. Barnardo's emphasises the importance of participation and partnership, in working with the child/young person, family and carers. Consequently, the policy clearly indicates to those working within the service that all information recorded in the files should contain information, which is already known to them.

A sample of files were examined by the inspectors and clearly evidenced that files are structured in the manner prescribed by the recording policy.

The inspectors noted that the files consistently recorded the child/young person's full personal history, the reasons for the child/young person's entry into the care system and the legal status of the child. The aims, objectives and intended duration of the placement were included. The inspectors noted that the information contained on the children's files was detailed; both in relation to the child's past and present life and the contents were up-to-date. The manager of the service informed the inspectors that the team managers audited all files on an internal basis. The inspectors' examination of a sample of files revealed that a consistent internal auditing of files took place.

From the inspectors' examination of a selection of children files and interviews with carers they concluded that there is an effective sharing of information between the responsible authority for the child and Barnardo's. This ensures full information can be provided to the foster carers, enabling them to provide appropriate care and effectively meet the needs of the child.

The manager of the service advised the inspectors that should a child leave their foster placement, a copy of all relevant records relating to the child would be forwarded to the responsible authority following a written request.

From discussions with staff it was clear that the service recognises the importance of the child keeping familiar and special personal items and belongings such as toys, photographs from their home. Foster carers, if necessary, are provided with an understanding of the importance of this for the child and encouraged to support the child/young person. The service also ensures that carers understand the importance of making a recording of significant events in the child/young person's life and supports the carers to do this in various

forms, including supporting carers to establish photograph albums.

At the last inspection it was recommended that expectations of foster carers in relation to record keeping be made more explicit and detailed in a record keeping policy for carers and that the service provides carers with training on recording. A record keeping policy has been developed in a draft format which has been given to staff for consultation. The service manager reported that training around record keeping is to be provided following the implementation of the policy.

The inspectors were of the opinion that the placement and partnership agreement clearly informs carers of the information that needs to be shared with the fostering service.

Interviews with the carers confirmed to the inspectors that carers were aware of the need to ensure that all information appertaining to the child/young person is treated confidentially and stored in a secure manner.

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

Separate records are kept for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations. The organisation has a clear written policy as to the confidential nature of the records, which are secured securely at all times.

Barnardo's also has an "Access to Records" policy that provides clear guidance to staff regarding access to records, as well as the recording requirements to meet the Data Protection Act. There is both an internal and external audit of the service's records and a system in place to remedy any deficiencies found in the recording system.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a permanent, private record for each child and each foster carer, which is kept securely. The child/young person, his/her parents or foster carers can see these records in compliance with legal safeguards.

The service has a computerised system (Live Link), and since the last inspection there has been a move towards the keeping of more computer records rather than written records. In the sample of files seen by the inspectors, the records were clearly recorded and met the requirements, as laid down in the Barnardo's policies. In both the manual and the computerised systems, records could be forwarded, if a child moves to another placement, ceases to be looked after, or if a reference request is made for a member of staff or a carer.

From the inspectors' examination of the services' procedures in relation to records, together with interviews with staff, panel members and an observation of the panel evidence was provided that all those involved in the organisation, are well aware of the procedures, in relation to the storing and management of confidential information.

There is a system in place for keeping records about allegations and complaints, which are handled in a confidential manner and held securely. Since the last inspection systems have been developed in order that information concerning allegations and complaints are more easily collated and evaluated.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			63
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			7
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			5
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			11
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			9
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

Payments made to foster carers vary according to the age of the child. All Long Term Foster Carers receive a weekly professional fee of £ 153.83 (2003 – 04) plus fostering allowances set out in the table below.

2002/2003 FOSTERING NETWORK MINIMUM RATES				
Age Group	Weekly	Birthday	Christmas/Religious Festivals	Holidays
5 – 10	£99.60	£99.60	£99.60	£199.20
11 – 15	£123.97	£123.97	£123.97	£247.94
16 +	£157.25	£157.25	£157.25	£314.50

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

Barnardo's, North West Fostering Service's office premises are suitable for their purpose. On the ground floor, the accommodation provides meeting rooms, training rooms, kitchen and changing facilities, with disabled access. Consideration is being given to disabled access also being available on the first floor of the building.

The manager of the service ensures all health and safety matters within the building are addressed. health and safety records are kept and were available to the inspectors. The organisation also has a health and safety officer, who inspects the premises.

The accommodation provides adequate space for staff, is comfortable and has sufficient IT and other necessary equipment, to support staff, in the effective delivery of a fostering service. The inspectors' were advised of the security in place, to safeguard all information contained in the IT system.

Barnardo's "Access to Records" policy clearly outlines the organisation's expectations in relation to recording, the Data Protection Act and during the induction of staff ensures this legislation is understood. The services internal and external auditing of records ensures staff adhere to the Data Protection Act.

The premises have lockable filing cabinets to secure confidential information. These cabinets are kept in a lockable room. The inspectors were able to evidence that the service has a robust, rigorous administrative system in relation to the tracking and follow up of any files, removed from the filing cabinets system. The inspectors were advised that no files can be removed from the building without the permission and signed agreement, of the manager of the service or the assistant or director of children services.

The premises have an appropriate security system in place to prevent inappropriate access to the building.

Barnardo's has adequate premises and contents insurance, to promptly replace any loss or damage caused to contents of the building or premises.

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

In the event of a financial crisis Barnardos has organisational procedures in place to inform the responsible authority of the child and would liaise with them, to safeguard the welfare of the child who was receiving their services.

Barnardo's organisational status is such that only the regulations and guidelines in relation to the Income Tax and National Insurance of their employees are applicable. The inspectors were advised that the organisation strictly adheres to these regulations and guidelines.

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

The inspectors met with the assistant director for finance. It was established that Barnardo's has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing its financial management. There are clearly written principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all managers, staff and professional experts. At the last inspection the inspectors were able to evidence through an examination of the fiscal systems, documentation and interviews with senior managers and middle managers of the service, that there are clear documented financial arrangements for the control and supervision of its financial affairs.

The Registered Provider regularly receives information on the financial state of Barnardo's North West Fostering Service. At the present time this information is provided on a monthly basis. An annual financial/budget statement is also forwarded to Barnardo's Head office.

An unannounced annual financial audit is carried out. The financial system is also, periodically, subject to an external, financial audit by an accountancy firm.

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**

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a clear policy on foster carer's allowances and expenses, which are reviewed on an annual basis. Each foster carer within the service is provided with a copy of the foster carer allowances and expenses.

During the course of the inspection, foster carers did not suggest there were any difficulties with the payment of allowances/expenses, as the general view appeared to be, that they were paid promptly and on time. The inspectors were of the opinion that the service provided an efficient payment system.

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

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a clear, detailed and well written policy, which outlines the panel's role and constitution. The document emphasizes the quality assurance function of the panel and confirms the panels role, in relation to receiving management information about the outcome of foster carers' reviews.

There are clear written procedures, in relation to the appointment of panel members. Interviews with panel members indicated that there is a thorough selection process of all panel members. The chairperson advised the inspector that all the necessary checks in relation to panel members had been completed prior to their appointment to the panel. From discussion with the chairperson it was evident that careful consideration is given to ensuring that the composition of the panel enables a range of viewpoints to be represented.

One fostering panel was observed, during the course of the inspection. The medical adviser and two panel members were interviewed regarding their role and the functions of the panel. From these interviews and observations of the fostering panel, it was evident that they had a good understanding of the panel's functions and their role and the role of the agency decision maker. It was clear that all members of the panel carried out their duties and responsibilities, in a professional and highly responsible manner.

The members of the panel indicated that they prepared for the panel meeting, by reading all the panel papers prior to the meeting, clearly recognising the responsibilities of their task. The panel members spoken with confirmed they received panel papers within the agreed timescales. Panel members were aware of the procedure around the storage and management of confidential information. The inspector was able to evidence panel members following this procedure, at the conclusion of the panel meeting.

The fostering panel has access to medical expertise, whenever required. The inspector noted that the medical adviser undertook a full role, as a panel member, in so far as contributions made to the panel were not purely on medical matters.

There is also access to information regarding educational matters provided by an independent panel member.

The observations of the fostering panel indicated that the panel was exceptionally well organised and conducted itself in an appropriate and extremely professional manner. Panel members having read, prepared and considered carefully, all the matters raised in the documentation provided them. The panel was well chaired and there was evidence of all

panel members' views being taken into account. The decision - making was clear.

A prospective foster carer attended the panel. It was evident that they had been prepared for this meeting and their attendance was managed sensitively.

At the last inspection the inspector's interviewed the chairperson of the foster panel and were advised of the work that had been undertaken to ensure the panel operates appropriately, effectively and efficiently. At this inspection the chairperson advised the inspector of the training that has been provided and is to be provided to ensure that panel members are kept up to date with changes to the service.

The service manager provides a six monthly report to the panel regarding the progress of the service to enable panel to provide a quality assurance 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?

2

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service agrees to provide a total of 28 days, short – term breaks, for all their long – term foster carers. It was therefore, partly in response to the internal needs of the service, that the short – term break scheme, was established.

The development of short – term break carers though, was also a response to an external need, as the service was receiving a number of respite care requests from local authorities, in respect of children/young people with severe learning and physical disabilities, who were living with their families.

A contract care service is in operation. This service has a contract with a number of local authorities' to provide shared and respite care for children/young people with severe learning and physical disabilities, who are living with their families. Each contract with the local authority varies, as to the nature and duration of contract care provided. The contract carers are paid a professional fee/salary for the service provided, are given twenty eight days paid holidays and receive twenty full training days, per year, for which they are paid.

The inspectors were advised that all carers who provide short – term care and contract care receive assessment, approval and induction training. Their training needs are identified during supervision, as is the case, with long term carers and these needs are met, through the training programme provided by the service. From the inspectors' discussion with the manager of the service and a short term and contract carer, it is clear that dependent on the circumstances, the emphasis is very much on the long – term carers or parents/family, remaining central to the promotion of the child/young person's welfare and development.

The inspectors were advised that short term and contract carers receive full information on the child or children placed with them in order that appropriate care can be provided and their needs effectively met. However, in one file examined by the inspector, significant information had not been shared with the carers, which had the potential to cause difficulties for both child and carers. The inspectors have made a recommendation regarding this matter.

During the course of this and the last inspection, some carers in considering the support that could be provided, informed the inspectors' that the service needed to increase the number of short term break foster carers, so that respite services currently provided to carers could take place and in some cases be increased. This was discussed with the manager and deputy manager of the service who agreed that there was a shortfall in the number of short - term carers required by the service and as a consequence, the service have plans in place with a view to addressing this shortage.

The service is continually considering the long – term carers' needs and the types of support services that they might require. The short – term break team developed a befriending service. This service is essentially to support long – term carers, in ensuring older children/young people access the local facilities in their community. This service has proved beneficial to long – term carers. Difficulties have been experienced in recruiting individuals for this service.

As a response to the need for short term carers the service has, where appropriate, approved the friends or family members of the child's long term carers as short term carers. These carers provide care within the home of the long term fostering placement. An application to register this provision as a domiciliary care service has been made to the National Care Standards Commission. The provision of a weeks holiday for children by 'Kids Konnect' has also provided invaluable support to children who are fostered on a long term basis and their carers.

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
All referrals to Barnardo's North West Fostering Service are usually made, when it has been established by the responsible authority for the child, that there are no friends or family able to care for the child. Barnardo's North West Fostering Service therefore has no carers who are family or friends in this service and as a consequence the inspectors did not address this standard, during this inspection.		

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 17th – 23rd March and 31st March 2004 of Barnardos North West Fostering Service 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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 26th May 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all 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 Julie Dugdale of Barnardos North West Fostering Service 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 Julie Dugdale of Barnardos North West Fostering Service 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.