



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Fostering People Ltd

St Clements House
61 Trent Boulevard
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 5BE

8th December 2003

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

Fostering People Ltd

Tel No

0115 9145301

Address

St Clement's House, 61, Trent Boulevard, West Bridgford,
Nottingham, NG2 5BE

Fax No

0115 9145303

Email Address

info@fosteringpeople.co.uk

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Fostering People Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Sarah Byatt

Date of first registration 1st April 2002

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

31/3/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th December 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lynn Smith	094143
Name of Inspector	2	Ros Chapman	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Sarah Byatt	

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 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 Fostering People Ltd. 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.
Fostering People Ltd is a small agency with 20 approved foster carers. The staff team consists of five supervising social workers, one supervising social worker, a manager and three administration staff. The agency also has access to an Independent Consultant. The staff team are highly motivated and conscientious in their respective roles within the agency. The agency provides foster families for children aged between 0-19years old, including siblings, parent and child and in particular teenagers.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

Statement of Purpose – standard 1 (met)

The Statement of Purpose has been recently reviewed; it is comprehensive and clearly addresses the National Minimum Standards.

Staff informed the inspectors that they have been involved in the development and feel it is appropriate and reflects the agency's child centred approach.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service – standards 2&3 (met)

Staff informed inspectors that the manager gives excellent management leadership.

The Manager of this agency is suitably qualified in childcare and has substantial experience. Inspectors found both the Manager and responsible individual suitable in line with schedule 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Management of the fostering service –Standards 4&5 (1 met)

Through the agency's policies and procedures, carers, staff and management are clear about their individual accountability.

The agency needs to introduce a system to ensure carers and staff declare any possible conflicts of interests.

The manager has an excellent monitoring system in line with Schedule 7 National Minimum Standards.

Accountability and levels of delegation are clear within the agency.

Securing and promoting welfare – standards 6 to 14 (met)

Foster homes viewed by Inspectors were of a good standard.

Through preparation training foster carers are informed about the importance of self-worth and valuing diversity. All forms of discrimination are addressed and foster carers are given ways in which they can support young people to deal with any issues that arise.

The matching forms used clearly address all aspects and needs of the child and how the prospective foster carer can meet these needs. A risk assessment form has also been introduced to inform foster carers of potential issues that may arise.

Evidence was seen of a pre- placement letter for young people, it gave name, telephone number and who lives at the proposed foster home.

Policies and procedures address all aspects of child protection. Each foster carer has access to these within their handbook. Training is also given.

At the point of referral, Fostering People address the contact arrangements for young people and consider this before a placement is made.

Young people informed Inspectors that they could have friends over to visit.

Placing social workers spoke very positively about the way the foster carers facilitate family contacts.

. Young People are encouraged to attend their reviews and give their views.

Fostering people request the young people's views for each annual review of foster carers, within the first two weeks of placements and after a placement finishes.

Through the preparation training foster carers are made aware of the importance of attending medical appointments and informing relevant people of any medical issues that the child has.

The agency have an expectation that all foster carers promote the education of the young people in their care and this issue is discussed during the assessment process and ongoing through supervision and support from supervising social workers.

Supervising social workers have recently attended training on education of children looked after.

Foster carers informed Inspectors that decisions made at reviews form the framework for support and guidance given to young people, however the agency social workers also raise pathway planning at the reviews.

The manager informed inspectors that she is currently working on a training package 'preparation for adulthood' for foster carers of adolescents and possibly will include young people themselves.

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

Fostering People have policies for both staff and foster carers recruitment; the foster carers information is in leaflet form, however Fostering Network 'An Applicants Guide to the Assessment Process' is also used.

All staff files viewed by inspectors contained references and relevant qualifications as well as CRB checks.

The staff files viewed, were of a good standard containing supervision notes and training records.

The small staff team, work closely together in an efficient and effective way that's evident in the standards the agency sets.

An independent reviewing officer is used for foster carers reviews, the reviews are also presented to panels.

Evidence was viewed in foster carers files of training attended.

Inspectors viewed regular supervision notes on foster carers files. An excellent format is used where the carer keeps a duplicate sheet of their supervision, which is signed by both the supervising social worker as well as themselves.

Foster carers informed inspectors that the support they receive is very good and re-assuring.

Staff and foster carers informed inspectors the administrative team gives excellent support.

The high staffing levels enable the agency to give a high quality service to foster carers and children.

Records – standards 24&25 (not met)

The children's files viewed by inspectors held excellent placement details. Regular weekly summaries were evident in a format that identified health, education and home issues.

Evidence of young people's views were contained on their files.

The administration process for recording, filing and passing records on is in the process of change at present. A written policy needs to reflect these changes.

Inspectors observed separate files for staff, children, complaints and allegations.

The manager has a system that monitors all matters in schedule 7 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Inspectors found no evidence of a procedure on how children and foster carers can access their files.

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

The offices are suitable for the agency. IT equipment is available for staff and security is addressed with locked cupboards, doors and alarms.

Financial requirements – standards 27 to 29 (met)

The manager informed inspectors that the agency has sufficient financial resources at all times.

The agency uses a registered accountant and financial procedures are in place.

The Annual Business Plans identify the financial management of the agency.

Foster carers informed inspectors that payments are prompt and the agency does inform them of what the payments are expected to cover.

Fostering panels – standard 30 (not met)

Fostering People have a clear written policy for the fostering panel that is in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards. Inspectors observed one panel member did not have a CRB check. Panels member are from education, health, independent children's social worker, previous and present foster carers, in general an independent panel and chair.

The agency has in place an excellent form that panel members feed back to the chair regarding each case and standard of work presented.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the 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	Lynn Smith	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Ros Chapman	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Lionel Anthony	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	20	FS30	Ensure all panel members have suitable in date Criminal Records Bureau checks.	1 st April 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	FS4	A system should be in place to ensure carers and staff declare any possible conflicts of interests.
2	FS24	A recording policy should be established
3	FS25	A written procedure for foster carers and young people should be established that encourages access and input into their files and records.

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

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	6
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	NO
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	NO
Date of Inspection	8/12/03
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	51

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?

3

The Statement of Purpose has been recently reviewed, it is comprehensive and clearly addresses the National Minimum Standards.

Staff informed the inspectors that they have been involved in the development and feel it is appropriate and reflects the agency's child centred approach.

The agency send a personnel letter to each young person, which forms a children's guide. It is clear accessible and can be translated into different languages as required.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Staff informed inspectors that the manager gives excellent management leadership. The Manager of this agency is suitably qualified in childcare and has substantial experience. At present she is undertaking an Open University course - Professional Certificate in Management.		

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
Inspectors found both the Manager and responsible individual suitable in line with schedule 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.		

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?

2

Through the agency's policies and procedures, carers, staff and management are clear about their individual accountability.

The agency needs to introduce a system to ensure carers and staff declare any possible conflicts of interests.

The agency has central monitoring logs for incidents, complaints and allegations. A clear written policy is in place for the foster panel that monitors the standard of form F's presented. The manager has an excellent monitoring system in line with Schedule 7 National Minimum Standards.

The agency's financial procedure is straightforward and clear.

Evidence was viewed of charges. This information is available to foster carers and local authorities that place or consider placing with this agency.

See recommendation number 1

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

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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

1

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
Accountability and levels of delegation are clear within the agency The Manager is aware of her responsibilities, which are identified on the job description. Inspectors were informed who would deputise in the absence of the Manager, this is also clear to staff.		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster homes viewed by Inspectors were of a good standard in pleasant environments. Foster carers informed Inspectors that health and safety is addressed by the agency through training and health and safety check lists, evidence was also viewed of these in foster carers files.

Each foster carer has a handbook, which addresses the agency's health and safety policy. Foster carers visited by the inspectors were aware of the inspection process by the National Care Standards Commission.

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

Through preparation training foster carers are informed about the importance of self-worth and valuing diversity. All forms of discrimination are addressed and foster carers are given ways in which they can support young people to deal with any issues that arise.

During interviews, foster carers clarified how important a child's diversity and self-worth is and gave examples of how they have promoted it.

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 agency has in place matching forms which prompt social workers to address all aspects of the child's needs and the agency to address these when considering a match with foster carers. The child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs are considered when a match is made. A risk assessment form has also been introduced to inform foster carers of potential issues that may arise. The manager informed inspectors that each match is carefully considered and risks to other children in the household addressed within the team and children's social worker before a placement is made. On the questionnaires sent by inspectors, a placing social worker said that this practice did not take place.

The agency request Looked After Children's essential information, care plans and any other relevant information before placement begins, however not all authorities provide this information at the start of placements. Evidence was viewed of supervising social workers letters, on file requesting this information from local authorities.

Evidence was seen of a pre- placement letter for young people, it gave name, telephone number and who lives at the proposed foster home.

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

Fostering People's policies and procedures which address child protection, whistle blowing, bullying and absconding are found in the Foster Carers Handbook which is given to all foster carers. The Manager informed Inspectors that foster carers are requested to sign an agreement that corporal punishment is not acceptable.

Safe caring is also addressed through training and supervision.

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

100

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

At the point of referral, Fostering People address the contact arrangements for young people and consider this before a placement is made.

Young people Informed Inspectors that they can have friends over to visit.

Foster Carers explained how on occasions the foster child's parent visits in the foster home this is only after discussions and agreements with the children's social worker.

Placing social workers spoke very positively about the way the foster carers facilitate family contacts.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

Inspectors viewed evidence that birth parents opinions are taken into account during reviews. Young People are encouraged to attend their reviews and give their views.

Fostering people request the young peoples views for annual reviews of foster carers, within the first two weeks of placements and after a placement finishes.

Evidence was viewed of a young person's views being sought on how well they got along with another young person placed in the foster home for their review.

The Manager informed Inspectors that the agency is considering the supervising social worker taking a direct role in monitoring, checking each child is ok and seeing them on their own periodically. The manager informed inspectors she would discuss this with placing social workers in the near future.

Evidence was viewed of the agency listening to a young person and taking a complaint forward on their behalf.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

Foster carers ensure young people are registered with local doctors, dentist and opticians.

Through the preparation training foster carers are made aware of the importance of attending medical appointments and informing relevant people of any medical issues that child has.

The weekly summary that foster carers make, address any health issues that have arisen.

The manager regularly reviews any health issues that young people have. Inspectors viewed clear health information addressed in young peoples files, it is also raised at each review.

Placing social workers do not provide each foster carer with a written health record for each child placed, however the agency did inform the inspectors that they pass on all health information to the foster carer.

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**

The agency have an expectation that all foster carers promote the education of the young people in their care and this issue is discussed during the assessment process and ongoing through supervision and support from supervising social workers.

Supervising social workers have recently attended training on education of children looked after.

The financial issues are addressed during the planning of the placement and the expectation is, foster carers approach schools to enrol the young people and attend relevant functions. Supervising social workers also support foster carers to enrol young people into full time education.

Foster carers can access the education-training course for children looked after.

Through monitoring the manager informed the inspectors that one young person of compulsory school age is not enrolled at school. At the time of the inspection all local schools were refusing to admit this child. The agency and the foster carer were pursuing all responsible personnel to make it happen and were considering letters to the Director of Education and Social Services.

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**

Foster carers informed Inspectors that decisions made at reviews form the framework for support and guidance given to young people, however the agency social workers also raise pathway planning at the reviews.

Placing social workers informed inspectors that foster carers do promote independent living skills.

The manager informed inspectors that she is currently working on a training package 'preparation for adulthood' for foster carers of adolescents and possibly will include young people themselves.

The agency do assist foster carers with leaving care legislation, benefits etc. by providing booklets and information.

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

The agency has in place a policy on recruitment of staff, which entails two references followed up with telephone calls, CRB checks and a six months probationary period. Staff files viewed by inspectors contained references and relevant qualifications. The agency holds CRB checks for staff and carers separately in a locked facility. Inspectors viewed a selection, all were found to be in date. The manager is at present seeking guidance from CRB/ Home Office regarding the need for administration staff to have relevant CRB checks. Due to the access administration staff have to children's records, the manager has raised the issue as a need for all staff to be checked through CRB.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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 staff files viewed, were of a good standard containing supervision notes and training records. The small staff team, work closely together in an efficient and effective way that's evident in the standards the agency sets. All staff are managed by the agency manager. Monthly supervision sessions are recorded and workloads monitored. Staff informed the inspectors they feel consulted about everything and felt very much involved with the agency. The manager listens and takes on board comments. The staff team feel the agency recruit in line with workloads so no one is overstretched. An independent reviewing officer is used for foster carers reviews, the reviews are also presented to panels. Evidence was viewed in foster carers files of training attended. Staff and foster carers informed inspectors the administrative team gives excellent support. The manager informed inspectors the agency is considering contracting an external consultant psychologist for looked after children to advise supervising social workers and foster carers.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The agency has sufficient qualified and experienced staff to supervise and support the foster carers and young people. The high staffing levels enable the agency to give a high quality service to foster carers and children. Staffing shortfalls are not an issue with this agency as staff retention is high.

Fostering People have policies for both staff and foster carers recruitment; the foster carers information is in leaflet form, however Fostering Network 'An Applicants Guide to the Assessment Process' is also used.

The assessment process throughout is robust and in-depth. The agency uses BAAF Form F along with the agency's own questions and accompanying evidences. Previous partners are approached where a long-term relationship has taken place or children are involved.

Throughout preparation training, prospective foster carers are assessed for qualities, competences and aptitude for fostering.

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**

Inspectors viewed insurance cover letters, which indicated adequate cover from allegations directed at staff or foster carers.

The agency policies and procedures are updated and reflect policies required in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Foster carers informed inspectors that the agency has an out of hours mobile telephone system for help and advice.

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**

Evidence was viewed on staff files that suitable training and induction does take place. The manager informed inspectors that the agency is embarking on the PQ programme for social workers.

The manager informed inspectors an appraisal scheme has been put in place for all staff. Staff and foster carers informed inspectors that joint training does take place.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Staff informed inspectors that the agency has clear policies and procedures that are accessible to them and they were all aware of their roles and responsibilities within the agency. Staff files evidenced that regular supervision from the manager takes place. Appraisals and training is also addressed on a regular basis. The agency has weekly staff meeting that all staff attend as well as regular informal meetings.		

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
The foster carers handbook explains the strategy for working with and supporting carers. Foster carers spoken to feel they are well supported. The agency discusses the frequency of support visits and any training requirements. Support groups are encouraged by the agency that funds the venue and meals. Placing social workers stated communication between themselves and the agency was good, however one or two did feel they could be kept up to date better.		

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?	3
Inspectors viewed regular supervision notes on foster carers files. An excellent format is used where the carer keeps a duplicate sheet of their supervision, which is signed by both the supervising social worker as well as themselves. Foster carers informed inspectors they understand and have copies of foster care agreements. Inspectors viewed duplicates of the foster care agreement of files, signed. Foster carers stated they do have a handbook from the agency addressing policies and working practices. The manager informed the inspectors the handbook is at present under review. Foster carers informed inspectors that the support they receive is very good and re-assuring. Foster carers were aware of the complaints and allegation processes. The agency has an independent reviewing officer; evidence was viewed of the reports.		

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**

Inspectors were informed all foster carers attend preparation training before young people are placed with them.

The agency runs regular training sessions throughout the year and consults with foster carers on what training they feel would enhance the quality of care for young people. Experienced foster carers do attend preparation training to inform prospective foster carers of their knowledge and experience.

The agency has recently reviewed training and will be introducing Fostering Networks programme of training 'Skills to Foster' in conjunction with the agency's own training. Foster carers informed inspectors that they do raise training issues with the agency and courses are put on to address their needs. Evidence was seen on a foster carers file of training given to address shortfalls identified in the matching process.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The children's files viewed by inspectors held excellent placement details. Regular weekly summaries were evident in a format that identified health, education and home issues separately. The manager informed inspectors that some placing authorities do not send all the appropriate Looked After Children's forms, namely essential information and care plans. Letters were evident requesting this information.

Evidence of young people's views were contained on their files.

Foster carers informed inspectors that training has been given to them on life story work for young people and they are aware how important this work is for young people.

Security of information is addressed in training and foster carers spoke with clarified this.

Placing social workers receive summaries on the young people, however several placing social workers stated information was not regular.

The administration process for recording, filing and passing records on is in the process of change at present. A written policy needs to reflect these changes.

See recommendation number 2

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Inspectors observed separate files for staff, children, complaints and allegations. Complaints and allegations were also recorded on relevant files.

The entries within the files were legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguished between fact and opinion.

The manager has a system that monitors all matters in schedule 7 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Inspectors found no evidence of a procedure on how children and foster carers can access their files, however evidence was seen of foster carers summaries on file.

Records were kept of checks and references that had been obtained and their outcomes on staff and foster carers files.

See recommendation number 3

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			20
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			69
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			33
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			10
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			1
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	327	Maximum £	418.50

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

Fostering People are located on the second and third floors of the building. The offices are suitable for the agency at its present size, however the Manager informed inspectors that she is in the process of looking for larger premises.
Suitable IT equipment is available for staff and security is addressed with locked cupboards, doors and alarms.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager informed inspectors that the agency has sufficient financial resources at all times.

The manager informed inspectors that the agency conforms to all regulations and guidelines imposed upon business, including Income Tax (PAYE), National Insurance and VAT.

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 Manager informed Inspectors that the agency uses a registered accountant and financial procedures are in place.

The Annual Business Plans identify the financial management of the agency.

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**

Foster carers informed inspectors that payments are prompt and the agency does inform them of what the payments are expected to cover.

Within the carer's handbook, the terms and process for payments are explained in-depth, including tax issues.

The handbook does state rates of pay will be reviewed annually.

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?

2

Fostering People have a clear written policy for the fostering panel that is in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards. Inspectors observed one panel member did not have a CRB check. Panels member are from education, health, independent children's social worker, previous and present foster carers, in general an independent panel and chair.

The inspector observed the panel working together and addressing relevant issues to each case. Comments were made about the high standard of form F's presented to the panel. The agency has in place an excellent form that panel members feed back to the chair regarding each case and standard of work presented. The individual forms are then kept with panel minutes.

Evidence was viewed in foster carers files of panel writing on their behalf to address issues. The panel are very much aware of all the foster carers at the agency. They are kept up to date on placements and reviews.

See requirement number 1

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?
Standard not assessed	9

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?
Standard not assessed.	9

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> 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 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 _____ of _____
confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation
of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that
I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with
these.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Or

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

--

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

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