

inspection report

Fostering Services

Cornerstone Foster Care

Bond Street

Northam

Southampton

Hampshire

SO14 5QA

4th January 2005

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

Cornerstone Foster Care

Tel No

023 8023 0473

Address

Bond Street, Northam, Southampton
Hampshire SO14 5QA

Fax No

Email Address

mt@cornerstoneuk.org

Registered Number of IFA

H030001047

Name of Registered Provider

Cornerstone Service Support Ltd

Name of Registered Manager

Ms Carolyn Brown

Date of first registration

31st December 2002

Date of latest registration certificate

31st December 2002

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

01/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		4th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jill Blanchard	106276
Name of Inspector	2	Wendy Hughes	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Carolyn Brown – Registered Manager	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 Cornerstone Foster Care. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 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.
Cornerstone is an independent company based in Southampton that provides a range of services for children aged 0 – 18 years, predominantly in and around Hampshire. Cornerstone Foster Care agency provides placements for children referred by the local authorities across the Southern Counties. At the time of the inspection there were 17 carers registered with the agency and 14 children in placement. Some of the children had moved into foster care from a Cornerstone residential unit. Children in placements were supported by social work staff and had access to therapeutic services.

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.)

Cornerstone Foster Care operates in accordance with its statement of purpose. Most necessary information is included, some additions are required, and these are detailed in the body of this report. Some documentation is provided in a child-friendly format.

The agency remains well managed. There were comprehensive procedures and policies to inform practice. The registered manager has a sound background in family placement services. The inspectors found evidence through talking to carers and staff and examination of management systems that she has very good leadership, organisation and management skills.

There were clear procedures in place for monitoring and control and ensuring quality performance.

The manager was fully aware of the need to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of any significant event. The foster care agency had made one notification to the Commission during the preceding twelve months.

The ability of carers to provide a nurturing and safe environment was an integral part of the organisation's assessment of potential carers. The preparation training covered health and safety issues and provided written guidelines for carers. The inspectors visited three foster homes as part of the inspection and found them warm, comfortably furnished, safe and free from avoidable hazards.

There was a culture of continuous learning throughout the service for staff and carers. All staff spoken to were very positive about the training opportunities and the support they received. Staff and carers had a programme of joint training throughout the year.

The role of the supervising social worker was clear as was the role of the support worker for the child. The inspector saw records of monthly supervision of carers which were signed by social workers and by carers. Annual review reports were prepared and presented to Panel. Carers interviewed felt valued by the service and appreciated the 24 hour on call support service. The foster care team worked hard to try to predict pressure points for families and targeted additional resources and services at the times of greatest need.

There was evidence that the agency listens to young people and provides services to meet their needs, and to promote their wellbeing and development.

The premises were appropriate for their purpose, however the agency is out growing the available space. There are close links with therapeutic services. The agency provides a range of educational support, and there was evidence that supporting young people to attend school is a priority with carers.

The agency had taken steps to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through their assessment and matching procedures, through training and supervision.

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:

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

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 Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector**Signature****Second Inspector****Signature****Regulation Manager****Signature****Date**

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements 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		FS1	To provide all the information required under the standard within the statement of purpose including information about staffing and any complaints received during the last year.	01/04/05
2		FS12	That copies of consent for medical treatment are retained on children's files and that they are dated.	01/04/05
3		FS26	To develop written policies concerning the nature of records, retention and access.	01/04/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS24	To develop a protocol relating to the storage and ownership of information about children kept by 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

2

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

YES

Group discussion with staff

YES

Interview with panel chair

YES

Observation of foster carer training

NO

Observation of foster panel

YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

YES

Date of Inspection

04/01/05

Time of Inspection

10AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

29

No

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?

2

The statement of purpose was made available for inspection, and this defined the objectives, principles and standards of care. The document did not contain specific information about staffing levels, staff qualifications or complaints received during the last year. The agency provided information about advocacy services for children. The agency had a children's guide that was in a child friendly format.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The manager of the service has appropriate childcare and management experience. The registered manager has an appropriate social work qualification and a background in managing public and private sector foster care services. The inspectors found evidence through talking to carers and staff and examination of management systems that she has very good leadership, organisation and management skills.		

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
Criminal Record Bureau checks had been completed for all staff including the manager. Records of checks were noted to be satisfactory.		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There were clear procedures in place for monitoring and control and ensuring quality performance. The manager had signed children's files and there was evidence that financial systems and policies and procedures were reviewed and updated. There were clear financial procedures and information about charges for purchasers of the service and for carers about payments.

The manager was fully aware of the need to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of any significant event. The foster care agency had made one notification to the Commission during the preceding twelve months.

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

1

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.

1

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager had a job description. There were clear lines of accountability and delegated responsibility for managers, staff and carers. All staff interviewed as part of the inspection were able to identify the person in charge in the absence of the manager.

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

The ability of carers to provide a nurturing and safe environment was an integral part of the organisation's assessment of potential carers. The preparation training covered health and safety issues and provided written guidelines for carers.

Inspectors had the opportunity to visit three carers and meet with the children placed. Homes seen were spacious, clean and well furnished. Each young person had their own bed and personal space. Siblings shared if appropriate and in accordance with the assessments seen on file in the agency office.

No hazards were noted in the foster homes, and appropriate equipment appeared to be available. Transport provided appeared safe and appropriate. Carers receive a handbook which includes guidance on health and safety matters. Carers and children spoken with had been aware of the inspection.

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

Equal opportunity statements underpinned all policies and procedures. Training and guidelines for carers emphasised valuing diversity and meeting the needs of children with disabilities. Anti discriminatory training was included in the training calendar. A commitment to value diversity and enhance children's self confidence was evidenced through discussions with staff, carers and children as well as observations of interaction between carers and young people.

Carers spoken with had received a lengthy induction, including training in Team Teach. Subsequent topics for training included autism and drug and alcohol awareness.

In all foster homes visited carers were actively supporting young people to pursue interests and develop new ones.

To date all referrals to the agency to date had been for white children. A number of children with profound disabilities had been successfully placed with carers.

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**

All carers were approved for children aged 0 – 18 years. All carers were also approved as respite carers. Skills, experience, expertise and the preferences of potential carers, as well as the needs of all family members, were evaluated and taken into consideration as part of the assessment process. The inspectors saw a written policy and records on files that matching considerations had been taken into account before any placement was made. The manager talked about a commitment to the provision of a continuum of care and the hope that the service would develop in partnership with the residential part of the agency. Some young people had been resident in the children's homes run by the parent organisation, prior to moving into foster care. One carer told the inspector that she had worked shifts in the residential unit in order to learn about the individual child's complex disabilities, routines, likes and dislikes, for several months before a transition plan was put into place.

In one file seen the young person had experienced a planned introduction to the placement over a period of a month, starting with a teatime visit and gradually building up to overnight stays, including the carer collecting the child from school. There was evidence of the involvement of natural parents.

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**

The inspectors saw appropriate child protection procedures and an anti-bullying policy. The agency had taken steps to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through assessment of carers, training in child protection and safe care and behaviour management, and provided clear procedures to follow should a child go missing from their placement. There was evidence of the awareness of carers in relation to bullying where this was an issue between siblings.

Carers have training in child protection as part of their induction. Carers interviewed were clear about their responsibility to pass on concerns to the young person's allocated social worker.

All carers spoken with were clear about acceptable sanctions. Where an incident occurred that was outside of their experience a carer told an inspector they were able to access guidance immediately.

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?**

4

Contact arrangements were set out in placements agreements and there was good evidence of the foster carers and other agency staff promoting and supporting children and young people to maintain regular contact with their families. Carers were expected to be non-judgemental and go to considerable lengths to promote contact. The inspector was told about one example where the agency had hired a people carrier to transport the carer's family and the three children in foster care, to ensure that contact occurred. There was evidence on file that the supervising social worker had liaised with the carer, parents an allocated social worker to facilitate contact under sensitive circumstances.

There was evidence from discussion with young people and carers, and from a review of the files that children are supported to maintain contact as appropriate. Where there were court orders or bail conditions restricting access carers were aware of this.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Observations and interviews with children led the inspectors to believe that children were listened to by agency staff and were able to influence the service provided. There was good evidence of the voice of the child contained in records of planning and review meetings. Support workers interviewed as part of the inspection were sensitive to the need to listen to and children, act as advocates on their behalf and where possible empower them to take any necessary action to improve the quality of their lives. Children said they did not always feel listened to by the placement authorities

Children are given information about how to complain. It is suggested that the agency give some consideration to how children might be supported to make representation where they are unhappy with the service they are receiving.

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

The inspectors saw records that showed children's health needs were met, often in partnership with parents. Copies of consents were present on files but in two instances were not dated. There was an expectation that most young people with social and emotional difficulties, place with a Cornerstone Foster Carer, would access a therapeutic service. The agency had strong links with the Corn Loft Art Studio and Consultancy, which provided creative/therapeutic art sessions. An inspector had the opportunity to speak with the psychiatrist who provides this therapeutic support to the young people, and it was evident there is good liaison.

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**

There was good evidence contained in children's files and from discussions with foster carers and staff that children were supported to continue with their education. Copies of statements of special educational need and personal education plans were present on files. Twelve of the fourteen young people in placement were in full time education. Two others were provided with out of school education programmes. Foster care support workers provided the inspectors with examples of activities undertaken and links with education staff to promote education. From observation and discussion with carers it was clear that the agency works closely with them in order to support the children in school and homework was actively encouraged by carers. One young person spoken with told the inspector unobtrusive 1:1 support had been offered in school, so that other children would not be aware of this.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The inspectors saw reports of work undertaken with one young person who was also out of school to promote independence skills in terms of budgeting and cooking. The manager reported that the service worked closely with the leaving care teams in Southampton and in Hampshire.

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 inspector sampled four personnel files. Personnel records were in good order. Files contained records of up to date enhanced CRB checks and copies of qualifications. There were two references on each file and a signed and dated record that references had been followed up with a telephone call.

The fostering service commissions independent qualified social workers to undertake specific pieces of work (assessments of carers). The inspector sampled files and found that appropriate checks had been completed and references had been taken up.

The fostering service commissions some Cornerstone Care Agency Staff on a regular basis as support workers to support specific placements through work with and care of the children both in the foster home and by taking children out.

Total number of staff of the agency:

5

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

There were clear management structures and lines of accountability. The inspector saw records of regular staff supervision and the agency demonstrated a continued commitment to the professional development of the manager, staff and foster carers. Five carers completed NVQ3 during the last twelve months. One carer already had an NVQ3. All other carers will undertake NVQ3 during the next twelve months.

There were appropriate levels of administrative support and files were in good order.

All employed staff had job descriptions. The inspector sampled employment files that showed that employees, sessional workers and consultants were provided with written contracts and conditions of service.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The manager was in the process of up-dating the business plan. The service has expanded considerably during the last year from eight to seventeen carers. The service worked to the model of one member of staff to support six carers. The manager explained that the priority was to review the management and organisation of the service in terms of future service development, to seek new office accommodation and in the short term, temporarily stop recruitment of more carers.

The inspector sampled the written assessments of carers that had been undertaken on behalf of the agency. The agency used a Fostering Network Competency Based Assessment model. Appropriate references and checks had been completed.

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

The agency had sound recruitment practices in relation to carers. Staff and carers said they experienced the organisation as supportive. Carers particularly valued the twenty-four hour support service provided for carers and for children. The inspector saw appropriate health and safety guidelines for carers and evidence of current public liability and professional indemnity insurance taken out by the agency.

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

There was a culture of continuous learning throughout the service for staff and carers. All staff spoken to were very positive about the training opportunities and the support they received. Staff and carers had a programme of joint training throughout the year. Individual members of staff were supported by the agency to enhance their professional qualifications. There was an induction programme for new staff. Individual training needs, professional development and appraisals were a component of regular supervision.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All staff were provided with a job description and were well supported through regular formal supervision. Team meetings were held on a regular basis and records are kept.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
The role of the supervising social worker was clear as was the role of the support worker for the child. The inspector saw records of monthly supervision of carers which were signed by social workers and by carers. Annual review reports were prepared and presented to Panel. Carers interviewed felt valued by the service and appreciated the 24 hour on call support service. The foster care team worked hard to try to predict pressure points for families and targeted additional resources and services at the times of greatest need. The service provided respite foster care for some children but in most cases put resources into the carer's home to enable them to have evenings out and planned breaks. Cornerstone own a caravan which carers could use in order to have a break. There were examples where support workers had used the resource to give the child a mini holiday with the use of the on site sport and recreational facilities. Carers were encouraged to attend a support group where they were able to set their own agenda. The service provided a news letter and organised social functions for carers their families and children looked after.		

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
The service proved monthly supervision of foster carers. Carers were supervised by a named suitably qualified worker There were foster care agreements on files described the expectations of the carers and were consistent with Schedule 5 of the national minimum standards for fostering services under the Care Standards Act 2000. There were systems in place to record and monitor complaints. No formal complaints had been received during the nine months preceding the inspection. There had been one incident where a carer had not performed to the expected standard. The worker and manager had worked with the person concerned by identifying training needs. The carer concerned had since resigned as a carer.		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

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

All carers were subject to pre-approval training as well as an on going training programme for the year based on issues that have been identified through supervision and annual reviews and analysis of issues identified in relation to the children placed. Safe care training is part of the pre-approval training but is not routinely provided to all members of a carer's household. Carers children are not involved in supervision sessions. They are interviewed as part of the assessment process and receive advice and support from social work support.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The statutory responsibility for the looked after children records remained with the placing authority. Looked After Children Placement Agreements were present on files, as were copies of LAC reviews and strategy meetings. Records were up to date, relevant and well organised. Children and young people were routinely consulted about their care and this was reflected in reports of reviews and meetings about them. While young people were reportedly given copies of the meetings they attended, none had asked to see their file. Carers received some preparation training in relation to recording and there was an awareness of the need to encourage young people to keep appropriate items relating to their life events, as well as the need to maintain confidentiality and store records securely. The inspector recommends that the service develop a written protocol concerning the ownership and keeping of records about children looked after and that this might usefully form part of the contract.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Separate records were kept for children, carers and staff. There was a chronology of placements contained on each carers file.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			14
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			22
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			4
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			11
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			1
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	410.00	Maximum £	512.50

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?

2

The premises were appropriate for purpose. The service is actively seeking new accommodation. The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room, appropriate measures to secure IT systems and appropriate security systems. There were no written policies available for inspection concerning the nature of records, retention and access. Procedures for storing and managing records were known to panel members and to staff. Children and carers were encouraged to participate in their records and read them. Records of children's participation and contribution to meetings and reviews evidenced this. The documentation relating to carer's monthly supervision was signed by the carer and by the worker. The inspector saw evidence of up to date building contents insurance. Records of risk assessments of the building, fire safety checks and evacuations were in good order.

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 inspectors have limited experience in assessing financial viability or compliance within financial regulations. The inspector met with the Director of Care had overall financial responsibility for the service. The service has expanded during the last year and evidence presented to the inspector regarding the agency's financial position did not give any cause for the concern and the inspector was invited to make contact with the registered accountant or the bank if there was a need to do so. Cornerstone has employed a qualified accountant to manage the accounts in relation to their services. The inspector saw copies of Insurance for foster carers (loss or damage) public liability and professional indemnity all of which were up to date.

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?

0

NOT ASSESSED DURING THE INSPECTION
See comments re standard 27

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 confirmed that they received their allowances promptly.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The inspector saw copies of policies and procedures relating to the membership and responsibilities of the panel. The inspector saw minutes of the meetings, met with the panel chair and observed part of a panel in operation two weeks prior to the inspection. The panel had clear procedures and terms of reference.		

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?
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The service is not set up to provide short-term breaks. This standard does not apply.

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?
This standard does not apply.	

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 4 January 2005 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 February 2005 , 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 Cornerstone Foster Care 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.

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