

# INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY FOSTERING SERVICE

**Report By: Director of Children's Services**

## Wards Affected

County-wide.

## Purpose

1. To identify action taken by the Children's Services Directorate in response to the requirements and recommendations of the Inspection of Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service (2005) undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

## Financial Implications

2. The immediate response to the report will be contained within the existing budget, although further investment will be required in the service to maintain and improve it.

## Background

3. Herefordshire Fostering Service provides the main source of accommodation for children looked after by the local authority in Herefordshire. At any one time there are around 125 households registered by the Service, and about 170 looked after children aged from birth to 18. In addition, the authority may call on independent fostering agencies (also inspected by CSCI) to provide fostering placements to meet specific needs.
4. Herefordshire has a good record for meeting the needs of looked after children effectively, over 90% within family settings such as foster care. All Fostering agencies are inspected annually against the relevant regulations and the requirements of the National Standards for Fostering. Herefordshire was first inspected in March 2004 and then in February 2005.

## The Inspection process and Report

5. Three inspectors compiled the 2005 report after attending a meeting of the Fostering Panel, reviewing policy documents and case files on foster carers and children, and undertaking visits to a range of individuals and groups over a two-week period. They also circulated a questionnaire to placing social workers, children and foster carers. A total of 123 were returned.
6. The Inspectors were pleased to find that short falls identified in the 2004 inspection report (which was only received in final version in July 2004) had been addressed promptly, with systems reviewed and developed to ensure improvement.
7. In 2004, 31 of the 32 National Standards were Inspected. 15 were met in full, there were minor shortfalls in 12, and 4 were not met. In 2005, all 32 standards were

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from Rebecca Plato, Fostering Team Manager, on 01432 262830

inspected. 28 were met in full and there were minor shortfalls in 4. This significant improvement reflects the work undertaken by staff.

8. The full text of the Inspection report has been forwarded as a separate document to Committee Members and is available to the public on request. Appended to this report is the Action Plan devised by the Fostering Service in response to the Statutory Requirements and Recommendations of the Inspectors. This indicates progress to date. The service will be subject to inspection on an annual basis.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the Committee comment on the actions taken in response to the statutory requirements and recommendations highlighted by the Fostering Services Inspection report.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Full copy of the Inspection Report "Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service".
- Chart indicating the nature and number of foster carer households in Herefordshire.