

Fostering Services

Brighton & Hove Fostering Services

**253 Preston Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 6SE**

**Fostering Service Inspection
under the Care Standards Act 2000
12th –16th and 28th January 2004**

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FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Brighton and Hove City Council

Address

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Hove
BN3 2SS

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Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

☐

Date of last inspection

☐

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		12/1/04-16/1/04and 28/1/04	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Anna Gilmartin	077583
Name of Inspector	2	Camilla Wood	
Name of Inspector	3	Mandy Hurrell	098592
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)			
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)			

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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 **(name of establishment)**. 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

Brighton and Hove City Council currently accommodates 385 children and young people. The Fostering and Accommodation Service supports 120 foster carer units who are caring for 170 children and young people. Where placements cannot be made within the service's own carers Independent Fostering Agencies are used and there are 65 children currently in IFA placements, the majority with one local provider. A further 30 children and young people are cared for in family and friends placements. Most children with disabilities are placed through Barnado's Link Plus, which provides respite care for children with learning disabilities. The fostering service provides a Special Placement Scheme for children and young people who are assessed as hard to place and whose package of care includes specific specialist support.

The service employs 61 staff and is managed by a Head of Service and two Service Managers plus two non-operational Development Officers acting as Professional Advisors to Fostering and Permanence Panel. There are 7 practice managers.

The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of carers and provides a duty service for the placement of looked after children with foster carers. The service is structured with a fostering team and a permanence team that have the responsibility for the recruitment, supervision and support of permanent foster carers as well as adopters.

There are two panels, the fostering panel, which is responsible for recommending the approval of short term foster carers, family and friends carers and Barnado's Link Plus Carers and changes to their approval status. The permanence panel is responsible for recommending the approval of long term foster carers, concurrency carers and prospective adopters. The agency decision maker who is Head of Child Protection in Brighton and Hove makes the decision with regard to any recommendations made by the panels in respect of Brighton and Hove applications. Both panels are supported by a non operational panel advisers who also play a quality assurance and service development role within the department. Panels are chaired by the same independent chair.

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.)

Three inspectors spent five days inspecting Brighton and Hove fostering service. This included meeting with a number of carers and looked after children as well as observing the fostering panel plus an emergency permanence panel. Inspectors found that there have been many positive developments since the last inspection and all of the previous requirements and recommendations have been acted upon. With the exception of Family and Friends care, which still needs further development, the service is generally providing good quality services to looked after children.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

Brighton and Hove Fostering Service has an appropriate statement of purpose and suitable separate guides for children and young people.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-5)

The agency is managed efficiently and effectively by an experienced manager, who is undertaking further management training with a view to obtaining an MBA qualification. Standard 3 was not assessed as personnel records are held centrally. The service meets all of the above standards and Standards 2, 4 and 5 are exceeded with good delegation of responsibilities and clear lines of accountability.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Brighton and Hove Fostering Service provides a range of suitable carers and has an on-going recruitment strategy to maintain and increase resources. The service carries out comprehensive and detailed assessments of carers and provides suitable preparation training. Carers visited by inspectors were seen to provide safe, healthy and appropriate environments for children and young people. All of the above standards are met. The service needs to ensure that appropriate safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster home and that matters, which could potentially involve a referral to the child protection team are appropriately dealt with and fully recorded. Standard 12 is exceeded, the nurse consultant and medical officer provide a quality service which effectively promotes the health care needs of looked after children. There is good consultation with children and young people who are looked after. Standard 8 is exceeded.

Recruiting, checking, managing and training staff and carers (standards 15-23)

There are sound recruitment and employment practices in place and there are adequate numbers of staff and resources to meet the needs of the service. There is a successful and on-going campaign to recruit new carers. Fostering assessments are competency based, comprehensive and thorough. Some training is mandatory and training is usually provided in-house. Staff and carers told inspectors they felt well supported. All above standards are met. Standard 15 was not assessed as records are kept centrally in the Human Resources

Department. Standard 21 is exceeded.

Records (Standards 24 and 25)

Both of the standards are met. There are suitable policies on recording and records are kept secure.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 26)

This standard is met. The office premises are suitable for the number of staff employed and there are appropriate facilities for meetings and training.

Financial requirements (Standard 27-29)

The local authority has invested a substantial amount of money into the fostering service. The foster care payment scheme has been revised and payments to foster carers have increased. Standard 29 is exceeded. These payments will be reviewed annually. Budgets are managed and there are robust auditing systems in place.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

There are two panels, for fostering and permanence. The fostering panel is a joint panel with Barnado's Link Plus. Both are chaired by the same independent chair. This standard is exceeded, the panels are well organised and panel members receive the documentation well in advance, questioning and scrutiny of assessments is robust.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not assessed as most short term placements are provided by Barnado's Link Plus, which is the subject of a separate report.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard is not met. The service recognises the need for further development to ensure that Family and Friends carers are appropriately assessed and supported.

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 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 2001.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	Timescale for action

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	Timescale for action

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	FS8	That the service endeavours to develop recruitment practice to ensure greater success in recruiting black and ethnic minority carers.
2	FS9	That safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster home and these are cleared with the child's social worker and explained clearly and appropriately to the child and recorded on the file.
3	FS9	That matters, which could potentially involve a referral to the child protection team are followed up appropriately and fully recorded.
4	FS10	That a copy of the risk assessment with regard to contact arrangements is kept by the fostering service.
5	FS13	That all children's files have a copy of the Personal Educational Plan and foster carers are enabled to contribute to the delivery of this plan.
6	FS32	That a strategy which ensures that family and friends carers are appropriately assessed and supported is developed and implemented without delay.

* 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	14
Survey of placing authorities	N/A
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• 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	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	12/1/04
Time of Inspection	10.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	45

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?	
Brighton and Hove has a comprehensive statement of purpose, which gives a clear description of the range of activities of the fostering service and the principles that underpin the work. The statement of purpose is included in the Foster Carers Handbook and inspectors were informed that plans are in place to review and revise the statement on an annual basis. Information about complaints is contained in the Fostering Service annual report, which is available together with the statement of purpose. Brighton and Hove has given careful consideration to the development of a children's guide and has produced guides in different formats for different age groups. Brighton and Hove Children's Rights Service had already developed a filofax for all looked after children over 12 years and together with input from the fostering service they have developed additional pages that explain the fostering service, which fits in with existing information on the Children's Rights Service, the Advocacy Project and how to make a complaint. Brighton and Hove consulted with BAAF about a guide for younger children and contributed to the production of the BAAF guide. Copies of the BAAF guide together with additional pages of information about local services including, the Children's Rights Service, the Advocacy Project and how to make a complaint are given to all looked after children. All under fives are given a copy of "Dennis Duckling" which explains fostering in an age appropriate way.		4

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The service has an experienced management team, who have considerable knowledge and experience of child care and fostering and provide effective leadership. The Head of Service is an experienced and qualified senior manager and she is currently undertaking a diploma in management qualification. There are two qualified and experienced Service Managers, one for fostering and one for permanence and two development officers who act as professional advisers to the separate fostering and permanence panels but also take a lead role in development and strategic planning. There are seven practice managers, who are all qualified and experienced social workers. Brighton and Hove has a comprehensive in-house management training programme and inspectors were told that managers had undertaken many short courses as part of this programme.

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?

0

Brighton and Hove operate a recruitment policy, which complies with all of the requirements. The Head of Human Resources has a lead role within the authority in ensuring all staff are CRB checked and that these are renewed every three years. This was not verified by inspectors as records are kept by the human resources department.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The management and staffing structures are clear and there are well established lines of accountability and communication between managers, staff and carers. The two service managers work closely together to ensure practice initiatives are co-ordinated across the service and to make best use of fostering resources. The management team place a strong emphasis on collaborative and integrated working across the service. The whole management team meets monthly and every three months they carry out audits of foster care files to ensure that each file is audited annually by a manager who is not the line manager of the supervising social worker. Inspectors found evidence of these audits on the front of files. The authorities finance department provide training for manager on financial management and there is a finance officer with responsibility for budgets held within the fostering and adoption service. The finance officer provides regular financial updates and meets with Head of Service and Service Managers every six weeks to review the budgets. Brighton and Hove employs a senior manager outside the fostering service to monitor agency placements for looked after children this includes placements with independent fostering agencies as well as residential placements. A declaration of personal interest/ conflicts of interest policy has been included in the foster care handbook.

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

0

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.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

5

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?	4
As previously described the service is efficiently and effectively managed. The Head of Service has no duties or responsibilities outside of the Accommodation Service apart from the provision of senior management cover in the absence of other Heads of Service and she is a member of the Senior Management team within the social care branch of the Children, Families and Schools Department. Staff told inspectors that she has effectively promoted the Accommodation team and raised the status of the service within the authority. The level of delegation and responsibility of the Head of Service and the lines of accountability are clearly defined. Appropriate arrangements are in place to provide management cover in the absence of the Head of Service.		

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
<p>Inspectors selected nine foster homes to visit as part of this inspection. The foster homes were chosen by the inspectors and not the service and they were all found to be providing a good standard of care. Inspectors examined a number of case files including the nine carers who were visited as part of this inspection. Assessments of foster carers are detailed, comprehensive, and competency based and include health and safety risk assessment of the carers home. Guidelines with regard to the foster carers responsibilities with regard to health and safety are included in the comprehensive foster carers handbook. Foster homes are inspected annually and this was confirmed by the foster carers who were visited. The fostering service is aware of the need for the placing social worker to undertake a risk assessment before children share a bedroom in cases where one or both children have been abused or has abused another child. The fieldwork teams have been informed about this requirement and it is now included in the duty assessment referral form.</p>		

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
<p>The fostering service acknowledges that there is a shortage of black and ethnic minority carers in Brighton and Hove and is reviewing the recruitment strategy and working to develop practice to ensure more success in recruiting black and minority ethnic carers. The fostering service promotes valuing diversity through training and all of the foster carers visited by inspectors were actively promoting the heritage needs of the children cared for. In one instance the foster carers and the social worker were attending training on trans racial placements together at the Post Adoption Centre in London. Foster carers also encourage the children they care for to attend activities and support groups organised by MOSAIC, a voluntary organisation in Brighton, which supports dual heritage families.</p>		

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

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

The fostering service has given considerable attention to a recruitment and marketing strategy. A suitably experienced marketing consultant has been employed and all of the recruitment material has been rewritten and re branded with a distinctive new look to all publications, which are given to the public or foster carers. The new recruitment material also includes a CD-ROM with video clips of foster carers talking about their fostering experience. The foster care payment scheme has also been improved. The strategy is now starting to impact on resources as more foster carers are being approved and in the long term the Head of Service anticipates that the increase in in-house foster carers will improve placement choice and placement stability for looked after children in Brighton and Hove. However the fostering service acknowledges that at the present time they are still heavily reliant on independent fostering agencies and matching is still sometimes less than ideal with the young person placed some distance from Brighton. The service is developing partnership working with the independent fostering service through a preferred provider scheme.

A new referral form has been developed which contains matching checklists. The fostering service provide daily duty service to fieldwork staff needing a placement for a child. A weekly meeting is held to discuss children awaiting placements, the meeting looks at referrals, resources available and plans for non-emergency placements.

The fostering service has developed a quality checklist for use with Independent Fostering Agencies and is in the process of agreeing a new preferred provider list with those agencies having to meet clear performance indicators.

Foster carers raised the issue of being approved for a certain age group and then within a short space of time being asked to care for a child outside the age group they were initially approved for. This may not have resulted in an unsuitable match and the fostering service has agreed to review the age range that foster carers are initially approved for.

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
Foster carers are provided with appropriate training in child protection, which includes safe caring practices. There are guidelines and a policy in place for carers in relation to safe caring practice and this is included in the foster carer handbook though on inspection of files individual guidelines were not always recorded and sometimes what was written indicated a lack of understanding of what was required. Allegations of abuse and standards of care within foster homes are collated and scrutinised by senior managers however on inspection of the files inspectors were concerned that in two instances the recording did not demonstrate a sufficiently robust investigation or follow up of potentially harmful situations. In one particular incident Inspectors were informed by senior managers that staff had followed the appropriate procedures though inspectors were unable to find on any formal response to the carer on the file.		

There are clear guidelines provided to carers in relation to appropriate sanctions and foster carers are clear that corporal punishment in all forms is unacceptable. It was evident from talking to carers and from the returned questionnaires that carers were clear about the fostering service expectations on discipline.

Bullying is addressed in the foster care handbook and the children's guides. Although a small number of children and young people completed a young person's questionnaire the number were not sufficient to provide a percentage figure.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The fostering service is committed to ensuring that children and young people who are fostered are encouraged and actively supported in their contact with family and friends though in practice contact is often pre-determined by the courts. The importance of contact is covered in foster carer preparation training and there has also been some joint training with supervising social workers and foster carers. Inspectors found some examples of risk assessments having been undertaken with regard to contact though these were not evident on all of the files.		

Standard 11 (11.1 – 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
Brighton and Hove has a well established Children's Rights Service which produces a newsletter for all looked after children and regularly carries out comprehensive surveys, by telephone and written questionnaire, about their views on fostering service. The Children's Rights Service produces excellent young person friendly documentation on the complaints process and access to the advocacy service and a questionnaire to facilitate the child having input into his/her review. All staff within fostering, adoption and fieldwork teams attend a rolling programme of Total Respect training that is run by young people in conjunction with the Children's Rights Service. The training is due to be extended to foster carers this year and it focuses on the rights of children and young people and the importance of listening to their views.		

Standard 12 (12.1 – 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
There is a nurse consultant for looked after children and she sits on the fostering panel, her role is to work with carers and social workers to ensure the health needs of looked after children are being promoted. She liaises with and advises foster carers and provides some training courses on health related issues for carers. All looked after children are seen by the nurse consultant and she produces a health plan. These comprehensive plans were seen on the children's files. The nurse consultant informed inspectors that the system for informing her about children's moves has improved particularly for children placed in-house though this is not always the case when they are moved within an IFA. The nurse consultant works closely with and is supervised by the Medical Officer, who attends the Permanence Panel. Both medical staff are sited in the adjoining building to the accommodation service.		

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
Brighton and Hove has a joined up Children, Families and Schools Department. The Development Officer for the education of looked after children has the lead responsibility to take forward issues around the needs of looked after children. The post holder informed the inspector that this is a one year post. The Development Officer offers advice and training to staff and has a key advocacy and training and development role with education and social work staff. The new foster care handbook and payment system have addressed all of the issues identified at the last inspection. The placement support team now offer activities four mornings a week to children who have been excluded from school, and future developments include the employment of a teacher within this team. Information on the educational		

attainment of looked after children and the numbers excluded or absent from school are held by the Development Officer. Inspectors were unable to find Personal Education Plans on the children's files. The Development Officer is pursuing this matter and consulting with staff to devise a new more appropriate format for the plan.

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

There is a written policy on preparation for adult living which is included in the foster carer handbook. All young people aged 16 years and above have a Pathway Plan and foster carers are expected to help with devising the plan. Case responsibility for looked after children transfers to the Leaving Care Team once they reach 16 years old. In conjunction with fostering service, the Leaving Care Team ensures that foster carers help the young people to develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

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?	9
Brighton and Hove City Council operates a recruitment policy which meets all of the requirements. This was not verified by inspectors as all of the records are held by the Human Resources Department.			

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16) Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
There is a sound management structure with clear lines of accountability. Staff are managed by experienced senior staff with appropriate qualifications. All staff work together in the same building and there is adequate administrative support. There are systems in place for monitoring caseloads and prioritising work. Staff and carers told inspectors that training was readily available and they had plenty of opportunities for professional development. There are appropriate systems to ensure that assessments, reviews and approvals are managed effectively. A senior manager, outside of the accommodation service is responsible for monitoring all contracts with IFA's and he works closely with the in house fostering service. Inspectors observed that the field social work staff and the accommodation service staff work well together and have a good understanding of each other's role.		

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7) The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
The fostering service is employing some freelance staff to undertake assessments of new foster carers, as this work has increased considerably as a result of the successful, high profile recruitment campaign in July 2003. Managers envisage this area of work to continue to expand because of recruitment initiatives including frequent full page advertisements and an innovative new scheme to promote foster caring among Brighton and Hove Council employees. Appropriate procedures have been drawn up in relation to the employment of freelance staff and these staff have access to appropriate training and supervision.		
The service has a history of retaining staff and some carers expressed appreciation about having been supported by the same supervising social worker for many years. There are some vacant social work posts and these are being recruited to.		

A number of foster care assessments were examined as part of the inspection and the lead inspector also attended the fostering panel where assessments are considered and the panel makes a recommendation to the agency decision maker regarding approval.

The assessments seen were found to be detailed and comprehensive documents with good evidence of the assessment carried out. The fostering panel adviser has a role in monitoring the quality of assessments before they are seen by the panel. Practice managers carry out a second opinion visit to all prospective carers and prepare a supervisors report that is submitted to the panel.

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
There are sound employment practices in relation to staff and carers. An in house 24 hour support service is available to carers. Carers receive regular visits and telephone contact from their supervising social worker. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and whistle blowing policies are in place for both staff and carers.		

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
All staff receive an induction and opportunities for further training and development are available. A significant number of staff have achieved PQ1 and PQ2 training. Inspectors were told that Brighton and Hove City Council introduced a new system of personal development plans in December 2003. Training programmes are regularly evaluated and reviewed and there is some joint training with carers.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All staff have written job descriptions and there are clear and detailed policies and procedures in place to support and guide them in their work. Inspectors were told that staff receive regular supervision from their line manager and that these sessions are recorded. Brighton and Hove City Council is implementing a new system of personal development plans, which should be fully implemented by the time of the next inspection.		

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
There is a strategy for working with carers, which is detailed in the statement of purpose and the foster carers handbook. The majority of carers reported that they felt well supported by the fostering service particularly those carers on the Special Placement Scheme and those accessing the Placement Support Team. The service runs a number of support groups for carers including one for lesbian and gay carers. The placement support team provides a comprehensive holiday activities programme as well as individual work with young people. Carers told inspectors that they felt valued by the fostering service. A regular newsletter is sent out to all carers and work is in progress to develop the local Foster Care Association. The role of the supervising social worker is clear to both the carer and the worker. There is a comprehensive annual review report and inspectors were told that these reviews are chaired by Practice Managers where there is a complex situation, potential change of approval or if there has been a standard of care issue. All first annual reviews are presented to the fostering panel and subsequent reviews are taken to panel if a problem is identified or if the review identified a change in approval.		

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
Supervising social workers carry out regular visits to carers and there is a clear expectation of the carer's role and the purpose of visits. There is a comprehensive foster carer handbook and together with the foster care agreement, this ensures that foster carers know what is expected of them. There was evidence on files examined that some unannounced visits had taken place though some are still outstanding. Records about allegations of abuse and complaints and standards of care investigations are kept and monitored and there are written procedures for dealing with these matters. The fostering service ensures that all foster carers are members of the Foster Care Network and have access to independent support from the network when required. The fostering service is currently employing a consultant from the Foster Care Network to assist with the development of the newly launched local foster care association.		

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
<p>One of the Practice Managers has lead responsibility for training and he works closely with the Learning and Development Officer, who is employed by the training department and whose brief includes foster carer training. A training audit has been undertaken and a record of training undertaken by carers is now kept. The training programme includes appropriate pre-approval and induction training for carers, child protection training, anti-discriminatory practice, therapeutic crisis interventions, court skill and Improving the health of Young People in Public Care. Unfortunately some of these courses were cancelled due to lack of numbers. Foster carers told inspectors that the times and venues were not always suitable and child care was not provided (though it could be paid for). The fostering service managers acknowledged that this had been a problem last year and it is anticipated that staff will be more flexible and creative about timing and venues of training in future programmes. Under the new payment scheme, payment of fees is linked to an expectation that carers attend mandatory training on approval and further training following approval for more than two years. The fostering service is developing a library of books, videos, CD-ROMS and other information and materials on fostering, which carers can access. The fostering service provides activity based support for children who foster.</p>		

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

There are separate files for each carer and for each child they care for. There is a comprehensive front sheet and also a file audit checklist on the front of each file. There is a quarterly comprehensive file audit, which involves the whole management team, within the audit, a manager not supervising the case inspects the carers file. Inspectors were told that there is a policy of supervisors reading files at least six monthly. Since the last inspection the fostering service has developed a policy with regard to the information held on the children's files. Generally information was easy to access from the files though the children's files did not always have all of the documentation required. Carers told inspectors that overall they were given sufficient information about the child though there was one example of carers not knowing much more than a first name before the child arrived at their home. Foster care preparation and training includes information about recording, confidentiality and the safe keeping of records.

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

The fostering service has sound administrative systems and confidential information is stored appropriately. There is a written procedure on storing and managing confidential information and this has been made known to panel members.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			170
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			?
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			?
Number of new foster carers\adopters approved during the last 12 months:			23
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			6
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	240	Maximum £	400

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The office premises are suitable for the number of staff currently employed though not large enough to accommodate expansion of the service. There are efficient administrative systems including facilities for the retention of records in lockable cabinets, suitable IT systems and security passes for all staff. There are rooms, which can be used for meetings and training and some rooms in the building are used for supervised contact and for staff to undertake individual work with children and young people.

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 local authority has invested a substantial amount of money in the fostering service this year. Payments to carers have been comprehensively reviewed and increased and there has been an increase in the money allocated to placement support and recruitment of carers.		

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Accommodation Service has an allocated budget and managers meet regularly with financial services staff to ensure sound financial management.		

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

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

After consultation with local carers and the employment of a consultant from the Fostering Network to advise a working party of staff and foster carers , the fostering service introduced a new payment scheme in July 2003. The new scheme incorporates an increased basic rate and a fee element to recognise the skills, experience and time involved in caring for a particular child or young person. The payments vary with the age of the child or young person, in three groupings, 0 to 4 years, 5 to 11 years and 12 to 18 years. These payments will be reviewed annually.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Brighton and Hove City Council fostering service share a joint fostering panel with Barnado's Link Plus. The panel is chaired by an independent chair and currently meets all the membership requirements of the regulations. There is also an administrator and a panel advisor who monitors the quality of assessments and ensures the panel is well organised and provided with appropriate detailed information well in advance of the meeting. Inspectors were told that Panel minutes are prepared and presented to the agency decision maker within 5 working days and that the written decision is then sent on to the carers following this meeting. Carers are informed of the recommendations at the panel and their social worker informs them of the agency decision maker's decision by telephone after the meeting between the agency decision maker and the panel. The adviser is employed by Brighton and Hove City Council but he is also panel adviser for Barnado's Link Plus. The lead inspector attended the panel on 28th January 2004 and was impressed by the robust questioning and scrutiny of the assessments and by the fair and open way, feedback and recommendations of the panel are communicated to foster carers. In the waiting room prior to attending panel, foster carers and social workers can view a laminated card with photos of panel members together with a brief resume written by each member. There is also an information booklet for applicants and foster carers attending panel for the first time and each person attending panel is asked to provide feedback on the experience. The inspector was also able to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Permanence Panel, which was called at very short notice because a baby needed an immediate concurrent placement. The panel was convened to approve the plan for concurrency and the match, in order to prevent the baby having to be moved again.

The panel is well organised, panel minutes are prepared and presented to the agency decision maker the following day. The written decision from the agency decision maker is sent within a maximum of five days though carers may be informed by the agency decision maker by telephone immediately after panel.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
The fostering service has a few dedicated respite carers; other carers offer respite alongside their other fostering work. Barnado's Link Plus, which is the subject of a separate inspection provides short breaks for children with disabilities. The Special Placement Scheme also provides regular respite care as part of the enhanced support for these carers.		

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	
<p>The fostering service acknowledges that Family and Friends Care needs further development and inspectors were told that a working group is being set up in January 2003 to develop a departmental strategy and draw up procedures relating to family and friends foster care. Inspectors were also informed that this strategy will be linked to the development of family group conferences through the work of the Children's Fund locally. At present two part-time social workers within the fostering service undertake family and friends assessments and provide some support for example running a group for grandparents. They are supervised by the Practice Manager for Concurrency. A training day was provided for the Fostering Panel with fostering service managers and the agency decision maker in November 2003 and the first Family and Friends assessments were presented to this panel in December 2003.</p>	2	

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector Anna Gilmartin **Signature** _____

Date 2\3\04

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

☐

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: