



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Cornerstone Foster Care

Bond Street

Northam

Southampton

Hampshire

SO14 5QA

1ST March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Tel No 02380 230400

Cornerstone Foster Care

SO145QA

Address

Fax No

Bond Street

Northam

Southampton

Hampshire

Email Address

mt@cornerstoneuk.org

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Mark Turner

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Carolyn Brown

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

11.12.02

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		9.15.a.m. 1 st March 9.15am 2 nd March 11.30 a.m.3 rd March	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Jill Blanchard	
Name of Inspector	2	Bridgette Lowe, Locum Inspector	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)			
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2001 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC 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 2001 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2001. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

Cornerstone is an independent company based in Southampton that provides a range of services for children in need, aged 0 – 18 years, predominantly in and around Hampshire. Cornerstone foster care is a developing service that was established in November 2002. Cornerstone Foster Care agency provides placements for children referred by local authorities across the Southern Counties. At the time of the inspection Cornerstone Foster Care had approved eight foster carers and was providing placements for seven children. None of the children were the subject of care proceedings under the Children Act 1989. Some of the children had successfully moved into foster care from a Cornerstone children's home. All children in placements were supported by social work staff and 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. The agency provides good information for potential purchasers, carers and children and the manager recognises the need to identify an advocacy service for children in the near future.

The agency is well managed and there were clear written policies and procedures for staff to work to. The agency is comprised of a manager who has a background in family placement services, a qualified senior social worker, a trainee social worker, a support worker and an administrative support worker. The inspectors witnessed a collaborative style of management within the organisation and a commitment to provide support for carers and a range of support services for children and young people.

There was evidence of thorough assessment procedures for prospective carers. The agency demonstrated a strong commitment to the continuous development for carers, staff and managers through training, regular supervision, annual reviews and staff appraisals.

There was good evidence that the organisation listened to children and provided services for them, designed to promote their wellbeing and development. Children's education needs were met and there were close links with therapeutic services. All children placed at the time of the inspection were in full-time education. In one instance the agency had commissioned a qualified teacher to implement a support programme, to gradually re introduce a young person who had been out of school for a very long period of time. Children's health needs were met, usually in partnership with parents. The inspectors identified the need for systems to be put in place to ensure that carers record the administration of medication for children and young people in their care.

The agency had taken steps to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through assessment of carers, clear procedures and training in child protection. An agency social worker or support worker saw children very regularly on their own.

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

NO

NO

NO

[illegible]

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2001.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2001, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	To identify an independent advocate for children and provide information concerning how children might access the service.	1.8.04
2	5 7 20	FS3	To provide documentary evidence of relevant qualifications for persons seeking to carry on, manage, or work for the foster care service.	1.6.04
4	5 7 20	FS3	To undertake and keep a record of telephone enquiries to follow up written references.	1.6.04
5	11 16	FS6	To ensure that carers who provide their own transport for children are qualified to drive and are appropriately insured.	1.6.04
6	11 34	FS6 FS9	That risk assessments for children who are likely to present a risk to themselves or others, or who require moving and handling are recorded.	1.6.04
7	15	FS12	That procedures are developed to ensure that foster carers record the administration of prescribed and non- prescribed medication.	1.7.04
8	17	FS14	To provide specific guidelines and training for foster carers to support them to prepare young people for adult living.	1.8.04
9	5 7 20	FS18	To ensure that two satisfactory references are provided for existing and potential employees.	1.7.04

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 for the return of information to the agency also needs to be developed.
2	FS25	That complaints and allegations are recorded separately.
3	FS18	To develop a home working policy.

* 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	5
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	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	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	02/03/04
Time of Inspection	9.15AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	46

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
The inspectors saw a statement of purpose that defined the objectives, principles and standards of care. The statement did not provide explicit information about staffing levels and their qualifications. Neither did it statement did not contain any information about any complaints received during the last year. Cornerstone Foster Care is a relatively new service and staffing levels had increased during the last year. The agency was aware of the need to include this information in any revised edition. The agency had produced a children's guide in a child friendly format. The inspectors also saw a guide using MAKATON symbols that had been developed for an individual child, which among other things, provided good information about how he/she could complain. The agency recognised the need for advocacy for children but had to date been unsuccessful in identifying a service.	

Standard met?

2

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

Those involved in managing the service had experience in childcare and management. The registered manager is a qualified social worker with a background in managing foster care for a local authority and for a private sector agency and was in the process of completing NVQ 4. Management in Social Care. The service employed one qualified social worker, one student social worker and one support worker. The inspectors witnessed a collaborative style of management within the organisation and a commitment to provide support for carers and a range of support services for children and young people.

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?

2

The personnel file for the manager had the following omissions:

- evidence of the foster care manager's professional qualification
- follow up telephone references had reportedly been undertaken but were not sufficiently well recorded

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 financial procedures and information about charges for purchasers of the service and for carers about payments.

The NCSC was notified of one significant event during last twelve months. The incident was unsubstantiated. The incident was well documented, appropriate enquiries were made and the inspectorate was informed of the outcome.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC 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.

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.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager had a job description and there were clear lines of accountability and responsibility between managers, staff and carers. There were clear arrangements in place to identify the person in charge when the manager was absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The ability of carers to provide a nurturing and safe environment was an integral part of the organisation's assessment of potential carers and the preparation training covered health and safety issues and provided written guidelines. The inspectors visited five foster carers' homes as part of the inspection and found them warm, comfortably furnished, safe and free from avoidable hazards. Health and safety assessments were present on files and were included in carers' annual reviews. The inspectors saw evidence of a very thorough risk assessment in place for a child who was admitted as an emergency placement. The manager agreed to develop a more uniform approach to the recording of risk assessments for all children. Foster carers need to provide evidence to the agency of their car insurance before they transport children.

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 and training and guidelines for carers emphasised valuing diversity and meeting the needs of children with disabilities. Three children with disabilities were placed with carers at the time of the inspection. The demand for placements was predominantly for children from the majority white population. The organisation had recently recruited a black carer and the agency was aware of the desirability of recruiting from wider ethnic groups.

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?****2**

A number of the children placed had moved into foster care from residential services provided by the umbrella organisation. A number of foster carers had either already worked as support workers in the residential setting or were given the opportunity to work there before taking on the full time care of the child concerned. Usually there was a period of introduction prior to the placement but some unplanned emergency placements had occurred, when it was clearly in the child's best interests to do so. Children and carers usually knew each other well prior to the placement and in that context there was careful matching. All carers were approved for children aged 0 – 16 years or 0 - 18 years. However in practice they had specific expertise and preferences regarding the ages and sex of the children. Matching processes need to be recorded as part of the placement agreement on all carer's files.

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. Unannounced visits were made to foster placements by the manager at least annually. Children were seen on their own by the agency social worker and agency support staff as well as by the local authority social worker. The agency had a whistle blowing policy and staff interviewed fully understood their responsibilities in relation to child protection procedures.

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

100

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

Contact arrangements were set out in placement 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.

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**

The inspectors thought the agency was good at listening to children and young people and the responses from young people's questionnaires and from the young people interviewed as part of the inspection confirmed this. However this could be better evidenced through records of consultation on individual files. The inspectors saw a booklet that had been prepared for a child with communication difficulties. Children were consulted as part of the foster carer's review. The agency plan to develop a questionnaire to be given to children when a placement ends.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The inspectors saw records that showed that children's health needs were met, often in partnership with parents. There was an expectation that most young people with social and emotional difficulties, placed through Cornerstone Foster Carer, would access a therapeutic service. The agency had strong links with the Cornloft Art Studio and Consultancy, which provided creative/therapeutic art sessions. The service was commissioned and funded by the child's placing authority. One young person who attended was very positive about the sessions and said it had given her the opportunity to talk about issues that troubled her. Procedures need to be developed to ensure that foster carers record the administration of prescribed and non-prescribed medication for children in their care.

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 on children's files and from discussions with foster carers that children were supported to continue with their education. Statements of special education needs were present on children's files. An example of a flexible programme to effect a gradual introduction to part-time, then eventually full time education within a school, included a period of shared care with a Cornerstone residential unit, input from of a qualified teacher, (spot purchased by Cornerstone Foster Care), and input by a Corner Stone Foster Care Support Worker.

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?****2**

The inspectors did not see any written evidence of specific training or guidelines for foster carers concerning preparing young people for adult living. However, foster carers visited were able to provide good evidence of programmes they had put in place to support young people to plan meals, budget, shop, cook and do their own washing. The agency worked closely with area social workers and with transition workers where required.

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?

2

Recruitment procedures need to be developed in the following ways:

- To develop written recruitment and selection procedures for the service.
- To ensure that two references are present on all employee files.
- To ensure that follow up telephone calls concerning references are fully documented and that the record is signed and dated.
- To ensure that evidence of identity is verified, signed and dated on personnel files.

The agency employed one senior qualified social worker, one social work assistant, one student social worker and an administrator. The manager closely supervised and was accountable for, assessments of carers undertaken by unqualified staff. One unqualified worker was in the process of training for a professional qualification, the other was about to embark on a course to become qualified in the future.

Total number of staff of the agency:

4

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 was a clear management structure and lines of accountability. The inspectors saw records of regular staff supervision and the agency demonstrated a commitment to the continuous professional development for the manager, staff and foster carers. All carers were undertaking NVQ level 3. The inspectors saw an on going training programme for staff and carers. Some carers said they would like the timing of the training to be more flexible. Staff had access to disciplinary and grievance procedures. If an unforeseen staffing shortfall occurred, the agency could call on other parts of the organisation for support.

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 team had grown from one worker to four during the last year. The agency employed one senior qualified social worker, one social work assistant, one student social worker and an administrator. The manager recognised the need to put in place a pay structure for salaried staff. There was good evidence that the agency was working to develop staff skills, expertise and qualifications. See standard 16. The statement of purpose contained explicit statements about individual workloads and there was good clerical and administrative support. Assessment and approval procedures for carers were consistent with good practice and addressed appropriate competencies and aptitudes for fostering children		

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. The agency needs to address the staff recruitment practices raised under standard 15. Staff and carers reported that they experienced the organisation as supportive. Carers particularly valued the 24 hour support provided to carers and 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
Staff were positive about training opportunities provided by the agency and in the case of unqualified workers, the level of support they received to achieve a professional qualification. There was an induction programme for all new staff and an appraisal system had recently been put in place. The inspectors saw a training programme that provided information about forthcoming training events for staff and carers. Corporate training for those who supervise other staff in the organisation was planned for April 2004. Training courses were currently monitored and evaluated by the manager of the foster care service.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All staff had clear job descriptions and received regular professional supervision. The inspectors saw records of supervision sessions and minutes of regular team meetings. The inspectors recommend that the agency develop a lone working policy.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The agency needs to ensure that it keeps to the weekly support that was promised and communicated through all the paper work sent to carers. According to the paperwork distributed by the agency the qualified supervising social worker was able to supervise up to six carers. The trainee social worker was, at the time of the inspection, responsible for the supervision of three carers. The manager monitored the work of the trainee social worker and that of the support worker. The agency promoted a foster carer support group and carers met together to work toward to complete NVQ 3.		

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
See standard 21. The service had introduced a Foster Care Agreement that accorded with schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2001. The inspectors saw a Cornerstone Foster Care Guide that was given to all carers. Information about procedures for dealing with complaints and representations was given to all carers. There was good recording and cross referencing throughout the files. The manager plans to undertake quarterly visits to foster carers as an additional monitoring mechanism to ensure that standards of supervision of carers are being met. Respite care for carers was reportedly provided when a need was identified. The inspectors saw evidence of respite care provided in the carer's home.		

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**

The inspectors found evidence of a strong commitment to training. All carers were subject to pre-approval training. All carers were in the process of undertaking NVQ 3. and there was a training programme set up for the next few months. Some carers said they would welcome more child protection and more safe caring training. The manager informed the inspectors that further child protection is planned for later in the year and will be provided by an external trainer. All foster carers had received Team TEACH training. (Positive behaviour management strategies for carers).

Consideration was given to the needs of sons and daughter of foster carers at each stage of the assessment, approval, appraisal and matching processes. The agency held a Christmas party for carers, their children and for children looked after. Carers visited spoke about the involvement and in most cases commitment, of their adult children in the fostering process. The manager of the service recognised that there may be a need to develop additional support strategies for children of foster carers in the future and will keep this under review.

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 collection of comprehensive records for children was the responsibility of the placing authority social worker. Children's files retained by the agency contained vital information and clear records of work undertaken. The legal status of children looked after by the agency was contained in the body of each file but the inspectors recommend that this could usefully be included in the key information at the front of the file. All carers kept diaries and these were locked away. The carer's handbook provided good information about the maintenance and retention of records by carers. A protocol for the return of information to the agency could usefully be developed.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Separate records were kept for staff, carers and young people. Records of complaints and allegations were maintained jointly and needed separating.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

7

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

10

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

3

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

8

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

0

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

400

Maximum £

500

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
Cornerstone Foster Care had a separate office but otherwise shared premises with other services provided by the parent company. There were appropriate security arrangements for the building. Car parking facilities were limited but there was a public car park nearby. The agency was seeking alternative office accommodation in the Southampton area. The inspectors met with the company representative for the health and safety of staff. Records of inspections of fire safety equipment and inspections by external contractors were in good order. However, fire evacuation procedures did not meet with health and safety standards and full evacuations of the building need to take place and be recorded. The office did not have a visitors book, but put one in place during the inspection.		

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 evidence presented to the inspectors regarding the agencies financial position did not give rise for any concerns. The director of finance was on sick leave at the time of the inspection. The manager explained that that the company was awaiting the outcome of an audit by a registered accountant. The inspectors saw a service development plan for the next year and the manager planned to work with a consultancy service to develop a strategic business plan.

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 THIS 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
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The first panel meeting was held in November 2002. The inspector attended part of a fostering panel meeting, which was seen to operate effectively. The inspector met with the independent panel chair as part of the inspection process. Panel members included male and female representatives, a foster carer and members with education and health backgrounds and expertise. The fostering panel had clear procedures and terms of reference. The inspectors saw evidence of panel meeting minutes that indicated that the panel was performing its duties to ensure that the assessments presented to them were of a high standard, to approve carers or not, and to receive reports concerning first annual reviews.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
One carer interviewed had provided care four nights a week for a child with disabilities. The placement had recently come to a planned end when the local authority placed the child in residential care. All carers were approved to provide respite care to support other carers during holiday periods, if the need was identified and providing appropriate matching procedures were conducted.		

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard does not apply.		

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor**

Signature

Date

Lead Inspector

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 17 March 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

☐

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 NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____
confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____