

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

Meeting: Children, Families & Schools (CFS) Sub Committee

Date: 6 June 2005

Report of: Director CFS

Subject: Fostering Service Annual Report

Ward(s) affected: 'All'

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002 govern the conduct of the Fostering Service provided by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC). The regulations are made under sections 22 and 48 of the Care Standards Act 2002 and the National Minimum Standards are issued under sections 23 and 49 of the Act. The Fostering Service is required by regulation to produce an annual report and inform Members of its activities.
- 1.2 This report seeks Member approval of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose (Appendix I).
- 1.3 This report will also inform Members of:
 - National developments including the consolidation of changes brought about by the introduction of Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards in 2002/3 and the development of the Government's Choice Protects programme;
 - Service developments during the year;
 - Fostering activity during the year April 2004 – March 2005;
 - The Commission for Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) report of its inspection of BHCC's Fostering Service in February 2005.
- 1.4 This report should be read in conjunction with the BHCC's Adoption Agency Annual Report as this includes details of carers who offer children permanence through long-term fostering.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report and the progress of the Fostering Service is noted and the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is endorsed.

3 National developments

- 3.1 The Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002 were implemented on 1 April 2002. These provided the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000(CSA) for the conduct of fostering services. The CSA extended the scope of regulations significantly to other services not previously registered, such as independent fostering agencies (IFAs), and provided for the annual inspection of local authority fostering services by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- 3.2 The national profile on fostering is high. On 31 March 2004 [latest available national figures] 61,100 children were being looked after by local authorities in England with 74 % fostered. On 31 March 2005 there were 427 children being looked after by BHCC, 314 were fostered (88.9%). These figures demonstrate the critical role foster carers play in looking after some of the most vulnerable children in society.
- 3.3 In March 2002 the Government announced the *Choice Protects* review, the aim of which was to help local authorities commission and deliver high quality placements for looked after children.
- 3.4 The *Choice Protects* review has continued to ensure that the commissioning and provision of family placements is seen in the context of the work already being carried out to reform and develop adoption services and the provisions in the Adoption and Children Act. It also links with the work of the Social Exclusion Unit, currently working on the promotion of the education of looked after children.
- 3.5 Nationally a £113 million *Choice Protects* grant has been made available over a three-year period: £20 million in 2003-4, £33 million in 2004-5 and £60 million in 2005-6. BHCC received a grant of £156,000 for 2004/5. This grant was used in a variety of ways from funding part of the Family and Friends team to paying for all of our Foster carers to receive a subscription to Fostering Network and funding a part time therapist to offer some additional input to carers to support placements.

4 Service development

- 4.1 A new comprehensive handbook was circulated to all BHCC's foster carers in May 2003. During 2004 the handbook was fully revised and revised pages and new chapters were sent to carers. Carers have reported that they find the handbook useful. The handbook will continue to be updated and developed, to ensure it remains a key reference manual for our foster carers.
- 4.2 After consultation with carers, Panel and staff the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose has been revised and requires the endorsement of Members (Appendix I).
- 4.4 CSCI inspected BHCC's fostering service in February 2005. The service received a positive report from inspectors, which stated that all the standards

were met and were exceeded under 15 key standards; 12 were exceeded in 2004. Inspectors noted there had been significant progress and development since the 2004 inspection. A copy of the inspection report is in Appendix 2.

- 4.5 The Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association (BHFA) was launched in May 2004 to represent the interests of local foster carers. During its first year BHFA has carried out a wide-ranging survey of carers' views on support, training and other key issues, which has had positive influence on the provision of services to carers. They are developing a mentor/buddy scheme for newly approved carers and are also applying for charity status. An active association enables the fostering service to involve carers more fully in service developments.
- 4.6 Last year the service completed a race equality impact assessment. This resulted in an action plan part of which was the creation of the new post of recruitment and publicity officer for black and minority ethnic (BME) carers to develop links with local BME communities with a view to improving the recruitment of BME carers. Like other local authorities, the service has had difficulties in recruiting sufficient BME carers to match the needs of local BME children requiring foster care (currently 8.5% of BHCC's looked after children). In addition, a new policy on the placement of BME children has been produced and a resource pack and guidance on caring for children placed trans-rationally has been developed.
- 4.7 Family and friends carers are playing an increasingly important role in providing placements for children unable to live with their own parents. A small team established in 2003 to assess potential family and friends carers has been expanded to improve support to family and friends foster carers, and now has a dedicated part-time manager. Practice is now underpinned by a family and friends policy developed in collaboration with carers. The successful support group for carers, mainly grandparents, has been maintained.

5 FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 5.1 Fostering Network has estimated that there is an 8,000 shortfall of foster carers across the country so the recruitment and retention of foster carers is a major issue facing every local authority.
 - 5.1.1 BHCC have 126 approved foster care 'units' (i.e. couples or single carers but excluding family and friends carers). On 31 March 2005, these carers were caring for 176 children. A further 85 children were placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs). 27 children were placed with friends and family foster carers.
 - 5.1.2 A key objective of the fostering service over the past year has been to work towards reducing the number of high cost agency placements by enhancing the capacity of the service to recruit more in-house foster carers. This would also enable our looked after children to have more opportunity to be placed locally and retain important links with family, school and their communities.

5.2 Recruitment activity

- 5.2.1. The Fostering Service has a clear recruitment strategy and runs regular high profile publicity campaigns.
- 5.2.2. The successful recruitment campaign continued in 2004/5 with a focus on recruiting carers for older children and young parents with babies and encouraging Council staff not directly working with looked after children to apply to foster.
- 5.2.3. Between April 2004 - March 2005 the team received 249 fostering enquires, 70 units attended information sessions, 65 follow up home visits were conducted and 34 units attended Preparation Groups resulting in 18 new foster care units being approved for fostering. There are a number of other assessments underway with a target of 20 new approvals for 2005/6.
- 5.2.4. The above figures highlight the fall out rate from enquiry to approval, with a significant amount of hidden assessment work as a number of potential carers have to withdraw because of changes in family circumstances or because issues of concern emerge within the assessment. However it should also be borne in mind that seeds can also be planted during the recruitment process that may bear fruit some considerable time later. Approximately 7% of the people who make initial enquiries go on to be approved as foster carers.
- 5.2.5. Over the last year there has been an increase in the number of carers in independent agencies transferring to our agency because we are able to offer more regular placements of children and better support. Three couples transferred over the last year.
- 5.2.6. Looked after young people have had an input into foster carer preparation groups which has been well received by prospective foster carers.
- 5.2.7. Recruitment work is overseen by a dedicated Practice Manager and priority is given to ensuring all prospective applicants receive a speedy, welcoming and informative response.

5.3 Foster Carer payment scheme

- 5.3.1. In 2003, payments to our foster carers were increased significantly which made us competitive with other agencies. This parity has been maintained and the major investment in foster care by the Council has considerably improved the recruitment and retention of carers.

5.4 Placement activity by the fostering service

- 5.4.1 The full impact of the recruitment campaign in terms of approvals of new carers coming through to Panel began to have a real effect in 2004/5. Most of the new carers are used for placements for children as soon as they are approved and placement choice has greatly improved, so children's needs are being met more appropriately.

5.4.2 Referrals to the fostering duty service for placements has remained high during the year. The duty service received 623 referrals in 2004/5, with 535 fostering placements made.

5.4.3 The Fostering Duty service is overseen by a dedicated Practice Manager and strenuous efforts are made to place children with in-house carers able to meet their needs if at all possible. There is still an inevitable mis-match between the profile of a number of children needing placements and the type of placements offered by the new carers. There are few carers coming through wishing to provide teenage placements and new carers have to be allowed to grow in confidence and experience before being asked to care for some of the more challenging young people in the care system.

5.5 Foster care support

5.5.1. Recruitment campaigns have given particular emphasis to the support package provided by the fostering service, which includes 24-hour on call support, a range of support groups for carers and their children, training and an enhanced service from the Placement Support Team (PST).

5.5.2 A website for Brighton and Hove foster carers and adopters was launched in January 2005 (www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk). It contains an open side for prospective foster carers/adopters with recruitment information and a password accessed side for approved carers with a number of different pages on support services and training and a message board for carers to exchange information and discuss care issues. The new website increases support to carers and is a key part of the recruitment strategy.

5.5.3 Carers have informed managers, staff and CSCI inspectors that they value the support services offered, particularly that provided by their own supervising social worker and the PST. The intensive support provided to carers on the Special Placement Scheme (SPS) was also highlighted within the inspection report. The management of the SPS has been transferred from the Permanence Team to within the PST, which should allow further development and increased support to these carers. It is planned to expand the SPS from 10 to 16 placements.

5.5.4 The PST continues to play a key role in supporting children and young people in placement and their carers. The team provides individual and group work to young people to help develop their self-esteem and ability to access mainstream services and has worked intensively during the last year with 69 looked after children and young people. The team supports young people at weekends and during school holidays and offered 557 places on activity programmes to looked after children and 79 places to carers' own children. The PST also provides a service to young people temporarily excluded from school or without full time education.

5.5.5 An important internal audit of placement stability was carried out in 2004 which proposed a number of measures to improve placement stability and support to carers.

- 5.5.6 A policy and guidance on drug, alcohol and substance misuse is being developed which should also assist the training of, and support to, carers.
- 5.5.7 Therapeutic support to carers on particularly complex placement issues has been enhanced by the involvement of a part-time freelance consultant. In addition the Service works collaboratively with the Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). There are excellent links with CAMHS which has enabled looked after and adopted children to be 'fast tracked' for assessment and treatment services and carers to access specialist help.

6 The Fostering Panel

- 6.1 The Fostering Panel Annual Report by Gill Harris, Independent Chair is attached (Appendix 3).

7 Use of independent fostering agencies and commissioning strategy

- 7.1 The Agency Placement Manager's commissioning strategy with the independent fostering sector has been maintained during the last year.
- 7.2 The Council's Preferred Fostering Service Provider List, established in 2004, helps to ensure that quality standards in foster care are provided by IFAs for children looked after by Brighton and Hove. It also serves to streamline and improve partnership working with other agencies and more cost-effective use of IFAs when in-house placements are unavailable.

8 Training

- 8.1 Training is accorded a high priority by the fostering service. Over the last year 155 carer units attended 24 courses covering the range of needs of looked after children. From April 2005, 8 Brighton and Hove foster carers will start to study for NVQ Level 3, with another cohort of carers to receive this training later this year. This is seen as a significant development in the move towards a more professional service. Carers have also been able to take part in training with social workers which has helped to increase understanding of each others' roles.

9 Complaints, allegations about foster carers

- 9.1 During 2004/5 across the Fostering & Permanence Teams there were no child protection allegations in respect of foster carers. There were 3 standards of care issues and 3 complaints received in respect of foster carers including one from a young person. These were all dealt with in line with the departmental procedures and actions taken appropriately.

10 Consultation

Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association; Brighton and Hove Fostering Panel; officers within Fostering and Adoption Services

Meeting/Date	Children Families & Schools 6 June 2004
Report of	David Hawker
Subject	Fostering Service Annual Report 2004/5
Wards affected	All

Financial implications

The budget in 2005/2006 for foster payments is £4.02m. This includes an investment of £1.2m following the implementation of the new foster care payment scheme in July 2003. In addition BHCC's allocation of the Choice Protects grant in 2005/2006 is £292,000. The current budget is sufficient to fund the present level of in-house fostering activity.

The unit cost for an in-house foster placements is currently c£500 per week, which compares favourably with the £720 per week it costs to place a child with an Independent Foster Agency (IFA). A shift between using IFA's to in-house carers has the potential, therefore, to make significant savings. During 2004/2005 the level of IFA usage reduced by 2.7%, the first time there has not been growth in IFA's since 1999/00.

Legal implications

The proposals in this report ensure that Brighton and Hove City Council meets all of its obligations under the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002

Natasha Watson May 2005

Corporate/City-wide implications	Risk assessment
Fostering Services are provided citywide and support services do require a corporate Council approach.	None
Sustainability implications	Equalities implications
None	There is a legal requirement for the local authority to provide foster carers who can reflect a child's religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background. The Council actively encourages foster carer applications from citizens from a wide range of backgrounds.

Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder

None

Background papers

None

Contact Officers

Adrian Briggs, Development, Officer, Fostering – Tel: 295381

Sharon Donnelly, Head of Service, Adoption and Fostering – Tel: 295549

Appendices to Brighton & Hove Fostering Service Annual Report

- 1. Fostering Service Statement of Purpose**
- 2. Commission for Social Care Inspection Report, February 2005.**
- 3. Fostering Panel Annual Report by Gill Harris, Independent Chairperson.**
- 4. Fostering Service statistics and items considered by Fostering Panel 2004-2005.**

APPENDIX 1

FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE



BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Fostering & Adoption Service
253 Preston Road
Brighton

June 2005

I Key aims and principles

- 1.1 A child's welfare is the paramount consideration. Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving and caring family, which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond. The needs and wishes, welfare and safety of the child or young person are at the centre of Brighton and Hove's Fostering Service. Children come from a wide range of cultural, racial, linguistic and religious backgrounds, therefore the Fostering Service will endeavour to recruit carers who reflect this.
- 1.2 Brighton and Hove City Council, with other agencies and community groups, will work to ensure that a comprehensive range of services are provided to support birth families to provide safe and appropriate care for their children.
- 1.3 Where children or young people are not able to live safely with their birth parents then active consideration will be given to that child being cared for within the wider family or friendship network. The Children, Families and Schools department is working to enhance the service provided to family and friends carers.
- 1.4 Where children or young people are not able to remain with their birth family or be placed within the wider family network a family placement with foster carers will be sought. Good childcare planning is essential to prevent children drifting in the care system.
- 1.5 All Looked after Children will have a Care Plan that will be reviewed regularly. The wishes of the child will be taken into account as appropriate in drawing up the care plan. The birth family should be fully involved in the care planning process and their views represented. Consideration should always be given to holding a Family Group Conference to enable the wider birth family to participate in planning for the child.
- 1.6 The Care Plan will be reviewed at every Looked After Child Review and at the 4 month review the plan for permanence will be addressed. This plan will be based on the needs of the individual looked after child and will include consideration of permanence being achieved by return to birth family or through permanent foster care or adoption. Clear timescales will be drawn up to expedite the permanence planning.
- 1.7 Consideration will be given in the care planning and reviewing process of the need to access appropriate specialist services for looked after children and their carers. These services should be provided in a non-stigmatising and enabling manner.
- 1.8 The views and wishes of the child should be sought by a range of age appropriate means. The Children's Rights Service and Advocacy service will continue to play a key role in promoting the wishes and views of looked after children and enabling their voice to be heard.

- I.9 The Fostering Service will aim to provide a diverse and wide range of safe, caring, stable and nurturing family placements to meet the needs of Brighton and Hove's looked after children. This will include respite carers, short term and task focused carers and permanent carers. The Fostering and Permanence team will work in collaboration with colleagues in the leaving care team, youth offending team and the Barnardo's Link plus team to ensure that an appropriate range of carers are recruited to meet the range of different placements needed.
- I.10 Foster carers will be carefully recruited and trained and given access to a range of support services to enable them to provide high quality care to the children placed with them.
- I.11 Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable them to work sensitively with the child to accept the child for who they are and promote their cultural, racial and religious identity.
- I.12 Foster carers will be supported to enable them to focus on the individual child's needs and work within the child's care plan to develop the child's full potential . Children in foster care should have access to a wide range of educational resources and facilities to provide the maximum opportunity for them to achieve and develop their skills and fulfil their aspirations.
- I.13 Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable the child to make full use of educational, health, leisure, creative and sporting activities to develop their skills and self-esteem and work towards overcoming the possible traumas of past experiences.
- I.12 The care plan for looked after children will always address the plans for contact with family, friends or important individuals from the child's past. Good care planning to promote and sustain appropriate contact arrangements is clearly associated with stability for the child and good outcomes. Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable them to work with the child's birth family as appropriate and deal with this issue sensitively with the child or young person.
- I.13 Foster carers will work to provide safe, caring and appropriate boundaries for the child. This will help to promote their child's physical and emotional health and educational achievement and to encourage the child to develop independence skills.
- I.14 The Fostering service will work with others to minimise disruption for looked after children and maximise their opportunity to achieve a permanent and stable family life style. Factors that are significant in achieving this will be the need for good assessment of the child's needs and careful matching with foster carers. Enhanced, specialist and multi –agency services will be provided for carers and looked after children as appropriate in line with the care planning process.
- I.15 The Fostering service will aim to ensure that full information is provided by the child's social worker about the child's background and family and

placement needs, including previous and current health history, to inform the matching process and enable the carers to work to meet the individual needs of the child in placement.

- 1.16 The Fostering service will aim to work in partnership with foster carers in an open and reliable manner. Foster carers will be involved in planning and developing the service and kept informed about practice and policy developments. They will also be kept informed about the wider departmental developments and encouraged to feel an integral part of the Children, Families and Schools department.

2 Fostering Service: Specific services and facilities.

- 2.1 The Fostering Service is an integral part of the Fostering & Adoption service and staff within the service have as their primary role the recruitment, assessment, training, support and supervision of carers. They also provide a placement and family finding service for social work staff on behalf of looked after children or children needing to be looked after.

2.1.1 Recruitment

- 2.1.1.1 The Fostering Service will co-ordinate an active and inclusive recruitment campaign to meet the diverse needs of Brighton and Hove's looked after children. Enquiries from prospective carers will be welcomed from a wide range of the population including couples with or without children, single parents, single men or women, lesbians and gay men, unemployed people, people from all ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, older people including those with grown up children.
- 2.1.1.2 The Fostering Service will provide a range of multi-media recruitment information for prospective carers. This includes the new website that provides comprehensive information for prospective carers, www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk. The recruitment information describes the whole range of fostering and adoptive placements that are needed. Staff within the service will respond to enquiries promptly and hold regular information sessions for prospective carers. These information and recruitment events will always include input from experienced carers.
- 2.1.1.3 The Fostering Service will continue to place a high priority on the recruitment of carers and will regularly review the recruitment strategy and initiatives. A wider pool of carers enables the service to provide locally based family placements for children which take a greater account of their specific matching needs.
- 2.1.1.4 The Fostering Service will also employ a dedicated Recruitment and Publicity Officer for Black and Minority Ethnic carers. This worker will develop links with key BME groups locally and work to raise the profile of the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic children within the care system.

2.1.2 Assessment and preparation of carers

- 2.1.2.1 All potential prospective carers will have an initial home assessment visit to discuss their interest in fostering in more detail. The service will run regular preparation training groups for prospective carers. These training groups will always include input from a range of experienced carers and prospective carers will also be given the opportunity to link up with individual experienced carers as appropriate. The Service will also endeavour to always include input from older young people in the care system and provide some preparation for the task of fostering for children within the prospective carers family.
- 2.1.2.2 The Fostering Service has comprehensive procedures in place for the assessment of prospective carers and all staff receive training and regular supervision on this aspect of the work. The assessment procedures are evidence and competency based and includes specific verification checks that comply with the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A detailed assessment report is presented to either the Fostering or Permanence Panel.
- 2.1.2.3 The Fostering and Permanence Panels are constituted to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and are both chaired by a suitably qualified and experienced independent chairperson. Both Panels have the services of professional advisors that do not have operational management responsibility within the service and play a vital quality assurance role.
- 2.1.2.4 The Fostering Panel meets monthly and the Permanence Panel fortnightly. The Permanence Panel considers the approval of concurrency carers and the matches of children under the age of 9 with permanent carers.
- 2.1.2.5 Both the Fostering and Permanence Panels have written Constitutions and Terms of Reference and information booklets for prospective applicants. Both Panels encourage the prospective carers to attend and ensure recommendations and decisions are communicated to the prospective carers both verbally and in writing in line with the legal requirements.
- 2.1.2.6 Both the Fostering and Adoption Service prepare annual reports to present to Children, Families and Schools Committee. These reports incorporate reports on the activities of both Panels prepared by the independent Chair of Panel.

2.1.3 Matching and Placement of Children

- 2.1.3.1 The Fostering Service provides a daily duty service to social work staff needing an emergency or short term/ task focused placement for a child.

Full information is taken about the placement needs of the child and consideration is given of all appropriate in-house placements. As far as possible children will be placed locally to enable them to sustain appropriate contact with family and friends and minimise any disruption to their school and leisure pursuits. The policy in relation to the needs of BME Looked After Children highlights the need to find a placement that reflects the child's ethnic, cultural and religious background if at all possible.

2.1.3.2 When an appropriate in-house provision is not available the Fostering service will seek a placement with a local independent fostering provider. A Council Preferred Fostering Service Provider List has been established which helps to ensure quality standards in foster care provided by IFAs for children looked after by Brighton and Hove. It also serves to streamline and improve partnership working with other agencies and more cost-effective use of IFAs when in-house placements are unavailable.

2.1.3.3 The department has a contract with Barnardos to provide a respite link scheme and some long term fostering provision for children with disabilities.

2.1.3.4 The Fostering team runs a weekly Children Awaiting Placement meeting to consider all the children that are waiting for foster placements. The Permanence team take referrals on children under the age of 9 needing a permanent foster or adoptive placement. Permanency Planning meetings are convened to consider the detailed matching needs and the family finding strategy. Staff in the Permanence team take the lead role in family finding for children on referral to the team.

2.1.3.4 Fostering and Permanence team staff will work collaboratively to ensure that fostering resources are fully used to best meet the needs of looked after children. Short term foster carers that are caring for children that require a permanent placement will always be considered as potential permanent carers for that child if that is their wish and it meets the needs of the child. Specific procedures for the re-assessment of short term carers offering permanency have been drawn up and agreed with Permanence Panel.

2.1.4 Training for carers

2.1.4.1 It is essential that all carers are given the opportunity to take up a range of training courses and access training materials to enhance their skills and abilities as carers and give them the opportunity for further development.

2.1.4.2 Key training courses will be mandatory following approval and other training courses and events will be planned as appropriate. A dedicated member of the training section will work with a Practice Manager within

the service to take lead responsibility for foster care training and ensure full information is sent to carers about forthcoming training events. Training will need to be delivered in a variety of ways and formats to allow for maximum participation. Carers can also access training information via the new website.

- 2.1.4.3 It is good practice where possible to plan for carers and family placement and fieldwork staff to train together to further develop partnership work and increase the understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.
- 2.1.4.4. The new foster care fee payment scheme is linked to the take up of post approval training and work has been undertaken to support and encourage carers to access the appropriate NVQ award.
- 2.1.4.5 Supervising social workers will regularly discuss carers' training needs on their visits to carers and a separate section of the foster carers annual review documentation will address carers training and development needs. This will inform the development of future foster carer training plans.
- 2.1.4.6 Foster carers will also be trained and supported to deliver training themselves to other carers and appropriate professionals.

2.1.5 Support services to carers

- 2.1.5.1 Foster care allowances will be reviewed annually and full guidance on foster care payments and allowances will be provided to all carers and is on the website. The current allowance scheme was fully reviewed in 2002 with the assistance of a consultant from Fostering Network. The views of foster carers were canvassed and a group of carers took an active role in drawing up the principles of the new scheme. The new allowance and fee payment scheme came into operation in July 2003.
- 2.1.5.2 All foster carers are provided with a comprehensive handbook. This handbook is updated and added to on a regular basis to ensure it remains a key resource and guidance manual for carers.
- 2.1.5.2. All foster carers will have an allocated supervising social worker who will visit or make contact with the carer at monthly intervals or more frequently as required. They will ensure that they are accessible and available to carers and that carers have the name of their supervisor to contact if they are unavailable for any reason. The supervising social worker will liaise closely with the social worker or workers for the children in placement.
- 2.1.5.3 The supervising social worker will have responsibility for the organisation of the foster carers' annual review and ensure that all the components of the review are completed as appropriate including the reports from the

carers, the carers own children and children in placement. The foster care reviews will be taken back to the Fostering Panel as necessary. The first review after approval will always go back to Panel, in addition, Panel will also consider the reviews of foster carers where there have been specific and significant complaints, allegations or standards of care issues or other major changes in circumstances.

- 2.1.5.4. The Placement Support team has a key role in providing a range of enhanced support services to looked after children, carers and their own children. They will work with individual children and groups of children to support them in their placement, provide them with an opportunity to access a range of sporting, creative and leisure activities to promote their physical and emotional well being. They will work closely with carers to ensure that children in placement are given the maximum opportunity to reach their potential and build sustainable stable relationships with their carers.
- 2.1.5.5. The Placement Support team will take on responsibility for the distribution of 'listen up' cards to looked after children which are aimed at enabling looked after children to take up use of local leisure facilities.
- 2.1.5.6 Support services provided by the Placement Support team and the Fostering service will be kept under review to ensure that the views of carers, children and social workers and other key professionals are taken into account. The Placement Support team will aim to work with carers and children to enable looked after children to be supported to access local community mainstream provision.
- 2.1.5.7 The Placement Support team will continue to provide a comprehensive holiday activities programme for looked after children and plan to continue to enhance the service provide to carers own children as appropriate and children in placement with family and friends carers. The team has also recruited staff that can provide activities and support to children in placement and their carers at weekends.
- 2.1.5.8 Staff in the fostering service will work with carers, parents and the social worker for the child to ensure that the child or young person has full access to educational provision. The fostering service will continue to work with colleagues from within the Children, Families and Schools department to promote the needs of looked after children within the educational service. This will include close liaison with the Development Officer for LAC and the facilitation of the role she has in working with carers to help them promote and improve the educational opportunities for children in their care.
- 2.1.5.9 The fostering service will also work closely with the Nurse Consultant for Looked after Children to ensure carers are kept informed about health issues and are working actively to promote the health of the child or children in placement.

- 2.1.5.10 The Fostering Service will also sustain close collaboration with CAMHS to enable foster carers and LAC with emotional and mental health difficulties to access a fast track specialist service.
- 2.1.5.11 The Fostering service will continue to provide an out of hours 'on call' service for carers. This supplements the service provided by the Emergency Duty Team which provided out of hours social services cover across East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. The Fostering Service's out of hours service would be the first port of call for carers needing advice or support.
- 2.1.5.11 The Fostering Service will provide and facilitate a range of support groups for carers. Currently the service runs a range of groups for carers including a specific group for lesbian and gay foster carers and adopters. These services will be reviewed regularly with carers and can extend to meet the needs of family and friends carers as appropriate.
- 2.1.5.12 The Fostering Service will continue to meet the annual cost of subscribing to the carers' organisation, Fostering Network, for all Brighton and Hove approved carers. This enables carers to use the advice and support services provided by Fostering Network and receive their literature.
- 2.1.5.13 The Fostering Service will support and work in collaboration with the Brighton & Hove Foster Care Association. The Fostering Service will ensure local carers are fully consulted on developments in the service.
- 2.1.5.14 The Fostering Service will continue to work with the Children's Rights Service and endeavour to further develop ways to ensure that young people's views on the service are taken into account and inform future developments within the service.
- 2.1.5.15 The Fostering Service will work to ensure that carers are kept fully informed about developments in the service. A regular newsletter will continue to be produced for carers and carers will also receive the Children, Families and Schools departmental magazine.
- 2.1.5.16 The service will continue to look at ways of improving communication. The new website has a secure password accessed side which provides detailed information on a range of support services plus a message board facility.
- 2.1.5.17 The Fostering Service also employs a part time therapist and child psychotherapist on a freelance basis to provide specialist and speedy support and consultation for carers as part of the service to enhance placement stability for children.
- 2.1.5.18 The Fostering Service recognises the significant role played by the carers' own children in the fostering task and the pressures this can bring to the family. The team will endeavour to take account of the needs of carers'

own children when planning services and develop specific services for 'children who foster'.

- 2.1.5.16 The Fostering service employs a community family worker to provide a range of practical support to foster carers including help with transporting children and supporting carers meet the specific needs of children in their care.

2.2 Other services within Fostering & Adoption

- 2.3 The service will also provide specialist services to meet the needs of particular groups of looked after children.
- 2.4 The Special Placement Scheme provides an enhanced package of support to some carers offering permanency to harder to place children. This package includes an intensive support service provided by the social worker managing the scheme, support for regular respite care with carers and sessional work support as appropriate.
- 2.5 The Concurrency team recruits, assesses, supervises and supports foster-adopters for children 0 – 2 years. Concurrency carers are approved as both foster carers and adopters and care for children on a fostering basis where concurrency has been agreed as the care plan in court. They are prepared and able to adopt the child if the rehabilitation with birth family is not possible.

3 Fostering & Adoption service staff

- 3.1 The teams within the service will work collaboratively to provide an integrated and co-ordinated service to carers, looked after children and fieldwork staff.
- 3.2 Staff from the various teams will be involved in the review, planning and development of the service. A range of training courses will be provided across the teams to facilitate staff development and aid the ability of staff to keep updated on the changing legal framework, practice guidance and the increasing body of relevant research. All staff are appropriately qualified to carry out their tasks within the service.
- 3.3 The management team, including Service Managers, Practice Managers and Development Officers within the service meet monthly with the Head of Service to discuss operational and policy matters and ensure the continued integrated development of the service.
- 3.4 Managers within the service are sufficiently experienced social worker practitioners and have access to managerial training courses. The Head of Service is an experienced manager and social work practitioner with appropriate management and social work qualifications. There are clear job descriptions and person specifications for all posts within the service.

- 3.5 The Head of Service is Sharon Donnelly and can be contacted at the Fostering and Adoption Service, Brighton and Hove City Council, 253 Preston Road, Brighton BN1 6SE. Telephone number 01273 295444, email sharon.donnelly@brighton-hove.gov.uk

4. Statistical Information relating to activities of the Fostering Service

- 4.1 The Annual Fostering Service report will provide detailed statistics relating to the number of foster carers and recruitment activity within the year.

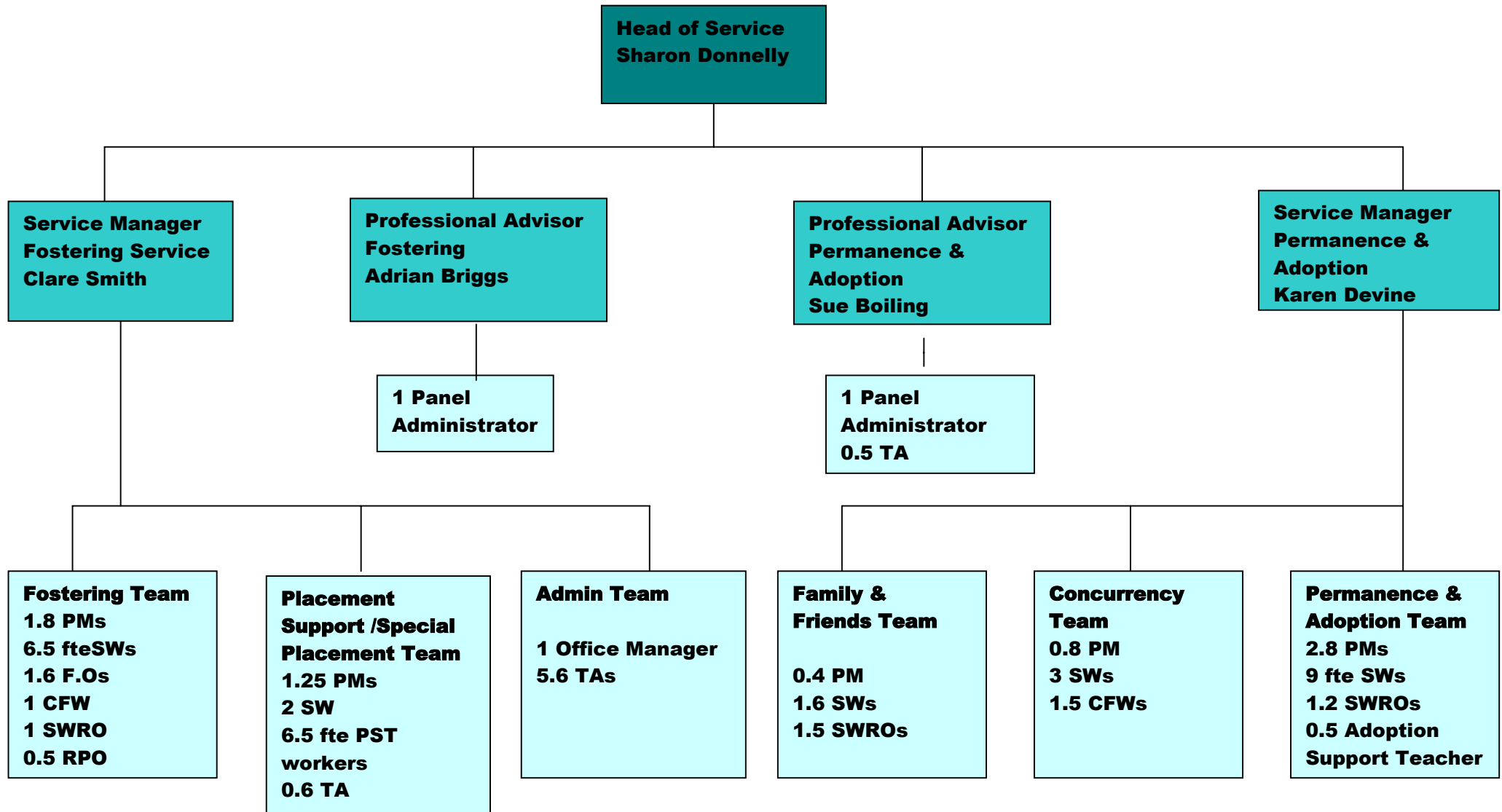
5. Complaints procedure

- 5.1 Users of the Fostering Services, including children, birth families, prospective and approved carers, are provided with copies of the complaint procedure, advised how to access the procedure and encouraged to invoke it if unhappy with services provided. Service users are advised that independent sources of support are available to help them make a complaint and advocate on their behalf if they feel unconfident making a complaint by themselves, the Children's Rights Service. Service users are advised that the Customer Services Manager who oversees the complaint procedure can be contacted at: Brighton & Hove City Council, Kings House, Grand Ave, Hove
Freephone 0500 291229 or by email at complaints@brighton-hove.gov.uk

6. Commission for Social Care Inspection

- 6.1 The Fostering Service will be inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations and the National Minimum Standards. These inspections will take place on a yearly basis. Inspection reports are public documents and a copy of the current report will be available via the website, www.fosteringinbrighton-hove.gov.uk.
- 6.2 The Commission for Social Care Inspection office responsible for inspecting fostering services provided by Brighton and Hove City Council can be contacted at:
East Sussex Area Office,
Ivy House,
3 Ivy Terrace,
Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 4QT.
Telephone – 01323 636200

Structure Chart – Brighton & Hove Fostering & Adoption Service June 2005



Key

PM – Practice Manager, SW – Social Worker, SWRO – Social Work Resource Officer, CFW – Community Family Worker
 RPO – Recruitment & Publicity Officer, F.O – Fostering Officer, TA – Team Administrator , fte – full time equivalent

APPENDIX 2

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION'S REPORT ON BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL'S FOSTERING SERVICE

FEBRUARY 2005



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

Fostering Services

Brighton and Hove Fostering Services

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

Fostering Service Inspection

under the Care Standards Act 2000

28th February – 4th March and 16th March 2005

This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior expressed permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Brighton and Hove Fostering Services

Address

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

Local Authority Manager

Sharon Donnelly

Tel No:

01273 295445

Address

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

Fax No:

01273 295444

Email Address

Sharon.Donnelly@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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

12-16/01/04

Date of Inspection Visit		28 th February – 4 th March and 16 th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Camilla Wood	078390
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Corrie McKeown	
Name of Inspector	3	Mr Paul Taylor	
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms Sharon Donnelly	

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

1. Statement of purpose

2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service

3. Management of the fostering service

4. Securing and promoting welfare

5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers

6. Records

7. Fitness of premises

8. Financial requirements

9. Fostering panels

10. Short-term breaks

11. Family and friend carers

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Fostering and Adoption service employs a total of 66 staff and is organised into a number of teams each with specific areas of responsibility: fostering, family and friends, concurrency, placement support, and permanence and adoption. The service was undergoing minor restructuring at the time of the inspection resulting in the placement support team and the special placement service being bought together into a single team.

The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of carers.

There are two panels. The fostering panel is responsible for making recommendations about the approval of short-term foster carers, family and friends carers and Barnardo's Link Plus carers. The permanence panel is responsible for recommending the approval of long-term foster carers, concurrency carers and prospective adopters. The agency decision maker is also the Head of Child Protection for Brighton and Hove. Both panels are chaired by the same independent chair, and are supported by a professional advisor. The professional advisors are non-operational managers within the service and play a quality assurance and policy development role.

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.)

This was the third inspection of the Brighton and Hove fostering service since the introduction of the National Minimum Standards. It was positive to find that all of the recommendations from the inspection in 2004 had been addressed.

Inspectors concluded that the service is operating effectively and efficiently. Staff showed a commitment to reflective practice and to the development of the service. They are keen to learn from other fostering organisations and to share their own good practice with others.

No failures to meet statutory regulations were identified during the inspection. All of the minimum standards were met; some were exceeded.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The fostering service has a comprehensive and detailed statement of purpose available to foster carers and professionals as a written document and on the service website. Age appropriate information about fostering is provided to children and young people.

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

The service is managed efficiently and effectively by suitably trained and experienced managers. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities; lines of accountability and levels of delegation are clear.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

There are good arrangements to monitor and control the activities of the fostering service.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

There is a recruitment strategy that is now targeted at carers for children and young people who have traditionally been more difficult to place in-house. There is a shortage of black and minority ethnic carers; a recruitment and publicity officer has been appointed to address this issue. The assessment process is rigorous; carers are carefully prepared for the fostering task. Procedures for the management of complaints, child protection and standards of care issues are in place. Good arrangements are in place to support the education and health needs of fostered children and young people. The importance of young people's participation is well understood; looked after young people have been involved in the provision of foster carer training.

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

Procedures for the recruitment of staff were not examined during this inspection. Arrangements for the recruitment of foster carers were judged to be robust and properly implemented. Training for carers is available; some is mandatory. An NVQ programme is being introduced. The supervision of foster carers is properly undertaken, including unannounced visits. The service is resourced to achieve its purpose and function. Staff reported feeling well supported through management supervision and appraisal and by peers.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Records were found to be relevant and to include all necessary information. Arrangements for storage ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

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

The premises used by the fostering service are adequate. However, there is no room to support any expansion of the service and, although staff make good use of available space, there are times and areas when conditions are cramped.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

Budgets are properly managed; there are auditing systems in place and operational. Payments to carers are reviewed annually; the scale of payments is graded to reflect carers' knowledge/expertise and the complexity of some placements.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

The fostering panel is a joint panel with the local Barnardo's Link Plus service. It is well chaired and administered; the scrutiny and questioning of reports presented is rigorous and thoughtful. Participants have a good understanding of fostering issues.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not assessed; the majority of short-term breaks are arranged by the Barnardo's Link Plus service which is the subject of a separate inspection report.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

Considerable work has been done in this area since the last inspection and the standard is now met. Practice is underpinned by a new policy framework; arrangements for the management of this area of work and for the supervision of family and friends carers are improved. Training has been provided to panel members about family and friends assessments.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	Timescale for action

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Camilla Wood</u>	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	<u>Corrie McKeown</u>	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	<u>Rita Griffiths</u>	Signature	_____
Date	_____		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	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	FS 26	Increase the accommodation resources available to the fostering service.

* 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	15
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	45

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

There is a detailed and comprehensive statement of purpose that is reviewed at least annually. The content of the statement accurately reflected the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided, as found by the inspection team. The statement is provided to carers in the foster carers handbook, a copy of which is given to all carers. It is also available on the Brighton and Hove fostering website. The annual report of the service supplements the information in the statement by providing more detailed information and analysis about core issues in any given year, e.g. about placements and complaints. Care has been taken to provide information for children being fostered in formats that are accessible and helpful. Brighton and Hove Children's Rights Service has produced a filofax for looked after children over 12 years of age and this includes additional pages specific to fostering, including how to make a complaint. Children aged 5 to 12 are given the BAAF guide to fostering, again with additional bespoke information about local services such as the Advocacy Project and the Children's Rights Service. All under fives are given a copy of a Children's Society booklet entitled 'Dennis Duckling' that tells a story about going to stay with another family in a child centred and thoughtful way.

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
<p>The senior management team have considerable knowledge and expertise in fostering and in children's services. Brighton and Hove has a programme of in-house management training and senior staff are supported to undertake relevant external professional training. The Head of Service has professional qualifications in social work and in management. The two service managers are professionally qualified and have extensive experience in their areas of responsibility. Practice managers are all qualified and experienced social workers. Overall the service was judged to be effectively and efficiently managed, and was considered to be respected within the department and by elected members.</p>		

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
<p>Standard not assessed. Recruitment records were not examined during this inspection. It is understood that Brighton and Hove operates a recruitment policy that includes CRB checks and references; the implementation of this was not evaluated by inspectors on this occasion.</p>		

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
<p>This standard was found to be exceeded at the previous inspection and remains an area of strength.</p> <p>There are clear and effective processes for monitoring and quality assurance within the service. Communication works well; lines of accountability are well understood by staff and by foster carers.</p> <p>Considerable efforts have been made to develop an integrated service in which staff within the different teams understand and respect one another's roles and share a common vision for the future of the service.</p> <p>The management team meets monthly; the agenda includes discussion about referrals, assessments and matching, as well as more strategic matters.</p> <p>There is a resource panel for looked after children and a weekly meeting to discuss children awaiting foster placements.</p> <p>The agency decision maker and the professional advisor to the panel both have a quality assurance role in monitoring the practice and decision making within the fostering teams. Agency placements are monitored and there is a 'preferred provider' list.</p> <p>The notifications below relate to the same issue over which the fostering service has liaised appropriately with the CSCI.</p>		
Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:		1
<p>Death of a child placed with foster parents.</p> <p>Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.</p> <p>Serious illness or accident of a child.</p> <p>Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.</p> <p>Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.</p> <p>Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.</p> <p>Serious complaint about a foster parent.</p> <p>Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.</p>	0	
	1	
	0	
	0	
	0	
	0	
	0	
	1	
Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:		0
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:		X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The service is effectively and efficiently managed. Levels of delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and operate as stated.</p> <p>There are proper arrangements for cover in the absence of the Head of Service or the Service Managers. Staff were clear and confident about the arrangements for management cover and confirmed that they felt supported at all times.</p>		

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>The homes of 10 foster carers were visited during the inspection. Without exception they were found to be providing good standards of physical and emotional care to the children and young people placed. They were comfortable, warm and nurturing; children's bedrooms were cosy and well furnished.</p> <p>The assessment of carers includes a detailed health and safety checklist of their home and garden; this is up-dated at the time of a carer's annual review, and when there is any significant change to the home environment e.g. a house move or the building of an extension.</p> <p>The foster carers handbook includes some health and safety guidance; issues are also discussed during preparation training.</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?	4
<p>The service is committed to providing services that recognise and celebrate diversity. The training of foster carers promotes understanding of and respect for, difference.</p> <p>Last year the service completed a race equality impact assessment; this resulted in an action plan part of which was the creation of the new post of recruitment and publicity officer for black and minority ethnic (BME) carers to develop links with BME communities in the locality with a view to improving the recruitment of BME carers. A new policy has recently been produced on the placement of black and minority ethnic children. A resource pack for foster carers of children who are trans-racially placed was nearing publication at the time of the inspection.</p> <p>There is a support group for gay and lesbian foster carers.</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
<p>The fostering service works hard to achieve suitable matches between the skills and abilities of foster carers, and the needs of children awaiting placement. The recruitment strategy has been successful in increasing the number, and thereby the choice, of possible carers although there are still shortages in specific areas e.g. for older teenage boys.</p> <p>The initial referral form that is completed each time a child or young person needs a placement addresses matching considerations. There is a weekly 'children awaiting placement' meeting that ensures thoughtful discussion of placement needs for those young people that do not require an immediate emergency placement.</p> <p>Towards the end of 2004 an audit of placement stability was undertaken. This was helpful in considering possible reasons for placement breakdown and has led to some recommendations for improvement in relation to supporting the stability of placements.</p>		

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
<p>Foster carers receive training in child protection including safe caring practices. Since the last inspection a Safe Caring Policy Agreement form has been introduced. This is used to specify a foster carer's 'house rules' in relation to caring for a named child in areas including dress codes, showing affection, and access to bedrooms. Although some carers commented that they had been initially sceptical about the form, in practice they had found it useful in clarifying their thinking around some basic issues related to the day-to-day care of some one else's child.</p> <p>The service provides carers with clear guidance about discipline and the use of appropriate sanctions.</p> <p>Allegations of abuse and standards of care within foster homes are collated and monitored by senior managers.</p> <p>Bullying is addressed in the foster carers handbook and in the children's guides. Several children and young people were met with as part of the inspection but the total number was not sufficient to provide a percentage figure in relation to bullying, although it was not raised as a concern by any of the young people met with.</p> <p>Foster carers are provided with written guidance about children missing from home, informed by the joint protocol between Brighton and Hove and Sussex Police.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)		
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The fostering service is committed to supporting contact between children and young people who are fostered and their birth families. Contact is one of the considerations in the matching process between carers and children; it is also addressed in the foster carer preparation training.</p> <p>In practice contact arrangements are often prescribed (or prohibited) by court order and foster carers are supported to understand and work within any imposed legal framework. Carers met with understood the importance for young people of maintaining contact and demonstrated sensitivity in their wish to support any such arrangements both practically and emotionally.</p> <p>The maintenance of contact between children and their birth parents is a particularly significant aspect of the concurrency work within the service, that inspectors found to be managed with skill and sensitivity.</p>		

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
<p>Brighton and Hove has a well established children's rights service, about which fostered children are informed. They are also given clear information about how to make complaints. Staff within the service showed an appreciation of the value and importance of securing children's involvement and in obtaining their views. They have completed 'Total Respect' training that promotes understanding of the importance of children's rights.</p> <p>Young people in foster care have been involved in delivering training to prospective carers. In addition to established feedback processes, young people are now able to make comments and raise issues about fostering via the fostering service's new website.</p>		

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 robust approach to identifying and addressing the health needs of young people in foster care. There is a nurse consultant for looked after children who completes a health plan for all children placed by the service. The post holder also provides training for foster carers and sits on the fostering panels.

The nurse consultant works closely with the medical officer, who comments on the health reports of all applicants for fostering and is also involved in foster carer training.

There is a 'fast track' referral process to the local CAMHS team for fostered children. This not only ensures a timely response, but also means children are seen by professionals who have an understanding of the issues faced by looked after children.

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 is an education project for looked after children that includes children within the fostering service. The development officer for the education of looked after children sits on the fostering panel, provides training and advice for staff and carers and has a lead role in advocating for the needs of looked after children within the education service.

Since the last inspection work has been completed to devise a new personal education plan format for looked after children; this was to be implemented shortly after the inspection.

Concern about the impact on foster placements of children excluded from school was expressed by staff and carers. The placement support team within the fostering service provides valuable support in such circumstances; the education project is able to provide some home tutoring. Inspectors heard several examples of creative packages of support for individual children. Alongside this there was also some expression of frustration from staff and carers that educational support for children excluded could be slow to put in place and be limited in amount.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The foster carer handbook includes the service's policy on preparing young people for adult living. There are good links with the leaving care team, supported by the team's manager being a member of the fostering panel. The change of key worker responsibility to the leaving care team was reported to now take place at 15 years rather than 16; this was considered to better support a smooth transition and minimise the number of changes facing young people during their sixteenth year.

Carers met with who were looking after older young people reported feeling involved in the development of Pathway Plans and in supporting young peoples' transition into 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?	0
<p>Standard not assessed.</p> <p>Recruitment records were not examined during this inspection. It is understood that Brighton and Hove operates a recruitment policy that includes CRB checks and references; the implementation of this was not evaluated during the course of this inspection.</p>		
Total number of staff of the agency:	66	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:
		3

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
<p>As stated previously, the service has a clear management structure within which responsibilities and lines of accountability are well understood.</p> <p>There is a willingness to review and evaluate the way in which the service is organised in order to deliver the best possible outcomes as evidenced by the recent merging of the placement support service and the special placement team.</p> <p>All operational staff of the service are sited within the same building; this supports integration and cohesion of service delivery.</p> <p>The use of IFAs is monitored by a senior manager outside of the fostering service; there is a preferred provider list.</p> <p>Some joint training has taken place between supervising social workers, children's social workers and foster carers; the focus of this was developing partnership working to support foster placements.</p> <p>The administrative support within the service was found to be helpful and efficient.</p>		

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
<p>Staffing within the fostering service has been stable over the previous year. The three departures noted under standard 15 relate to administrative staff. The teams within the service are experienced and skilled in their specialist areas. Workloads are busy; a caseload weighting system is used. Freelance workers are used to undertake some foster carer assessments; this avoids prospective carers experiencing undue delay. There was some discussion at the foster panel attended about the processes for monitoring and quality controlling the work of these staff; this is something that the panel intend to enquire about further.</p> <p>There is a recruitment strategy for foster carers which is being increasingly targeted towards the recruitment of carers for young people for whom there has historically been a shortage of in-house carers e.g. older teenage boys.</p> <p>Foster carer assessments are detailed and comprehensive. The competency based assessment format is used for 'mainstream' fostering and the BAAF Form F for permanence and for family and friends assessments. Practice managers carry out a 'second opinion' visit to all prospective carers.</p> <p>The professional advisor fulfils a useful quality assurance role by examining all reports and identifying any gaps or queries so that these can be clarified before they are presented to panel.</p>		

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
<p>No shortfalls were identified in employment practices in relation to staff or to foster carers. Carers receive regular supervision in accordance with prescribed timescales together with ongoing regular telephone contact from supervising social workers. Carers receive copies of their supervision reports.</p> <p>Out of hours support is provided to carers by the fostering service.</p> <p>There are whistle blowing procedures in place for staff and carers.</p> <p>There is a comprehensive health and safety policy with relevant information provided to carers in the foster carers handbook.</p>		

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
<p>There is a comprehensive programme of training available to staff and to carers. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake professional post qualification training, as well as completing relevant short courses. A performance appraisal system is used to formally review staff development and training needs.</p> <p>The training programme for carers has been further developed since the last inspection; some areas of training are compulsory and attendance is monitored through the annual review process. Looked after young people have been involved in delivering some of the preparation training. An NVQ programme for foster carers is being commenced from April 2005.</p> <p>There is an induction pack for new carers; they are also invited to attend a coffee morning at the fostering service offices, providing an opportunity to meet staff and other new carers.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>Staff reported feeling well supported by managers and by peers. Staff have written job descriptions and were clear about their roles and responsibilities. They receive regular, recorded supervision and appraisal.</p> <p>There is comprehensive policy and procedural guidance to underpin and inform practice. Staff meetings are held; there is a whole service team day once a year.</p>		

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
<p>Carers who met with inspectors reported that they felt well supported by the fostering service; this was also the majority view in the written questionnaires completed by carers for the inspection.</p> <p>In 2004 the newly established Foster Care Association in Brighton and Hove conducted a telephone survey of local foster carers. Feedback included comments that carers did not feel sufficiently valued by the service and that respite arrangements, while appreciated, could be better organised. The service is looking at how best to respond to the issues raised in the survey, and has already begun to progress some of the suggestions made e.g. the development of a 'buddy' system for carers.</p> <p>Established support arrangements centre around the services offered by the placement support team. Carers who had benefited from this spoke highly of the team, indicating that their input had often been essential in maintaining placements through times of extreme difficulty, that would in all probability have broken down without the intervention of the team. There is an out of hours service staffed by fostering employees. Carers valued this and appreciated being able to discuss issues with staff who were familiar with fostering, rather than having to go through the generic out of hours service.</p>		

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
<p>Carers receive regular, recorded visits from their supervising social workers.</p> <p>There is an extremely comprehensive foster carers handbook that is regularly reviewed and up-dated with new information. All carers are required to sign a foster carers agreement that, together with the handbook, makes clear what is expected of them particularly in key areas such as discipline and child protection.</p> <p>Carers are given relevant information about complaints, standards of care enquires and child protection.</p> <p>Unannounced visits to carers take place at least once a year; some staff appear more comfortable in making these visits than others. Managers recognise that this is still a relatively new area of practice the purpose and value of which needs to be consistently reinforced through supervision, so that all staff become equally at ease with this aspect of their role.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

As previously noted, there is a strategy and a comprehensive training programme to develop carers. One of the practice managers has lead responsibility for carers' training and the post holder works closely with the organisation's Learning and Development Officer.

The training programme includes mandatory pre-approval (preparatory) training and induction. Payment of foster carers' fees is linked to the expectation that they will attend mandatory training. Short courses and workshops cover areas including child protection, anti-discriminatory practice, and the health and education needs of looked after children.

There is a programme of support and activities for foster carers' own children; these young people also have a page on the fostering service's website.

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 service maintains individual files for each carer and for each child that they are looking after; there is also a duty module for each child containing referral and matching information. Children’s main social work files are retained by the field work service. Files held by the fostering service were found to be well organised and to contain relevant and up-to-date information. Carers who met with inspectors and/or completed a questionnaire commented that, aside from emergency placements, they were usually provided with sufficient information about children being placed. There was a perception from some carers that on occasion field social workers did not always provide full information about children to the fostering service, although this appeared to be less of an issue than in the past. Foster carers’ preparation and training includes guidance about record keeping.

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
<p>The fostering service has good administrative systems. Records are well organised and securely stored.</p> <p>The majority of file entries are word processed.</p> <p>Managers carry out a quarterly audit of a sample of foster carers files held by supervising social workers; all files are examined through this process at least once every twelve months.</p> <p>The figures below for weekly payments reflect the standard payments to mainstream carers and do not include the allowances paid to family and friends carers or those on the special placement scheme.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			182
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			123
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			125
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			19
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			9
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	242.40	Maximum £	333.70

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 premises used by the fostering service are adequate. It is positive that all staff work together from the same base; this supports the delivery of an integrated and accessible service. However, there is no available room within current premises to support any expansion of the service and, although staff make good use of available space, there are times and areas when conditions are cramped.

There is space to ensure that administrative arrangements are properly conducted and to maintain confidentiality and security of records.

Rooms are available for meetings, supervised contact, and individual work with children and young people. The basement area used by the concurrency team for supervised contact and work with birth parents would particularly benefit from refurbishment and the provision of additional space so that facilities are not shared with other users of the building.

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?	
<p>The fostering service is properly resourced to fulfil its statement of purpose and function. The service manager has been creative and resourceful in identifying and accessing any additional funding sources that might be available e.g. through 'one off' grants.</p>	3	3

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?	
<p>The accommodation service is subject to the proper local government systems for financial audit and monitoring. Operational managers meet with their counterparts in financial services to monitor and review the budget on a regular basis.</p>	3	3

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

Foster carer allowances were comprehensively reviewed in 2003, and a new payment scheme introduced. Payments incorporate a basic allowance plus a fee element that recognises the skills and knowledge of experienced carers, together with the additional challenges and resources required in looking after a child or young person with specific needs.

Payment rates are reviewed annually.

None of the carers met with during the inspection raised any issues or concerns about either the levels of allowance, or the arrangements for payment.

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
<p>The fostering service shares a joint panel with the Barnardo's Link Plus scheme (responsible for the majority of short-term break placements of disabled children and young people). An independent person is employed to chair both the fostering and the permanence panels. Composition of the fostering panel at the time of the inspection met the requirements of the statutory regulations.</p> <p>The panel is attended and supported by a professional advisor part of whose role is to 'quality assure' assessments being presented.</p> <p>The panel observed by the lead inspector was well organised and administered. Panel members were clearly well prepared; assessment reports were rigorously scrutinised and questions asked about applicants were appropriately probing. The role of panel was carefully explained to applicants at the outset; recommendations and feedback were sensitively and thoughtfully conveyed.</p> <p>In the waiting area prior to attending panel a laminated sheet is made available with photographs and pen pictures of members, together with an information booklet about the panel process.</p> <p>Persons attending panel are asked to complete a feedback sheet; one example of a change made because of this feedback has been the re-arrangement of the seating arrangements so that attendees sit in a more central position at the table and are not isolated at a far end. A system for the appraisal of panel members has been recently introduced; this includes self-evaluation plus input from the panel chair and the professional advisor.</p> <p>Panel members confirmed that they have received relevant training and guidance, for example in relation to trans-racial placements, and family and friends as carers.</p>		

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?	
<p>This standard was not assessed.</p> <p>The Brighton and Hove fostering service has a very small number of respite carers; the overwhelming majority of short-term breaks for children and young people with disabilities are provided by the Barnardo's Link Plus service that is the subject of a separate inspection.</p> <p>The special placement scheme provides respite to foster carers employed by the Brighton and Hove service, as part of the enhanced support provided to these placements.</p>	0	

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?	3
<p>At the last inspection arrangements for family and friends as carers were assessed as needing further development.</p> <p>The service has worked hard to improve this area. Practice is now underpinned by a written family and friends policy; this was developed by a working group that included family and friends carers. Panel members have received guidance on family and friends assessments including evaluating the significance of health and CRB references.</p> <p>A further positive change has been that from December 2004 the fostering service took over the supervising social work role of family and friends carers that had been held within fieldwork teams. Additionally, a dedicated (part-time) practice manager has been appointed to oversee this work, whereas it had previously been part of the role of the concurrency team manager.</p> <p>There is a support group for family and friends carers.</p>		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

[Empty box for Lay Assessor's Summary]

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 28th February – 4th March & 16th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

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 27th April 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

REGULATIONS

Record of Compliance found on inspection with
The Fostering Services Regulations 2002

This record does not form part of the public inspection report, but is required for CSCI monitoring purposes.

	REGULATION	Met (Yes/No /NA)
3	Statement of purpose and children's guide.	NA
4	Review of statement of purpose and children's guide.	NA
5	Fostering agency - fitness of provider.	NA
6	Fostering agency - appointment of manager.	NA
7	Fostering agency - fitness of manager.	NA
8	Registered person - general requirements.	NA
9	Notification of offences.	NA
10	Local authority fostering service – manager.	NA
11	Independent fostering agencies – duty to secure welfare.	NA
12	Arrangements for the protection of children.	NA
13	Behaviour management and absence from foster parent's home.	NA
14	Duty to promote contact.	NA
15	Health of children placed with foster parents.	NA
16	Education, employment and leisure activities.	NA
17	Support, training and information for foster parents.	NA

	REGULATION	Met (Yes/No /NA)
18	Independent fostering agencies - complaints and representations.	NA
19	Staffing of fostering service.	NA
20	Fitness of workers.	NA
21	Employment of staff.	NA
22	Records with respect to fostering services.	NA
23	Fitness of premises.	NA
24	Establishment of fostering panel.	NA
25	Meetings of fostering panel.	NA
26	Functions of fostering panel.	NA
27	Assessment of prospective foster parents.	NA
28	Approval of foster parents.	NA
29	Reviews and terminations of approval.	NA
30	Case records relating to foster parents and others.	NA
31	Register of foster parents.	NA
32	Retention and confidentiality of records.	NA
33	General duty of responsible authority.	NA
34	Making of placements.	NA
35	Supervision of placements.	NA
36	Termination of placements.	NA
37	Short-term placements.	NA
38	Emergency and immediate placements by local authorities.	NA
39	Placements outside England.	NA
40	Independent fostering agencies – discharge of local authority functions.	NA

	REGULATION	Met (Yes/No /NA)
41	Local authority visits to children placed by voluntary organisations.	NA
42	Review of quality of care.	NA
43	Notifiable events.	NA
44	Financial position.	NA
45	Notice of absence.	NA
46	Notice of changes.	NA

APPENDIX 3

FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

2004 – 2005

BRIGHTON & HOVE FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2004 – 2005

1. Introduction

1.1 This report covers the period from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005. This report briefly summarises the work of the panel over this period including any policy and practice matters. The panel operates as a joint Brighton & Hove and Barnardo's panel.

2. Composition of the Panel

2.1 The following members have left the panel during the year:

Wayne Sampson, Barnardo's officer, vice chair
Coun, Dee Simpson, Brighton & Hove elected member
Gordon Oliver, Brighton & Hove council officer, fostering

2.2 New members to panel during this period are:

Michelle Lee-Izu, Barnardo's officer
Dermot Anketell, Brighton & Hove council officer, fostering
Councillor Juliet McCaffery, Brighton & Hove elected member

2.3 The current panel membership is:

- Gill Harris, Independent Chair
- Vanessa Wright, independent member, health, Vice-Chair
- Coun Juliet McCaffery, Brighton & Hove elected member
- Toni Sullivan, independent member, ex service user
- Susan Clements, independent member, foster carer
- Dermot Anketell, Brighton & Hove council officer, fostering
- Sarah Daly, Brighton & Hove council officer, childcare
- Sue Darby, Brighton & Hove council officer, education
- Ivan Sharpe, Barnardo's officer, fostering
- Caroline Down, Barnardo's officer, childcare
- Michelle Lee-Izu, Barnardo's officer

2.4 The panel meets the requirements of the Fostering Regulations and has the maximum membership allowed for a joint panel of eleven. The panel unfortunately continues to remain imbalanced in respect of gender and particularly race and ethnicity. It was not possible to address this fully in the recruitment of new panel members.

2.5 Brighton & Hove continues to pay an expenses fee for independent members to attend.

2.6 The professional adviser to the panel for the year has been Adrian Briggs.

2.7 Sam Duly has been the panel administrator for the whole of this period.

2.8 There is a requirement for panel members of attendance at 75% of meetings over the year. Two members have been unable to meet this requirement fully, falling just short of it. A third member was unable to make this commitment due to work pressure and therefore resigned.

2.9 An annual appraisal scheme has been introduced for panel members; all members have now completed this. This will inform the professional adviser and the chair of the individual and collective training needs of the panel.

2.10 The chair's role and performance is evaluated each year via a meeting with the professional adviser and the Head of Service with feedback from panel members and relevant managers within the Department.

3. Work of the Panel

3.1 The panel continues to meet on a monthly basis. It has met on thirteen occasions during this period; an extra panel was needed in October due to the pressure of work. Eleven of the panels have been full day meetings and two have been half days. This is due primarily to the ongoing increase in work from the recruitment campaign by Brighton & Hove Fostering Service.

3.2 The panel has also met for a training day on 21.1.05 in relation to the placement needs of black and minority ethnic children. This has been the only training that panel has undertaken during this period. It has not undertaken any training with the teams.

3.3 During this period the panel dealt with and made recommendations on **70** case presentations:

Brighton & Hove: 55 cases
Barnardo's Link Plus: 15 cases

This is very similar to panel's workload for the previous year (72 cases).

3.4 The panel recommended the approval of **25** new carers:

17 short term foster carers
7 Link Plus carers
1 supported lodgings carer

The number of new approved short term foster carers has again increased, this year by over 30% on last year's figures. The Link Plus figures for new approvals are up by over 100%.

3.5 The panel has also recommended interim approval for **7** Family & Friends carers, an increase of 75% on last year.

3.6 The panel has dealt with annual reviews for **20** carers:

17 short term foster carers
1 supported lodgings carer

2 Link Plus carers

3.7 The panel recommended the termination of approval of **1** short term foster carer. This is the same as last year's figure.

3.8 There have been resignations of **10** carers:
4 short term foster carers
6 Link Plus carers

This is the same as last year's figures for Brighton & Hove and double the figure for Barnardo's Link Plus.

3.9 Full details of the work presented to the panel over this period can be found in the attached spread-sheet/chart.

3.10 The Agency Decision Makers have endorsed all of the panel's recommendations.

3.11 The panel has also been used to offer consultation and guidance in respect of problematic cases before a formal presentation.

4. Functioning of the Panel

4.1 The format and process of the panel meetings, including the agreed structure for the discussion of the paperwork, remains largely as outlined in last year's annual report. There has been no reason to change it significantly as it appears to work well.

4.2 The attendance of applicants and foster carers for their approval and reviews is now established and panel members consider that this aspect of panel works well generally. Informal and formal feedback from applicants and foster carers indicates that they too value being included as fully as possible in the panel process.

4.3 When there has been information that the panel needed to discuss in confidence with the workers or where there were questions around the assessment or reviewing process itself rather than in relation to the applicants or foster carers, then panel has seen the workers alone.

4.4 There has not been an opportunity for the vice chair to chair a panel meeting during the year. This is something that will need to be considered for the future.

4.5 There has continued to be an issue of timing with panel running over time on some occasions, although this is improved from the previous year. This has been monitored by the chair and professional adviser. There appears to have been two main reasons for this:

1. Inadequate reports requiring panel to spend more time to get the necessary information to make a safe recommendation.
2. Timings of panel not being adequate for a full discussion.

4.6 In relation to the first the panel has had discussions with the managers from both Brighton & Hove Fostering Service and Barnardo's Link Plus to agree common base lines for assessments and reviews re quality and type of information required and the tightening of the quality control of paperwork before its presentation to panel.

4.7 In respect of the second the panel reviewed its timings for cases last year and added extra time. However it is fair to say that the panel still struggles with dealing with the work in the time allocated particularly when there are difficult and sensitive issues to discuss. The attendance of applicants and foster carers has been a very positive development but it does mean that the process takes longer. This will continue to be monitored to identify whether either panel processes need to be tighter or extra time needs to be added.

4.8 Feedback forms are given to all social workers, applicants, and foster carers attending the panel to ensure that the panel is aware of their experiences and views. The panel has received 38 feed-back forms for this period; 22 from applicants/foster carers and 16 from social work staff. Panel received copies of these on a monthly basis and was therefore able to look at any changes that needed to be made to the way that it operated. For example, following the feed-back from applicants and foster carers the panel changed its seating arrangements. This has met with positive approval.

4.9 In general the feed-back has been positive. The main concern expressed by applicants and foster carers attending is the number of people on panel and how over-whelming this can feel on walking into the room. Panel is very aware of this and therefore makes a considerable effort to ensure that they are welcomed and made to feel as relaxed as realistically possible in a formal meeting. Applicants and foster carers also have information available to them in respect of panel members and the Agency Decision Makers in the waiting room, a booklet sent to them re attending panel and discussions with their assessing social worker or supervising social worker to prepare them for attending panel.

4.10 There has been one notable exception to the positive feed-back received by panel which was from a staff member who was very critical of the panel process and reported a very negative experience at panel. Whilst panel members did not agree with a number of the comments made they took time to look at the process and how things could be done differently. This resulted in an agreed procedure for the deferment of cases at panel.

4.11 The panel meets on a regular basis with the team manager and practice managers for the fostering service in Brighton & Hove to discuss issues and developments and this is seen by the panel as very helpful. Panel also meets twice a year with the Head of Service and once a year with the Agency Decision Makers for Brighton & Hove and Barnardo's Link Plus. Panel members value this opportunity for discussion and consider it contributes to open and effective communication with both agencies.

4.12 The chair continues to complete a feed-back form for the Brighton & Hove Agency Decision Maker on every case presented to the panel. This arrangement continues to work well and be of value.

4.13 This has been a period of consolidation for panel. The panel is a very confident and competent panel and overall operates in an open and effective manner.

5. Panel Terms of Reference

5.1 The constitution and terms of reference for the panel continues to meet the requirements of the Fostering Regulations and Minimum Fostering Standards.

6. Practice

6.1 In general panel has felt that the work presented to it is of a good standard. However, there have been several occasions when this has not been the case and the panel has highlighted its concerns to the agency decision maker via the professional adviser. This has generally been in respect of assessments of applicants to foster for Brighton & Hove. Panel has also fed back to social workers when assessments and reviews have been completed well.

6.2 In relation to the above a continued concern of the panel is the format and content of The Fostering Network (formerly NFCA) competency based assessments used by Brighton & Hove. Panel continues to find it difficult to get the right information from this format. Despite discussions and amendments to the content of the assessments this remains an area that panel feels needs to be looked at by the agency.

6.3 Black and minority ethnic children are often placed trans-racially and trans culturally in short term placements due to the lack of appropriate carers. Panel is aware that Brighton & Hove is trying to address this in relation to specific targeted recruitment and also training for workers and existing carers regarding these children's placement needs. The panel is looking at the role it needs to play in the approval and review of carers who will offer trans-racial placements and will discuss this with the managers from the service at a future meeting.

6.4 There have been changes during the year as to panel's role in initial interim approval of kinship carers. The number of cases presented to panel during this period was not as high as previously had been expected. However, it is unclear whether this reduced number is representative of the level of work that panel can expect in the future. As the Department continues to develop its policy and practice in relation to kinship care placements panel's role will become clearer.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The panel continues to play an important role in ensuring the provision of a quality fostering service to children.

7.2 The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has recently undertaken an inspection of Brighton & Hove's Fostering Services and observed a panel meeting and

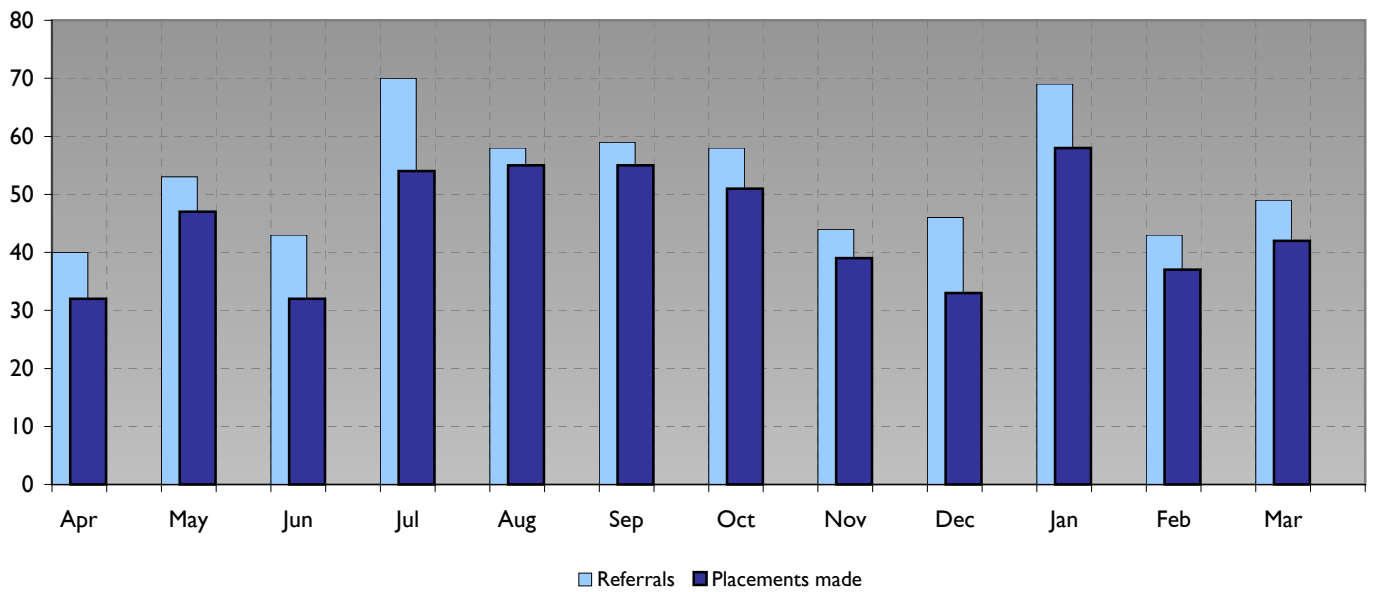
met with the chair as part of this. The feed back, as in the previous year, was a very positive endorsement of the panel's work. The authority will be awarded by CSCI a "four" in respect of its panel work, the highest possible mark, which means that the work of the panel exceeds the requirements of the Regulations and Standards.

Gill Harris
Independent Chair
Brighton & Hove Fostering Panel
10th April 2005

APPENDIX 4

Fostering Service statistics and items considered by Fostering Panel 2004-2005.

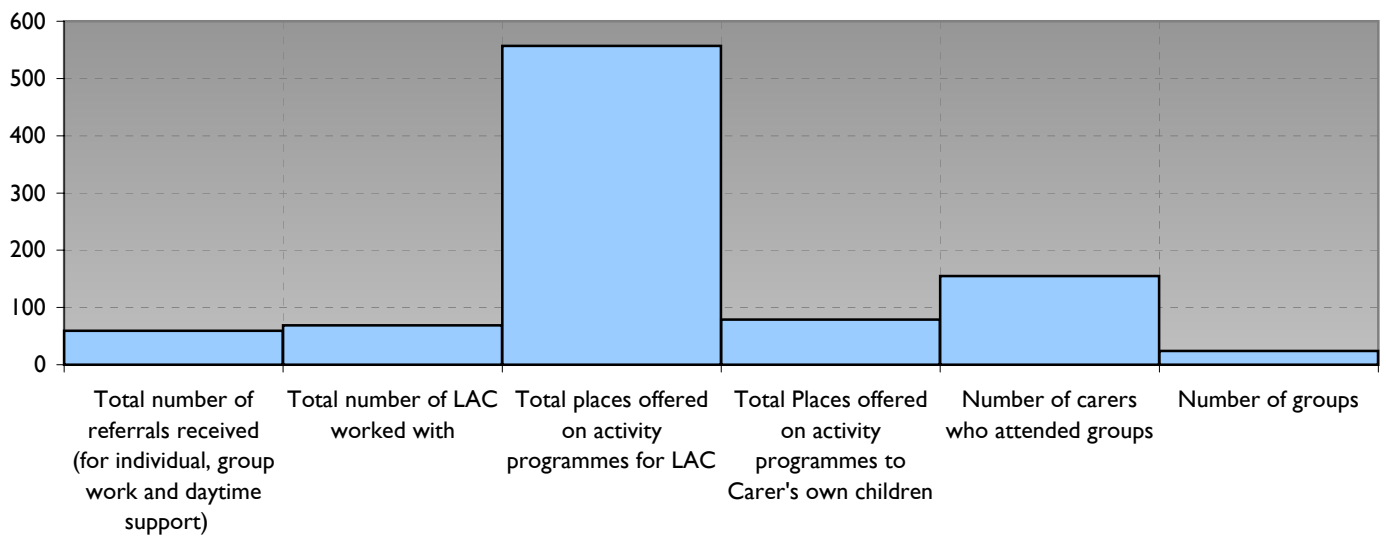
Referrals



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Referrals	40	53	43	70	58	59	58	44	46	69	43	49
Placements made	32	47	32	54	55	55	51	39	33	58	37	42

Not all referrals result in placements. Placements cover new children coming into care, children changing placements and respite care.

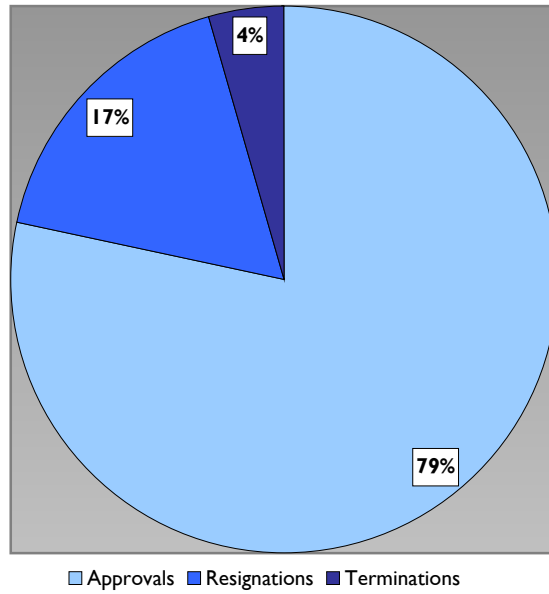
Placement Support Team



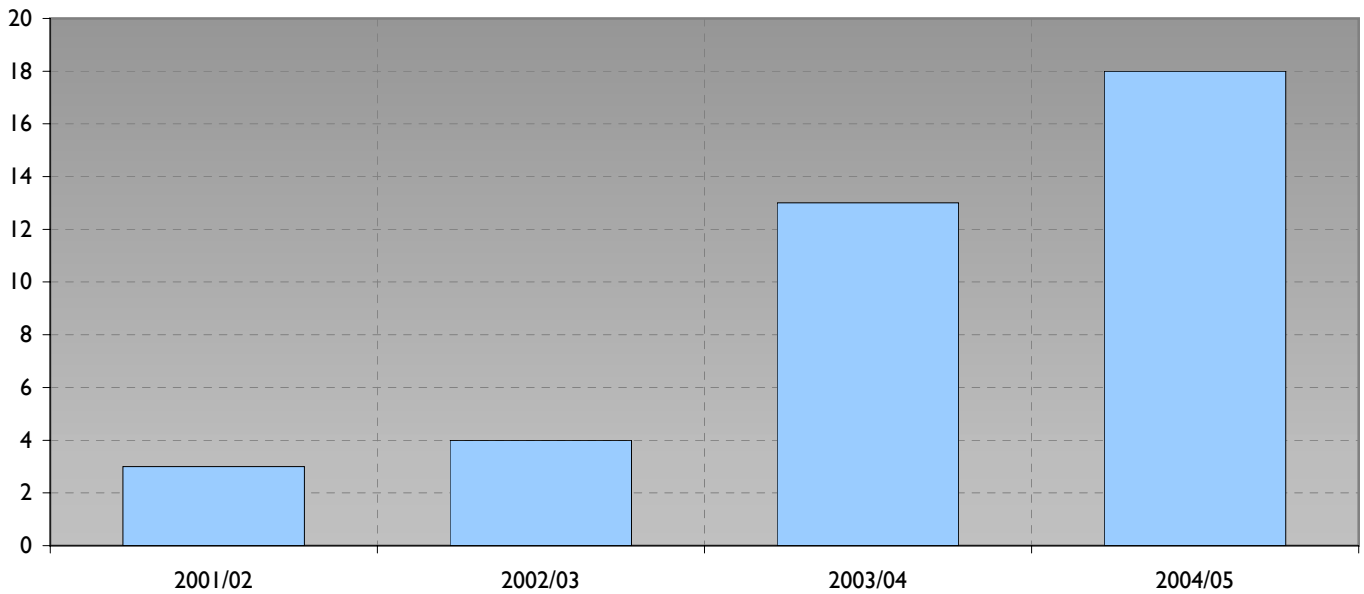
Total number of referrals received (for individual, group work and daytime support)	59
Total number of LAC worked with	69
Total places offered on activity programmes for LAC	557
Total Places offered on activity programmes to Carer's own children	79
Number of carers who attended groups	155
Number of groups	24

Fostering Panel

Approvals, Resignations & Terminations

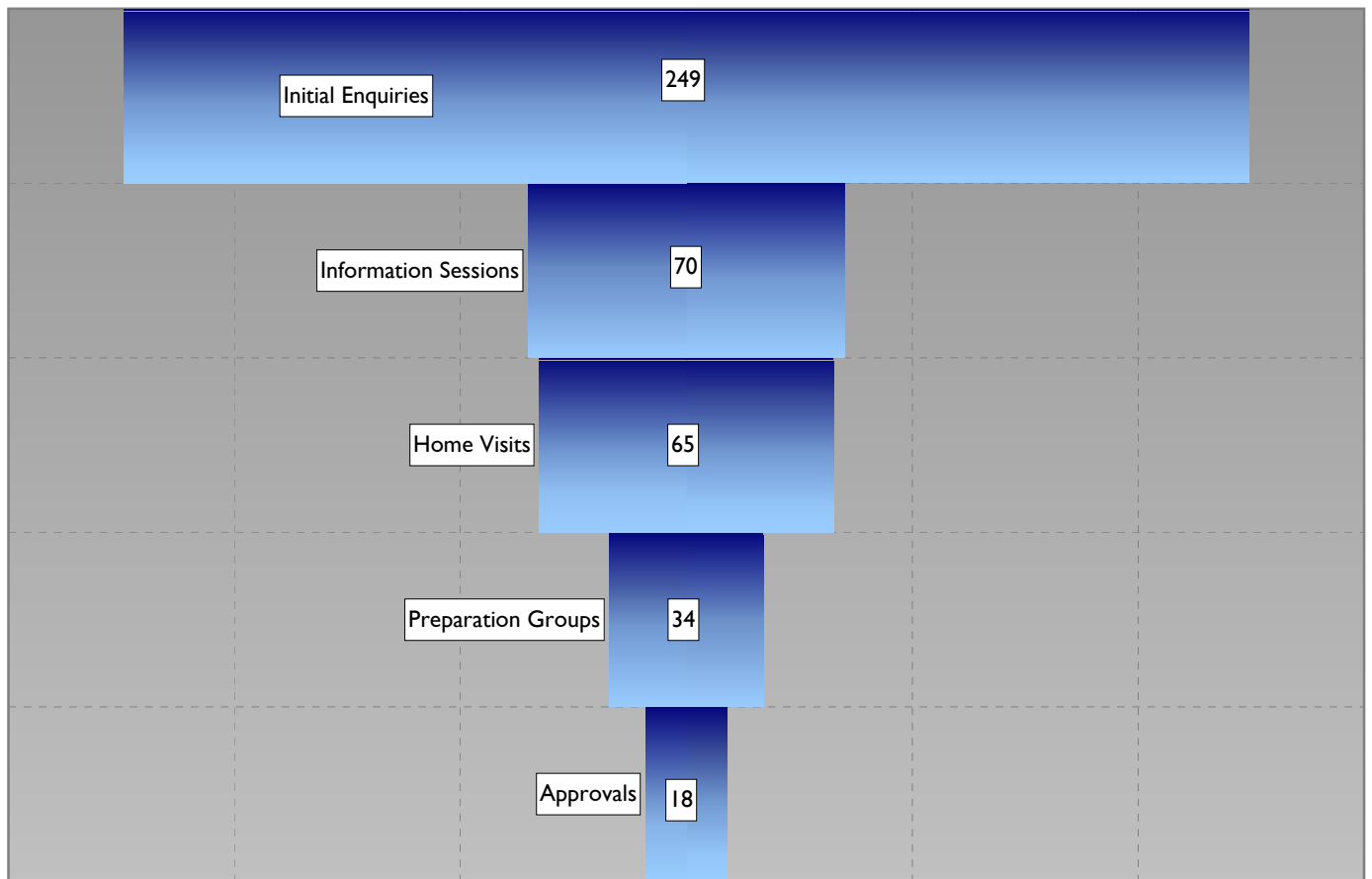


Approvals	18
Resignations	4
Terminations	1



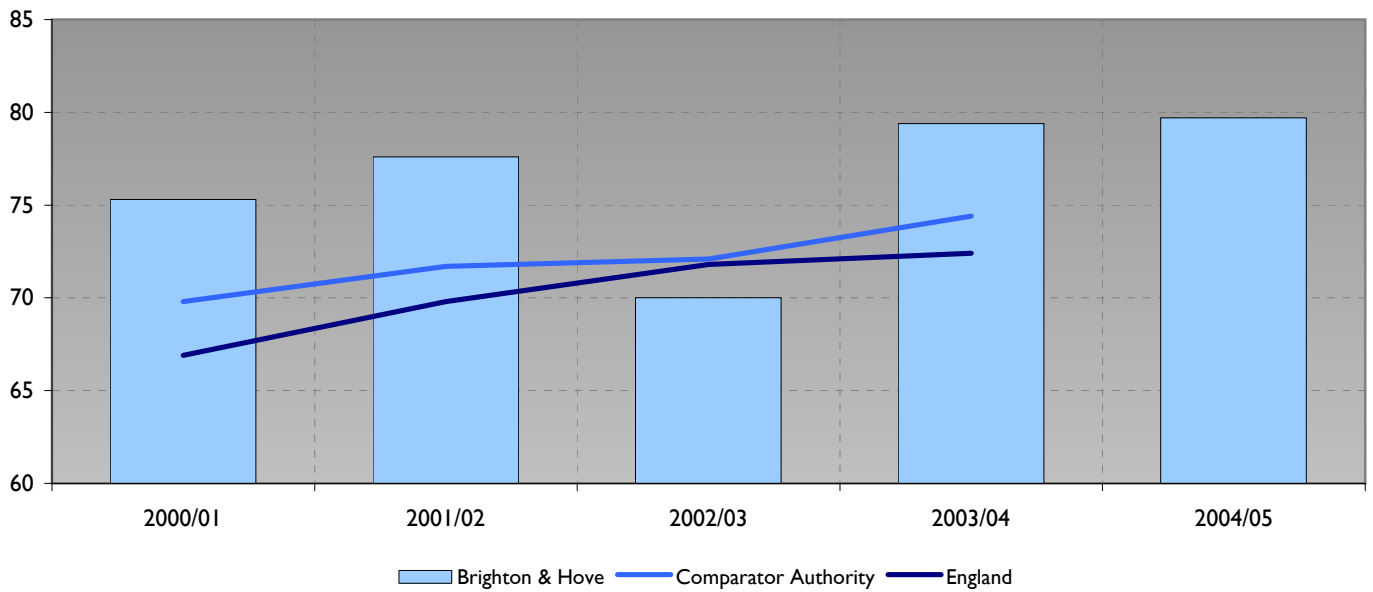
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Approvals	3	4	13	18

Foster Carer Recruitment Activity 2004/05



Indicators

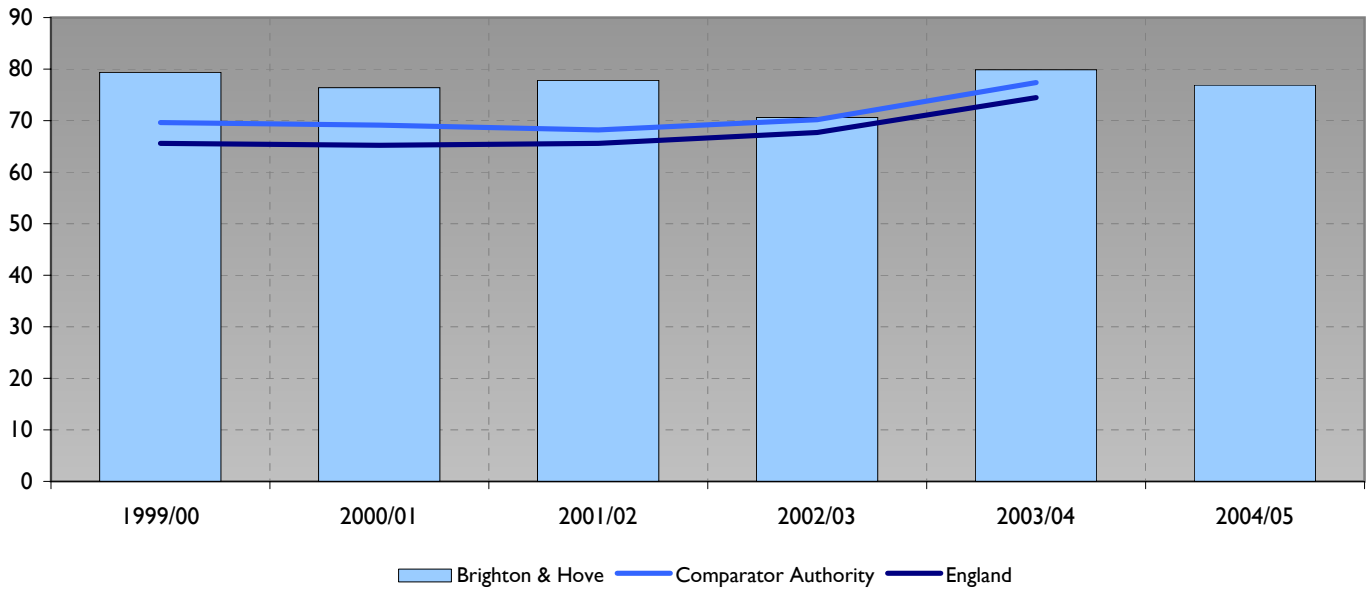
% Of children looked after aged under 10 in foster placements (CHI51)



	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Brighton & Hove	75.3	77.6	70	79.4	79.7
Comparator Authority	69.8	71.7	72.1	74.4	74.4
England	66.9	69.8	71.8	72.4	72.4

Indicators

% Of children looked after in foster placements (CH45)

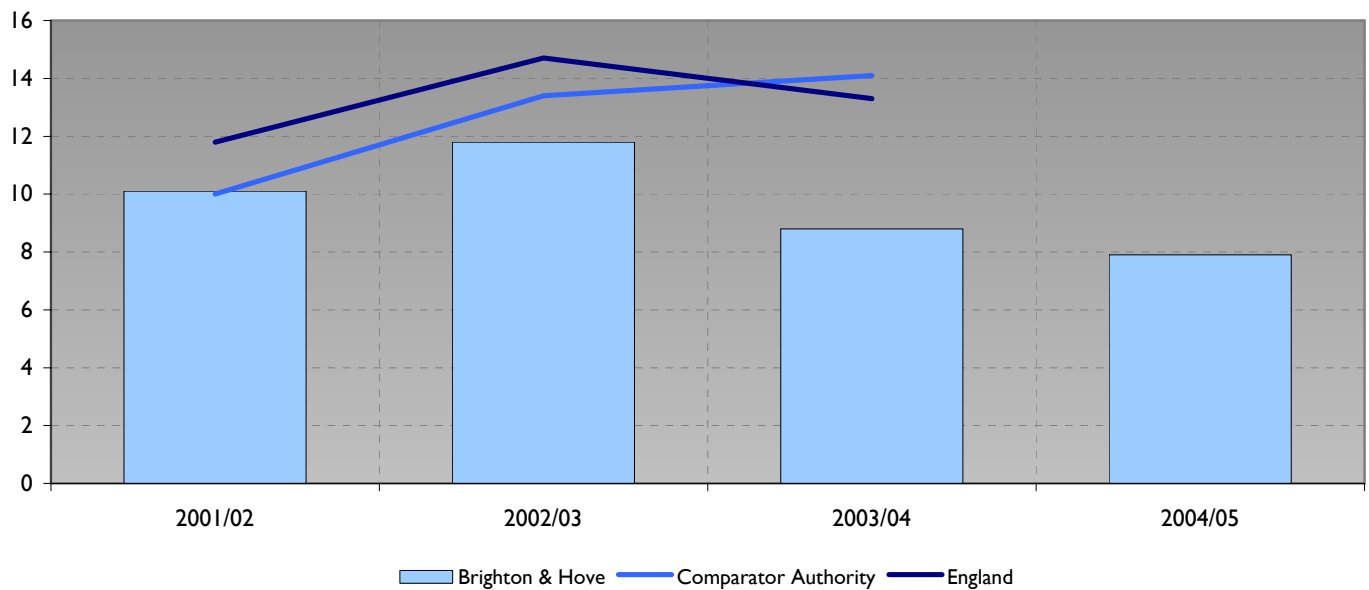


	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Brighton & Hove	79.4	76.4	77.8	70.6	79.9	76.9
Comparator Authority	69.6	69.1	68.2	70.2	77.4	0
England	65.6	65.2	65.6	67.7	74.5	0

Overall % of children looked after in foster placements.

Indicators

% Of children looked after fostered by relatives or friends (DIS1111)

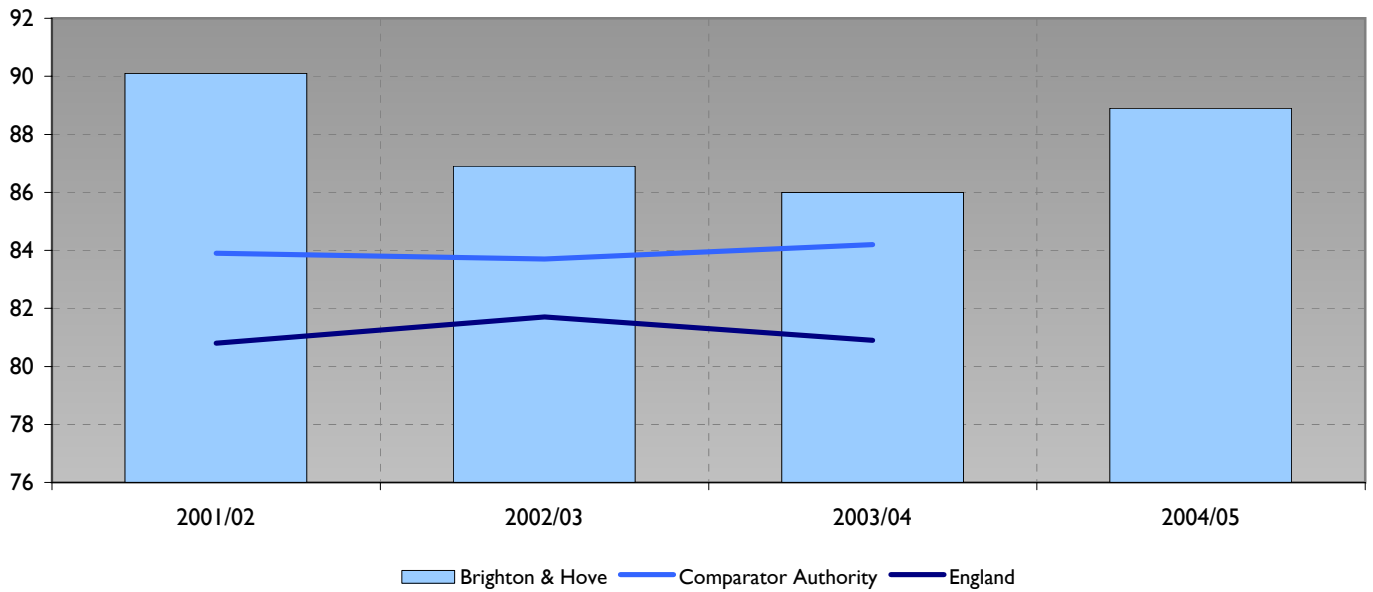


	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Brighton & Hove	10.1	11.8	8.8	7.9
Comparator Authority	10	13.4	14.1	0
England	11.8	14.7	13.3	0

The council also supports family members or friends to care for children who cannot live with their birth parents as an alternative to being in care. When children have to be looked after and are placed with relatives or friends, they are encouraged to apply for Residence Orders and afterwards will continue to receive support.

Indicators

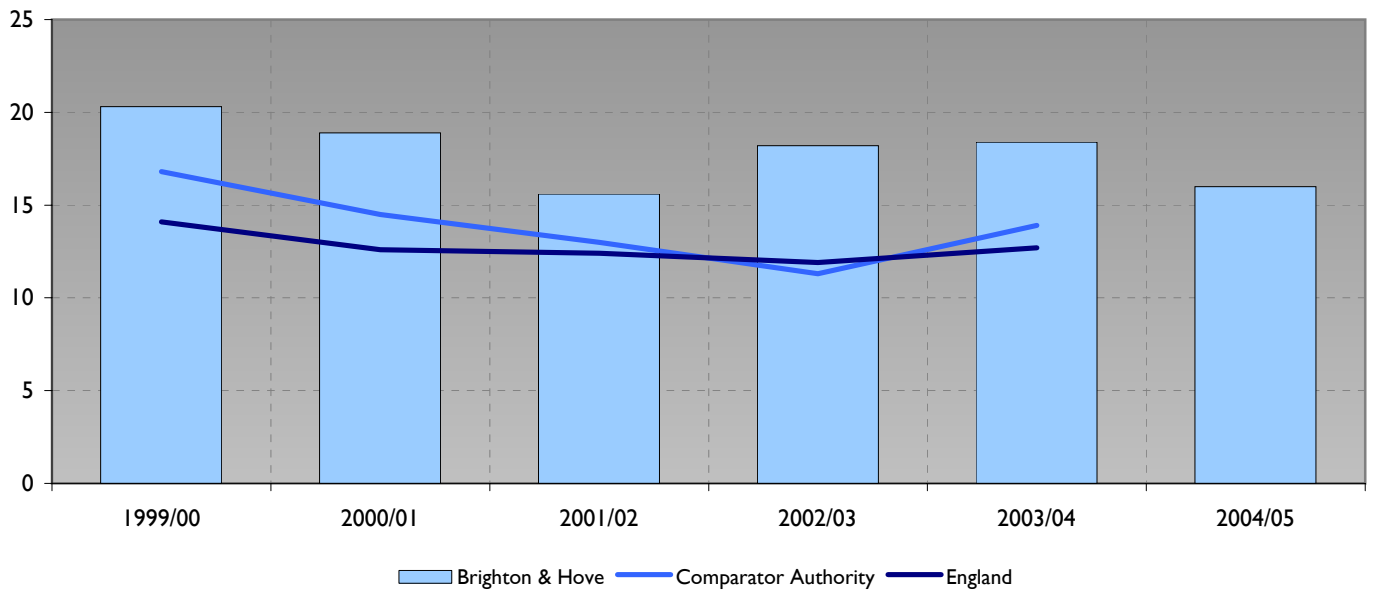
Children looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption (PAF C22)



	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Brighton & Hove	90.1	86.9	86	88.9
Comparator Authority	83.9	83.7	84.2	0
England	80.8	81.7	80.9	0

Indicators

Percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements (PAF B7)



	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Brighton & Hove	20.3	18.9	15.6	18.2	18.4	16
Comparator Authority	16.8	14.5	13	11.3	13.9	0
England	14.1	12.6	12.4	11.9	12.7	0

For children entering care for the first time, some will move around in placements before they settle. A number of children will move for positive reasons or because of placement breakdown.

