



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Families For Children

Findon Court

Findon

West Sussex

BN14 0RA

13th December 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Families For Children

Tel No

01903 877448

Address

Findon Court, Findon, West Sussex, BN14 0RA

Fax No

01903 877448

Email Address

d.miller@families-for-children.co.uk

Registered Number of IFA

H110000968

Name of Registered Provider

Mr David Ralph Miller

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mr Simon Newstone

Date of first registration

28th March 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

4th June 2003

Registration Conditions Apply?

NO

Date of last inspection

27/10/03

Date of Inspection Visit		13th December 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Kevin Ball	111565
Name of Inspector	2	Mrs Liz Driver	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not applicable	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		Not applicable	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Simon Newstone	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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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

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Families For Children. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Families for Children is an independent fostering service that aims to work alongside local authorities to place children and young people in foster care. The agency has been operating for nearly 15 years and recruits Foster Carers from throughout the south east of England.

The service is formed in two parts. Firstly, Families for Children (South) Ltd, which is made up of four Directors, three of whom have long and established careers in the social care field as well as that of looked after children. The fourth Director is an experienced and qualified accountant. All have specific roles within the organisation and are suitably qualified for the duties they perform. Secondly, Families for Children Limited Liability Partnership. Three of the Directors above are partners in the LLP.

Families for Children currently have six local centres in East and West Sussex, with a seventh centre recently opened in the London Borough of Bromley, as well as a school unit for the mid Sussex area. It also has a main resources office in Brighton and an administrative base in Worthing. The recruitment, assessment, training and review of foster carers is managed by the Resources Centre in Brighton and the administrative base for other business is managed through the Worthing office. The service has over 150 Foster Carers and is responsible for over 200 children and young people placed with them.

The service has achieved the Investors in People Award and is committed to providing a high quality service for the children it looks after. The service is constantly reviewing and developing its practice and as such often responds to need and practice issues in an innovative and resourceful way.

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

This Standard is exceeded with Families for Children having a sound and meaningful Statement of Purpose in place.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service; Standards 2-3

Both of these Standards are exceeded with an experienced, well qualified and effective management team in place.

Management of the Fostering Service; Standards 4-5

Both of these Standards are exceeded with comprehensive, effective and robust management and monitoring strategies in place.

Securing and promoting welfare; Standards 6-14

All of these Standards are exceeded, with the exception of Standard 10 that is met. The agency has solid practices in place demonstrating robust recruitment of Foster Carers, anti-discriminatory practice, safeguarding and promoting both children's welfare and their achievement. The agency is particularly commended for its educational provision. Standard 10 is met however birth parents have not been contacted for this inspection.

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

All of these Standards are exceeded with Families for Children offering excellent support and training for staff and Foster Carers, being a sound and credible employer.

Records; Standards 24-25

Both of these Standards are exceeded with the agency maintaining well kept records.

Fitness of premises for use as a Fostering Service; Standard 26

This Standard is exceeded. Families for Children are accommodated in well-maintained premises. All accommodation is comfortably furnished and suitable for its purposes.

Financial requirements; Standards 27-29

Both of these Standards are exceeded. Financial management is professionally undertaken.

Fostering panels; Standard 30

This Standard is exceeded with a robust and professionally managed Fostering Panel in place.

Short term breaks; Standard 31

This Standard does not apply to Families for Children and has therefore not been assessed.

Family and friends as carers; Standard 32

This Standard does not apply to Families for Children and has therefore not been assessed.

Summary;

Surveys were sent out to all children over five years and to those Foster Carers who have been approved in the last 12 months. Previous inspections surveyed all other Foster Carers, and placing Social Workers.

Of the 32 National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services two do not apply to Families for Children. Of the remaining 30 Standards the agency exceeds 29, the remaining Standard is met.

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?

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	
			Not applicable	

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
			None	

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	4	Incorporate the Conflict of Interest Policy in to the Foster Care Handbook thereby ensuring accessibility to staff and Foster Carers.

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	4
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NA
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• Interview with children	NO
• 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	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
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	13/12/04
Time of Inspection	09.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	30.00

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The Statement of Purpose is clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service and of the facilities and services it provides. This details the Aims and Objectives section but is also detailed in the Core values section setting out the style and culture of the organisation.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the facilities and resources available to children using the service. The ethos, services and facilities are based on valuing children as individuals whilst recognising diversity. The document is clearly child focused.

The Statement covers education, the holiday scheme, therapy, health, culture, religion, and the range of placements available.

The Statement covers the status and constitution, structure of the partnership with details of the Directors and their specific roles.

Due to issues of confidentiality refers the reader to a separate document that will provide details of staff employed by the agency, their relevant qualifications and experience. This seems entirely appropriate given the nature of the work undertaken by the agency.

Details of the number of Foster Carers and the number of children placed are provided.

Details of any complaints are listed including the number of children who made contact with an Independent Advocate.

The Statement has recently been updated (October 2004) and its review is a regular part of the senior management team's business. As such it meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

Children are provided with a colour pamphlet entitled ' An Introduction To Families' which gives details of how they can contact an Independent Advocate as well as significant points that could be important to them. The 'Guide for young People' backs this up, which contains information about procedures relating to their care and how to make a complaint.

The agency provides a regular Newsletter to children – entitled 'the Buzz' - which is a colourful magazine showing various activities undertaken at the centres and detailing children's achievements. Its format is in the style of a comic and very eye catching. The latest edition was published in September 2004.

The agency is commended for the high quality of material they have created and as such exceed the Standard.

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
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The Centre Managers all hold professional qualifications relevant to working with children and young people and have a solid background in the social care field. They all have more than the minimum requirement of working in and managing services for children of at least two years and one year in a management capacity.

All staff spoken with confirmed that the Senior Management team, including the Directors provide excellent support at all times and were available and accessible for guidance, leadership or consultation whenever required. The Directors play an active role in the day-to-day operation of the service and two of the Directors hold appropriate qualifications in child care/social work.

The service has worked closely and cooperatively with the Commission in developing practice as well as preparing staff, foster carers and children for the inspection.

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?	4
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The Commission for Social Care Inspection holds photographs, a birth or marriage certificate and certificates of qualifications for the Responsible Individual, the Directors and the Registered Manager of the service.

The Responsible Individual, the other Directors and the Registered Manager of the service have completed satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Other relevant information is held by CSCI at the West Sussex area office.

The service exceeds the National Minimum Standards in that they have supplied the above details for all of the Directors as well as the Manager.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Families for Children are commended for the high quality of the material available to staff, carers and children to demonstrate how they will monitor the activities of the agency. A Foster Care Handbook is available to staff and carers which states the expectations the agency has of them and the level of support provided by the Directors. This is developing as a tool and reference point for staff and Foster Carers.

The agency has a range of procedures and documentation covering its work, which includes leaflets for placing agencies about the types of services available and the fees charged. Records seen showed that each placement contract clearly stated the fees to be charged.

The service requires staff, Managers and carers to declare any possible conflict of interest. An Inspector met staff who were also Foster Carers for the agency and all were able to demonstrate that their dual roles were very clearly understood. It is the policy of the agency that an Independent Assessor carries out the Annual Review of carers who are also employees rather than a Reviewing Officer employed by the agency. Additionally, there is cross centre case working so that immediate colleagues are not supervising them as carers. The agency has developed a Conflict of Interest Policy applying to staff, Foster Carers and any other situations that may arise. It is advised that this be incorporated into the Foster Care Handbook.

The agency is diligent in the reviewing of its policies and procedures, and has reviewed all in the last two years to ensure compliance with the Foster Care Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Information, as required under this Standard, is supplied to purchasers of services, including charges and fees.

New monitoring and tracking sheets have been introduced by the agency to allow a greater internal auditing. Documentation was noted that allowed each Centre Manager to track essential paperwork that might be missing from case files, such as Looked After Children documents, Personal Education Plans, savings accounts, unannounced visits to Foster Carers and supervision.

The agency has looked at methods for reviewing the practice within the organisation and the Registered Manager – as Development Manager – takes on responsibility for monitoring practice development, in discussion with the Directors. The agency is developing a computerised database that will enable a whole range of useful information to be collated and analysed. It is hoped that this will also streamline many of the business processes currently undertaken. Due to ill health of the individual creating this programme there has been a delay, however, it is anticipated that this will be operational in Spring 2005.

It is the applied thought and attention in ensuring quality performance and practice that is undertaken and evidenced by the organisation that exceeds the National Minimum Standard.

The Commission has received four notifications of complaints. All were resolved without CSCI needing to become involved.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	27
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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.	17
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.	0
Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	8

Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
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Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0
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Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
	4

Each of the Centres has a Manager who is accountable to the Operations Manager. Final decision-making on significant issues is clearly held by the Directorship.

The Inspector is aware that the Directors have a positive working relationship and hold regular board meetings for which records are maintained. Centre Managers will remain informed about practice through regular meetings. Communication within the service appears to be very good and only positive comments were received by the Inspectors about the management.

Managers interviewed by Inspectors stated that they felt their job descriptions to be accurate with the lines of accountability and delegation clearly understood. All members of staff have an Employment Handbook that contains all employment information.

The agency has a good level of management and staff were aware of who to go to if their line Manager was not available. Staff confirmed that supervision took place with Managers each month and the Inspector noted records that confirmed this. Newly appointed Managers received a higher level of supervision with their respective line manager.

It is the consistently positive feedback about the quality of the management within the agency that satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?
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All those who apply to become a Foster Carer with Families for Children are required to undertake a very detailed recruitment, assessment and training programme before the final reports are prepared for presentation to the Fostering Panel.

The agency has a written policy for the recruitment, assessment and reviewing of carers.

The Panel sees this process through.

All Foster Carers have a person specification and job description both of which were clear and easy to understand.

Upon the successful completion of a two-day Choosing to Foster course a decision is made about moving to the next stage of assessment. An Assessor would be allocated to the potential Foster Carer and works through a set process to agree the application. This includes detailed checks on the applicants and their premises. Applicants are made aware of the outset how long the process is likely to take and may take up to nine months. Clearly this is suited to the needs of individual applicants.

There is no reason to consider that the findings from the previous inspection concerning the quality of the Choosing to Foster course do not remain valid. By attending this course the Inspector found three trainers, two of which were Foster Carers for the organisation, facilitating the course. The course followed the Fostering Network's programme of topics such as 'What is fostering all about', 'Listening to young people', and 'Fostering and your family'. This is a nationally recognised training programme. The workshop was well attended and presented in a professional manner.

Once the course is successfully completed, a report is prepared for the Fostering Panel and the applicants, along with the Assessor attend the Panel for the final approvals to be ratified.

Part of the approval process includes a detailed assessment of the premises and checklists were seen by an Inspector on an application recently completed in preparation for a Fostering Panel.

The Foster Care Handbook gives a clear indication to prospective carers of the things that they need to consider before signing up to agree to take a certain child and this includes their specific skills and knowledge, space, and the effect on family relationships.

The agency has a written policy that states no child of the foster carers or other fostered children should share a bedroom and carers who met with Inspectors confirmed this, however this can be a flexible arrangement when siblings are placed together dependant upon the children's needs.

The agency policy with regard to expectations of the accommodation provided by carers is clearly stated in section 4 of the Foster Care Handbook.

Risk assessment is undertaken as part of each individual placement planning process.

It is the quality of the training and assessment process in choosing Foster carers that satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?	4
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Families for Children employ a Referrals Officer who's role is to ensure that all children are placed in services which value diversity and equality as well as their individual need. Gender, religion, language and ethnic matters are all considered. The agency provides a service to local authorities wishing to place refugee and asylum seeking children. Families for Children have negotiated a service agreement with West Sussex County Council as a port authority for refugee and asylum seeking children. Support is given to children to ensure that they receive appropriate education and language development skills by the agency to enable them to enter mainstream education. The agency ensures that carers have adequate support and training. A comprehensive information pack containing practice notes is available for Fostering Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. This is a professionally produced document.

The agency works with children with a range of disabilities and ensures that it is able to offer the appropriate service to the carer and child. The Inspector noted Families for Children taking a strong advocacy role for one particular child with special needs and taking an active role in ensuring needs are met for other children. The Hills Barn Centre of the agency takes a lead responsibility for placing children who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Families for Children are aware that they would like to recruit more carers from differing backgrounds in order to meet the needs of those particular children. This is something that they continue to be actively undertaking but remains a challenge to the organisation. Proactive steps have been taken to address this issue by attempting to make contacts with local communities where there will be a greater cultural and ethnic mix. Nevertheless Families for Children do attempt to meet the needs of the children they have currently placed by using local resources and contacts to assist, ie, interpreters, STAMP (Supporting Team for Ethnic Minority Pupils) and a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teacher is also available.

Training courses are available to carers to enhance their skills in this area, focusing upon

issues such as asylum seeking children and refugee children. Some of the carers who were interviewed had children placed with them from either an ethnic minority background or with special needs. It was apparent that the carers were able to advocate for these children given their particular needs and were aware of the need to promote these young people's life chances and equality of opportunity.

Families for Children are proactive in attempting to meet the needs of children from different backgrounds, as well as those children with special needs. As such there is an active approach to countering discrimination and valuing diversity. This satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?

4

As is detailed in Standard six the assessment and matching process is detailed and the information gathered at all stages of the assessment of the child and the carer will contribute to the matching process. Families for Children has agreed service agreements with a number of placing local authorities and are developing its assessment practice regarding mother and baby placements. This has been through collaboration with the Monroe Young Family Centre who have assisted Families for Children in researching the area of practice.

The Foster Carer records show that progress and stability are discussed by the Caseworker when they undertake their six weekly visits and by the Reviewing Officer each year as part of the annual review. Staff were clear that placements did not always work out and if at any stage it was not considered in the best interests of the child work would commence to reassess the needs of the child.

The agency has a policy on trans-racial and trans-cultural placements that clearly underpins the values of helping each child to retain an understanding of his cultural background and heritage. The contract agreed with each local authority covers any funding requirements for trans-racial and trans-community placements.

The use of a matching matrix/framework to evidence decision-making and increase the likelihood of successful matching taking place is under constant review. The agency has developed a policy and practice guidance on Assessment for permanency, defining what is meant by the different routes for care i.e. long term, short term, permanence. This is helpful in determining care planning and matching.

Evidence seen within case files and in discussion with caseworkers (agency social workers) indicated that the matching procedures carried out within Families for Children meet the requirements of this standard. A sample of children's and foster carer files seen by the Inspector contained comprehensive and satisfactory written assessments of the child, their family and the carers.

The Inspector considered that matches are achieved following the sharing and consideration of information that involves all relevant professionals, the child and his/her family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement. (Standard 8.3). The Inspector was advised that the ideal was that appropriate introductory periods to the placement are agreed following assessment of individual need.

Statistics provided for the Inspector regarding changes of placement for children within Families for Children in a 12-month period up to 31st October 2004 show that 18 had one change, 5 had two changes and 4 had 3 changes of placement. Families for Children had 205 children placed with them as of 31/10/04.

Families for Children is pro-active in attempting to match children to Foster Carers successfully and has developed practice strategies accordingly. This aspect exceeds the Standard.

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?

4

The agency has a detailed Child Protection Procedure and extensive information about child protection issues in the Foster Carers Handbook. An explanation is given as to what constitutes abuse, what forms it might take and the response expected of carers and staff. The material acknowledges that many of the children being placed will have suffered some form of abuse and gives useful information about caring for such children. Training courses on Safer Caring are also mandatory within the agency. The Inspector attended part of one such course for the inspection in 2003 and was assured that the content adequately covered the relevant aspects in order to protect both Foster Carer and child. By raising awareness about the complex subject of safer caring the agency attempts to promote a culture of reflective and transparent practice thereby offering a further safeguard for both children placed as well as Foster Carers. There is no reason to consider that practice has changed in this respect since the last inspection.

The agency maintains a central register of any child protection issues and the Inspector saw a copy of the quarterly report, July to September 2004. This detailed cases that were and were not subject to section 47 enquiries (Children Act 1989). Other matters were referred as Notifications. Families for Children employ a dedicated person who has responsibility for child protection who is clear about thresholds for safeguarding children.

The Handbook contains detailed advice about behaviour management including the implementation of the Behaviour Management Policy. The value base on which the policy operates is that a child is valued as an individual and any behaviour management must be part of a shared objective with a child to help them develop and take responsibility for their actions.

It clearly states that any punishment must be fair and effective. The Foster Care Handbook is clear that no form of corporal punishment is permissible and lists these. It then states the sanctions that may be used which are based on restitution, reparation, and loss of privileges, pocket money or time out.

It is the clear reporting procedure, the dedicated member of staff and the depth of experience within the staff team that satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has written details in each child's Care Plan as to the level of contact agreed with the child's parent. This is also displayed at the front of each child's file.

This matter is dealt with as part of the assessment with carers and is considered a vital part of the matching for each child. Records were seen which detailed contact arrangements with parents and showed that this is not always a comfortable time for carers as parents can show hostility. Caseworkers and Support Workers are a key part of some contact visits.

Contact arrangements are agreed as part of the placement planning process and are in line with the Care Plan or any court directions They are then monitored and reviewed as appropriate at each Looked After Child Review or other forum as appropriate. Specific arrangements are managed by the agency Caseworker, with placement Support Workers involved as necessary. Risk factors are assessed on an individual basis and detailed within the LAC Care plan and review documents. Each local centre has a comfortable and well-equipped family room, where supervised contact can take place if necessary. Financial support is provided as and where necessary. Both direct and indirect contact is promoted by the agency and the Inspector noted one example of indirect contact being devised by requesting a father to record readings from the Koran. This was also a strategy used for supporting the child's religious beliefs and respecting the family wishes.

Details of contact sessions, including any impact upon the child, are recorded by the carers in the daily diary. Any issues that arise can be discussed with Support Workers, who record all information on contact sheets. This is shared with the Centre Manager and kept in the child's case file. Notes made on contact sheets seen by the Inspector in case files demonstrated sensitivity to issues raised by contact sessions and good management of the outcomes for the children. These noted were seen to be up to date.

The Commission has taken a decision, at local level, to not survey birth families. The views of birth parents, for this inspection have therefore not been sought. However the Inspector has noted on file and through discussion many excellent examples of how Families for Children advocate and promote contact for children, and in many respects exceed the requirements as set out in the Standard. The scoring of Standard met is not to be seen as a reflection on Families for Children practice.

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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

Families for Children ensure that all children have regular contact with a Caseworker and children are fully involved – when able to be - in Foster Carer annual reviews.

The agency undertakes questionnaires with children as part of its annual review of Foster Carers. Caseworkers are available to assist children in completing them.

The agency's complaints procedure is provided to children and is presented in a child friendly format. An independent advocacy service is available to children, although this has had minimal use by children. The service benefits from three independent advocates, two men and one woman. Documentation was seen demonstrating how matters referred to the service were dealt with. The Children's Guide still refers to the NCSC and this will need to be corrected to be CSCI.

In addition to the above the Looked After Children/Integrated Children's Services Consultation documents may be used by the young people when appropriate as a method for gaining the children's views.

The Caseworker role is key in enabling and facilitating open communication between children and carers and the network of professionals involved in the placement.

All Foster Carers spoken with confirmed that the agency places a high regard on children's ability to be consulted and have opportunity to complain if needed. This assures the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Families for Children ensure that all health care needs of children are known and assessed prior to admission to any placement as far as is possible. It works in co-operation with area health authorities and has access to a medical consultant if required.

Training for all staff about, physical, emotional and social development are mandatory.

Case records of children seen show that health care is reviewed as part of the supervision of the Foster Carer and is detailed as part of the review of the child. Outstanding documentation was chased up with placing authorities and letters sent to placing authorities were noted on file chasing up any deficits. The agency also has monitoring sheets for tracking such documentation. Each Foster Carer is required to keep a log of significant events for each child in their care.

The agency has a good resource bank of mental health specialists available should a child need more specialised support. These include the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health teams but also play and art therapists, counsellors, child Psychiatrists and Psychologists.

The last inspection highlighted that the agency was looking to develop a separate health record, in a friendly and useable format that will be able to travel with the child should they move placement. It was anticipated that this would avoid the need for some children to be reassessed/re-examined following a placement move as well as essential health information being lost within the care system. This has yet to be implemented as the concept and format has progressed to consider all aspects of the child's history and placement. This document would be available to the respective child and is intended to provide a bridge between placements as well as a record for the child. This is an innovative development and as such exceeds the National Minimum Standards. It is anticipated that it will be in place for the next inspection.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The agency strongly promotes the rights and needs of all children to receive education and ensures as part of its contract with any placing authority that appropriate funding and provision is agreed before the placement commences.

The agency has a written policy which relates to the 'Education of Children not in School' which includes the action to be taken by staff and Foster Carers when children are excluded from school on a short, medium and long term basis

Each Foster Carer keeps a detailed record of day-to-day education issues/achievements in the daily diary, which is a key document in tracking the development of skills or areas that may need more support.

Currently two education centres are available for children – one for the younger age group based in Findon and the second in Ditchling acting as a support for older students – with both being of significant value to the children who attend. The centre for younger children is registered with OFSTED for up to six children and the second centre can cater for four children. Additionally, each Centre has provision in the form of a room, a desk and a computer terminal, for children to use if excluded from school or experiencing some other educational difficulty, for use in the short term.

The Education Manager acts as a liaison role with educational services within the county and supports Caseworkers when it is required at educational review meetings.

Analysis of educational attainment for those children cared for by Families for Children shows that in 2004 100% of Year 11 students entered for GCSE exams achieved one or more GCSE's, grade A-G. Similar results have been achieved for 2003 and 2002. In 2004 77% of students entered for GCSE achieved a grade of A-C in one or more subject. This is an increase for the past two years. Progressive figures are also available for those achieving three or more GCSE's. Further statistics regarding the achievement of Key Stage tests are available.

The agency is also able to provide Educational Support Workers whose role includes supporting children in the mainstream school environment to remain in that setting when they might otherwise face exclusion. This appears to be a valued resource both from the Foster Carers perspective as well as the schools point of view. The worker merges in to the classroom environment and assists as and when necessary by including other children as well as the intended child. This avoids singling out the child and appears to work very well.

Each Centre has an education Support Workers who liaises with local schools.

As highlighted at the last inspection Personal Education Plans were not always in place on the selection of files inspected. Information provided demonstrated that the agency has 35% of PEP's in place, with 15% outstanding. A further 50% rest with the local authority with letters chasing them. Given these deficits the agency is to be commended on its practice, provision and approach to managing educational matters and as such exceeds the Standard.

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?

4

The agency uses the ASDAN programme (Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and materials which Caseworkers and Support Workers stated was specifically planned for each child with their carers. Subjects covered including managing personal care, budgeting, preparing meals, and looking after premises, the use of public transport and any other specific requirements. The agency also liaises with local employers who are supportive and sympathetic to gain sponsorship for apprenticeship type schemes. Two Centres are running groups for adolescents. One Centre provided information to the Inspector detailing discussion groups and topics covered. These included ground rules for the group, self esteem, hygiene and personal care, relationships, drugs awareness and keeping safe. This group was well attended and popular.

Children are consulted about their future placements through regular contact with Caseworkers, Support workers and as part of the Looked After Children reviewing process. Records were seen at more than one centre that confirmed this.

Families for Children runs a course for Foster Carers – Preparation for Independent Living- which ran in 2004.

Section 12 of the Foster Care Handbook details areas that will apply for those young people nearing leaving care.

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?

4

Both Inspectors met a wide range of staff as part of the inspection. All staff interviewed confirmed that they had followed the recruitment policy of the company, which they felt was robust and challenging.

Criminal Records Bureau checks have been completed on all staff and the agency has a policy to ensure they are re-checked every three years.

All Case Workers, Support Workers undertake training on the use of the Foster Care Handbook. Those employed by the agency have opportunities to undertake further training such as academic programmes i.e. Degree in Social Work, Practice Teacher Award (Social Work) the Post Qualifying Award in Child Care, Diploma in Social Work, and Post Qualifying Award One. Support workers and Teaching Assistants have undertaken a range of training including Team Teach, Counselling, and Open University Diploma in Social Work, First Aid, NVQ in Working with Children and Young People. Administrative and Business staff undertakes appropriate training. The agency has a comprehensive training programme for staff for the coming year. Other courses will be considered upon request. All staff may attend course run for Foster Carers if they wish to.

Staff who met with the Inspector stated that the agency was very willing to support anyone on relevant courses and that the Training Manager gave advice and guidance as required.

Staff records seen show that staff are appropriately qualified for the job they hold and that the appropriate checks have been made.

The Personnel Officer confirmed that when she requires advice with regard to any employment issue she has access to a consultancy company who provide personnel and employment law advice.

A selection of staff records were checked during this inspection and were noted to be maintained to an excellent standard.

It is the positive feedback from all staff and Foster Carers that satisfies the Inspector that this

Standard is exceeded.

Total number of staff of the agency:

79

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

28

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?

4

As previously stated the agency has a clear management structure comprising of four Directors, a Commercial Manager, an Operations Manager and a Development Manager who make up the Senior Management Team. The entire management team are well qualified and experienced in the field of family placement and all feedback about their availability and support was positive. There had clearly been an amount of preparation in respect of quality performance prior to the inspection by Managers, and this positively reflects the value placed upon professional practice within the agency.

All staff that have managerial responsibility have appropriate qualifications for the role.

Discussion with a range of staff showed that supervision, training and development is provided at all the centres with funding being available for training.

The main administration for the agency operates from a base in Findon and an extensive team of administrative staff are employed to support the whole staff team.

Job descriptions, contracts of employment and conditions of service for staff were checked by an Inspector for selection of newly appointed staff. Records kept were of a very good quality. Staff spoken with confirmed that they each had a personal copy of the Staff Employment Pack containing the information as required.

The structures, systems and internal monitoring procedures in place to manage the service are very good and as such satisfy the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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

Inspectors met a range of staff as part of the inspection and without exception all were clear about their role within the agency. All staff were well prepared for the inspection and welcomed the Inspector at each of the Centres. All staff interviewed felt the level of staffing to be appropriate to the needs of the service.

The turnover of Foster Carers is very low. The agency recognises that it would like to recruit more Foster Carers from a wider range of backgrounds but is clear that they are recruited for their skills and not purely because they balance ethnicity.

The robust assessment process described elsewhere in this report ensures that Foster Carers understand the task required of them. All of the criteria as detailed in 17.7 is addressed through the assessment process through the competency based pro-forma.

Records seen by an Inspector show that the matching process is reviewed if a placement does not work as successfully as anticipated and any development issues would be discussed with the Foster Carers.

As stated the recruitment of Foster Carers from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds remains a challenge to the organisation in order to fully meet the needs of some of the children Families for Children find themselves having to place. The agency has however been pro-active in addressing the ethnic shortfall and is attempting to make links with local communities where there may be a greater representation of cultural and ethnic diversity. This is a positive step and one that it is anticipated will encourage individuals or couples to become interested in becoming foster carers.

Foster Carer satisfaction is high and as such satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The agency is considered to be an excellent employer that has strong principles about valuing those who are employed regardless of their role.

Inspectors met with a range of carers, staff and all felt proud of the agency they worked for.

Several staff quoted examples where Directors and Managers had specifically supported them in a very positive way.

Many staff employed by the agency knew of the quality of its work in their previous employment and joined them because they were in agreement with its values.

The out of hours support for Foster Carers is excellent and all commented in surveys undertaken for the last inspection that they were satisfied with the support offered.

The agency has the appropriate levels of insurance and requires carers to ensure that their insurance is up to date.

The Representations and Complaints Procedures incorporated within the Foster Carer Handbook are detailed and comprehensive and include the Whistle blowing policy. This is available to all staff.

Given the consistently positive feedback about the fairness and competence of Families for Children as an employer the Inspector is satisfied that this Standard is exceeded.

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?

4

The induction programme for employed staff describes areas of learning that have to be covered in the early stages of employment and up to a period of eighteen months.

Training programmes are available for all levels of staff that is linked to the staff appraisal scheme. Readers should refer to the text in Standard 15 for further information regarding training.

Staff and Foster Carers may meet together for some training. Staff considered this to be essential to maintain a good understanding of the issues facing them.

Statistics for attendance on training courses were provided for the Inspector and highlighted a good level of participation. Provision of training courses that would progress and not just refresh workers was also considered to be important. In 2004 19 Foster Carers and four staff achieved the NVQ level 3 Award. New courses organised in 2004 included workshops on attachment issues, Communicating with children, mental health and young people, men who foster and first aid for young people.

The agency also has the provision to take Social Work students on placement by having accredited Practice Teachers and Assessors. Some staff were undertaking the Post Qualifying Award – Part One - as well as the Child Care Award.

It is the value placed upon training by the agency and the satisfied feedback received from staff and Foster Carers that exceeds the National Minimum Standard.

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

4

As described in other standards all staff have a good understanding of their role and duties.

Formal supervision is provided to all staff and occurs at least as a minimum once a month and more frequently if a staff member requires it for any reason. Staff records seen showed that the supervision happens regularly and is planned in advance.

Staff meetings take place in all of the Centres and offices and records are maintained of these meetings. Staff spoke positively of the managers and Directors and saw them as having an open door policy. Maintaining professional standards is central to the function and efficacy of the agency and interviews with staff and Foster Carers demonstrated that they understand their accountability and that they are well supported. It is this that exceeds the National Minimum Standard.

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

4

Annual reviews, supervision, regular contact and informal discussion all provide mechanisms to manage and support of Foster Carers. These strategies appear to be the central method of support however there was also a clear and comprehensive training programme available to carers and external courses would also be available if considered to be appropriate.

In addition to this, regular Core Groups were used as a way of Foster Carers meeting and supporting each other. Sometimes these were informal and more focused on fun and activity and at other times they were more formal with specific issues to discuss. The Inspectors attended three of these Core Groups and noted it to be well attended, informative, relaxed and yet well facilitated. Guest speakers may attend and some meetings will focus on specific subjects such as mother and baby placements. These meetings enabled discussion around many issues for carers such as training needs, outcomes for children, sharing experiences and tensions around placements and generally the importance of an informal network of support. Families for Children are also in the process of implementing a Foster Carers Forum. Each Centre will nominate two Foster Carers to represent their area who will then meet 4-6 times a year to discuss relevant issues concerning the operation and development of the service. The Forum will include representatives of the management team and is hoped to be operational in early 2005.

Holiday activities for the children were also available, as were two opportunities a year for respite care in order for the carers to have a break. This is optional.

The agency operates an out of hour's service that, again, was well thought of by the Foster Carers. Response times were felt to be swift regardless of the hour with someone always contactable if needed.

Inspection of Foster Carers files highlighted that all had recent visits by Case Workers and records show regular supervision takes place.

An example of how the agency values those it employs is by them providing a choice of fun days out – all paid for – following the positive previous inspection in 2003. This was seen as a ‘thank you’ by the agency for the hard work that all had put in to the service. In 2004 the agency held a ‘Celebration Day’ with a similar focus.

Measures such as these satisfy the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The Foster Care agreements are very detailed and contain all the information required by this Standard.

Each Foster Carer is supervised by a professionally qualified Social Worker and discussion with them showed that they felt well supported in carrying out this role.

Supervision is provided by Caseworkers at a minimum level of every six weeks and an annual review is undertaken in respect of each carer. Records were seen of supervision and contact notes on the file of the carers and these were all maintained to a good standard.

Approved Foster Carers have a copy of the Foster Care Handbook. Managers acknowledge that this contains a wealth of information and Foster Carers need to assimilate and use them as reference points for information. Discussion with Foster Carers showed that they feel well informed by the agency. Foster Carers also reported that they felt supported at all times by the agency.

Information given to the Inspector demonstrated that carers benefit from a robust system of practical support and are fully aware of the procedures in place to deal with allegations of abuse.

The agency has robust monitoring procedures for its practice and provision. This Standard is clearly exceeded.

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?

4

The agency provides a very comprehensive training programme through from first stage of enquiry to ongoing support when they are approved. The agency introduced a requirement of its Foster Carers that between the period from February 2002 to February 2004 or within two years of approval whichever comes later that all approved carers will complete a minimum of seven courses, which are mandatory. The mandatory courses include Child Protection, Foster Care and Basic Law, Basic First Aid, Valuing Differences, Challenging Behaviour, Education of Looked After Children, and Safer Caring.

The Training Brochure for 2004 details a wide and diverse range of other courses are offered which more than exceed the minimum requirement required by the Standards.

The requirement for attendance on some courses is built into new Foster Carers contracts and the agency is aware that some Foster Carers will attend courses more readily than others.

Statistics for course attendance were provided to the Inspector showing a good attendance. An Inspector attended a small selection of training courses during the last inspection and these were well organised, professionally delivered and pitched at an appropriate level.

Sessions are also organised for the birth children of Foster Carers. Evidence of one Centre's group was provided for the Inspector and seen to be well attended.

As stated in other Standards the agency offers an excellent training package and places a high value on equipping staff and Foster Carers with the tools, skills and knowledge to undertake the task. It is the high quality of training courses offered that satisfies the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?
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An up to date and comprehensive case record is maintained for every child in the service and a sample of these were seen by both Inspectors in two Centres. Records for children held at other Centres were inspected in 2003.

A check of the records showed that they are maintained to the required standard with all records clearly stating the reason for the child being placed.

The records seen showed that all Looked After Children/Integrated Children's Services documentation was correct and up to date or if not on file, letters sent chasing the documentation. In some instances this had occurred more than once. Case records in respect of children are maintained at the respective Centre that supports the child and carer.

The records seen show that children are involved in their care planning and where advocacy is required this is made available.

Records seen show that carers are required to keep a log of significant events which are signed by the Caseworker as part of the supervision of the care and a copy kept on the file of the child.

Files and records were of a high quality and well kept, user friendly and logically sequenced.

Carers who spoke with the Inspector confirmed that they are given all relevant information about the placement. There is an expectation that they will provide secure storage for any records kept in the foster placement and the Foster Carer Handbook contains guidance on this.

It is the high quality of the case records that assures the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?**

4

The agency operates efficiently and smoothly and as such is able to maintain a high standard of record keeping and administration. This essentially appears to be due to dedicated administrative staff for each Centre. The Commission for Social Care Inspection were provided with updates to policies and procedures as well as amendments to the Foster Care Handbook in preparation for this inspection. These are well presented and were easy to understand.

Separate records are kept for staff employed by the agency, Foster Carers, children, complaints and any allegations made.

All records were stored securely with a clear policy about access.

As already mentioned in this report a computerised data base is being developed that will streamline administrative processes and ensure that comprehensive information is collated regarding many areas of practice and provision. This will include such areas as recording complaints, incidents and allegations, staff training and appraisal, annual reviews for Foster Carers as well as details about children.

As highlighted earlier Families for Children are in the process of developing a portable folder holding all relevant information about a child's placement to go with that child to the next placement. This would be available for the child to look at as well.

N.B the number of Foster Carers who left the agency over the last 12 months consists of those who retired, relocated area/country, resigned from fostering, transferred to another service. The number of placements made covers the period from November 2003 to October 2004. The number of placements which ended in the last 12 months covers children that moved on as part of their Care Plan.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	205
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Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	155
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Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	138
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Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	24
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Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	13
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Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	335	Maximum £	360
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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?

4

The agency operates its main administrative office from Findon in West Sussex and has centres in East and West Sussex. New offices have opened near Lewes, in Shoreham and in Chiselhurst. All of these are operational, with the Chiselhurst office serving the south London area. All premises have been visited by Inspectors over the last two years and noted to be well maintained and meeting the standard stated in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Agencies.

Staff and Foster Carers confirmed that they have access to the Centres during normal office hours. All are domestic in style and décor with fully fitted kitchens to enable birth parents / family and children to prepare meals together. The standard was of a high quality.

I.T and communication systems are located in all the offices and all have good security systems to preserve security and confidentiality. The IT system at Findon Court links with all the Centres

The Centres have adequate space for staff to conduct their work from and sufficient space for large meetings.

A certificate of insurance was seen by the Inspector, which showed that the agency had adequately covered the premises.

It is the high quality of accommodation that exceeds the National Minimum Standard.

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?	4
<p>A summary copy of the Revised Budget Profit and Loss Account to 30th June 2005 was provided for the Inspector. This provided financial detail and seemed to be in order.</p>		
<p>Families for Children are currently awaiting the outcome of a Tribunal Hearing regarding the payment of VAT or not. Correspondence from one of the Director's confirmed that Families for Children continues to be financially viable at all times and that they comply with guidelines regarding Income Tax, National Insurance and VAT.</p>		
<p>Foster Carers who responded to questionnaires over the last two years have not indicated that they have experienced any problems with finances and payments.</p>		

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?	4
<p>One of the Directors for Families for Children is a qualified and experienced Accountant and as such the financial processes of the agency are properly operated and maintained.</p>		
<p>The agency issues a list of its charges for fees and expenses and any additional charges would be agreed with the contractor in advance.</p>		
<p>Information as stated in Standard 27 also applies to this Standard. The Directors and Senior Management Team meet on a regular basis and will discuss financial matters. There is no reason to consider that Families for Children are not financially viable or credible.</p>		

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?

4

All Foster Carers receive an allowance and agreed expenses, which are detailed in the Foster Care Handbook.

The fees are reviewed annually and Foster Carers made aware of any amendment. All fees are paid one week in advance and the service is clear about the finances before any placement commences.

The service facilitates access to a stakeholder pension scheme for Foster Carers to join by also making a contribution. Foster carers also receive a bonus of £500 should they introduce someone to the agency who is subsequently approved as a Foster Carer. Additionally, Foster Carers receive £1000, for long service after five years and ten years respectively.

It is the above value, recognition and reward that satisfy the Inspector that this Standard is exceeded.

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?

4

The Panel has clear written policies and procedures which detail how the agency expects this function to be carried out. These are contained in a number of documents including terms of reference and operational procedures. Reference is made to guidelines for when Panel members are not in agreement about an issue and these should be included in the Foster Care Handbook.

An Inspector met with the Chair of the Panel and was more than satisfied that he has the appropriate skills and experience to carry out the function effectively.

There is a good balance within the Panel membership, including an Independent Chair. The Panel membership included a young person who had been in care. Medical expertise is available. The membership of the Panel, otherwise, satisfies the requirements.

Panel meetings are well organized and include a short discussion on key issues affecting fostering.

A range of business was discussed during the Panel that included approving new Foster Carers, terminations, a matching report for a local authority Permanency Panel, and standards of care for Foster Carers who have undergone a child protection enquiry, and other practice business. Members of the Panel had received documentation prior to the meeting and were clearly informed and prepared for the business of the meeting. Discussion was noted to be thorough, appropriately critical and lively. The whole process was rigorous and robust and the Inspector was satisfied that considered, measured and safe practice was conducted throughout.

The Fostering Panel Annual Report details that from January to December 2003 21 new Foster Carers were approved, with one being deferred and one needing re-assessment. All families were invited to attend the Panel. This number is slightly less than the previous year with 27 new approvals in 2002. The Panel also completed 114 annual reviews, with 32 first reviews and 45 changes to approvals. This report also details membership of the Panel as well as the context in which the Panel operates.

It is the efficient and robust process along with the depth of experience at the Panel that exceeds the National Minimum Standard.

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?	9
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Families for Children do not provide short-term breaks for children therefore this Standard does not apply and has not been assessed.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This Standard does not apply to Families for Children and has therefore not been assessed.	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 13th December 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of Families for Children 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 Families for Children 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.

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S0000037385.V194095.R02

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