

Quality Fostering Ltd

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Warren Clarke / Christy Wannop
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	1 January 1900

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Quality Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency based in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. It is recently established with its own fostering panel and provides the full range of foster care services: recruitment, assessment, support, training and review of foster carers. Currently it has the capacity to provide placements for up to six children.

Summary

This is the first inspection of the agency since it was registered in January 2007. The inspection was announced and the findings are derived, among others, from information provided by the registered manager in a pre-inspection questionnaire and a document, also completed by the registered manager, conveying the agency's self-assessment. Account has also been taken of observation of a setting of the fostering panel and interviews with the registered manager, foster carers, and children. Throughout the report children and young people are used interchangeably and the plural is used when it does not strictly apply so that no particular child can be identified. Quality Fostering Ltd will be referred to as the agency throughout the rest of the report. The agency performs well in promoting the children's health and in keeping them safe. There are some procedural deficits that need to be addressed in these two areas, but they are not found to have had any adverse effect on the welfare of the children. There are no concerns about the ways in which the agency supports children's education and promotes their leisure interests. Adequate systems are also in place to facilitate children's contact with their parents and others who are significant to them. The inspectors are satisfied that they are encouraged and provided with opportunities to contribute to decisions that affect them and to comment and indeed influence the way they are being looked after in their foster placements. We judge that the agency provides the children with a good material standards and way of living that does not unfavourably set them apart from other children. However, the guidance that the agency gives foster carers on promoting independence and preparing the children for adulthood needs to be in more detail. The agency has only been in existence for five months and, therefore, does not have many foster carers, staff or children in placement. Currently the agency uses some sessional workers to perform some of its duties and some procedural shortfalls are apparent in these arrangements. This has resulted in some of the requirements set out in the Action section of the report.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children being looked after by the fostering service are assured of having their health promoted and their health care needs attended, but some of the systems and arrangements in place for this need to be strengthened. The fostering service gives due regard to children's health and demonstrates this in a coherent system. However, in practice, certain aspects are defective if the system is to be completely effective and deliver all its intended outcomes. The system that the agency adopts commences with a referral process, which gathers information on children

for whom it is proposed it should look after. This process involves, among other factors, assembling health information to determine whether the agency has the resources to meet each child's needs and as a 'fail safe' should the Looking After Children (LAC) documentation fail to convey all the necessary health information at the time when the placement starts (the LAC documentation is a nationally recognised system of background, assessment and action records for children looked after by local authorities). The area in which the system fails, in practice, is that the section of the document that authorises the foster carer to arrange medical care and treatment for children was left unsigned. Whilst foster carers have some health information crucial aspects of the children's health history such as immunisation and whether they have any allergies is missing. It is also noted that though there is apparent gap in particular foster carers' knowledge and experience in caring for children with particular conditions, the process of matching the children to the foster carers does not set out what compensatory measures are to be introduced to fill the gap. Against the background outlined above, foster carers are nevertheless working effectively to promote children's health and make appropriate responses to their health care needs. For example, they are seen to make primary care arrangements for the children, registering them with local GPs, dental and optical services. Carers in some instances provide accounts suggesting that they have the same motivation to maintain the health of the children placed with them as they do for their own children and advocate for them accordingly. Where it is necessary, foster carers are seen to work closely and effectively with other health care professionals to meet children's health care needs as confirmed by the children's records. The agency monitors the children's health by requiring foster carers to keep daily records and provide monthly summaries of each child's care and experience. This information is used by the agency in the supervision and support of the carers to sustain their performance in caring for the children's health. Despite the deficits mentioned above, the children who were seen in their foster placement were clean, comfortable and in good physical health. The children had no concerns about their physical health and where they give a view it is of content with the how their health care is being attended.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety and the protection of children from abuse and neglect is addressed by a range of policies, procedures and practices that the agency has put in place. As a first stage in assuring the protection of the children in the agency's care, it is noted that the persons operating and managing the agency have been vetted for their suitability to be involved in the care of children. This information comes from a successful registration process, which was concluded in January 2007. The manager declares that since then there has been no change in their circumstances to cast any doubt over their continuing suitability. A similar situation is found in relation to the suitability of the foster carers and their households. There is evidence to confirm that potential foster carers and their households are subject to a rigorous assessment process to establish their suitability to look after children and young people and that they provide a safe and acceptable home environment for so doing. In this connection, the agency adopts the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) nationally recognised assessment framework. Foster carers who have been approved by the agency confirm that they had to undergo a rigorous assessment including a health and safety audit of their homes. It is noted that the assessment takes account of potential risk that pets, such as dogs, might pose to any child or young person who might be placed with the carers. Only one issue, the manager reports, is still outstanding from the suitability vetting of persons in the foster carers household and the inspectors are satisfied with the approach that is being taken to resolve it. The households

seen during the inspection were acceptable. They have all the required amenities and are currently able to provide each child with his or her own bedroom. It is noted that in some instances where foster carers have been approved and refurbishment of their homes is underway, it is clearly understood that no child will be placed in those homes until the refurbishment is completed. Since it is necessary for foster carers to use their own vehicles to transport the children placed with them, the agency provides documentary evidence of establishing that the foster carers' vehicles are safe, licensed for use and are adequately insured. Although the agency has only been operating for a relatively short time with recently approved foster carers, it nevertheless demonstrates that it has an acceptable system for monitoring the carers performance and suitability on an ongoing basis and for conducting their annual review to ensure that at all times their suitability, and the safety of their households, are not in doubt. Furthermore, if there are any doubts these can be addressed in a timely fashion. A system - the matching process - is employed by the agency to ensure that foster carers have the skills, experience and physical resources to care for particular children taking account of their circumstances, needs and interests. The system of matching encompasses initial referral of children by their social workers for which the agency has produced a referral form intended to capture the essential details about the children. A matching matrix, designed to analyse the children's requirements along the lines of the five Every Child Matters outcomes (these form the headings for the main text of this report), is used to align the needs profile of particular children with the resources of the foster carers. In principle, this approach is judged to be sound though in practice some aspects need honing. That is, some matches are not ideal - there are gaps between the children's needs and the foster carers' resources. The measures to fill these gaps are not clearly identified nor are the actions that the agency intends to take to fill them documented. The agency is seen to have an acceptable child protection procedure, which the manager says has not yet been ratified as in compliance with those of Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It was noted that a copy of the LSCB's procedures is not available at the agency's office. Foster carers have received basic child protection training as part of their preparation to become approved carers and they say that this training has been valuable since it places in context the agency's child protection procedure and safe caring guidelines. Foster carers also explain how this training has been challenging in that it has caused them to think of the protection of their own children in relation to fostering. Comments along these lines are also reflected in an observed fostering panel discussion in which prospective foster carers are involved. Although the foster carers have received training that covers safe caring and have been issued with guidance in this regard, they do not have a safe caring guidance of relevance to their particular households and the children placed with them. Comments, on how the agency seeks to ensure that the carers it approves and the staff it employs to look after children, as conveyed in a self-assessment prepared and submitted by the manager prior to the inspection provides the following information. 'All relevant checks will be undertaken with carers and staff before ...[they are appointed]' and will include obtaining satisfactory references and comprehensive BAAF Form F assessment. This is borne out by the accounts that foster carers give of their experience of the assessment process and in the records which are kept in relation to that process which reveal only one unresolved issue relating to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure. Currently the manager is the only employee directly employed by the agency. The manager declares that others, for example, social workers who conduct the assessment of foster carers, who perform duties on behalf of the agency are commissioned to do so and their competence and suitability has been checked and deemed satisfactory. The agency has a staff recruitment and selection procedure for such time as it is in a position to seek to employ more staff. A fostering panel has been established by the agency to oversee the safe assessment and

review of foster carers. The panel is properly constituted and its functions and operational procedures are clearly set out in writing. The manager declares that all the panel members have been vetted for their suitability to act in this capacity and have undertaken to act with due propriety. For example, they undertake to treat as confidential the personal information that they are given, about foster carers and others, in the discharge of their duties. They are also required to declare any conflict of interest. Minutes of previous panel meetings and observation of one of its sittings shows that it is operating as effectively; its members are drawn from a wide spectrum of disciplines: social work, education, health and clinical psychology. Practising foster carers are also represented among panel members. The panel is appropriately critical in its scrutiny role and provides constructive feedback to the agency on aspects of work which might be done more effectively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Foster cares demonstrate a genuine commitment to providing such personal support that children require to address their needs arising from their race, religion, disability and so on. The agency adequately supports foster carers in this regard, and guides them to recognise the importance of education and other self-fulfilling achievements in the proper development of children and young people. The agency has only recently been established and, therefore, has few children to look after. It is, however, able to demonstrate that it has the necessary means by which to respond to needs arising from children's race religion, culture and disability, where relevant, to support their development of a positive identity in this regard. In their preparation and skills to foster, the agency expects prospective carers to learn about, and demonstrate a good working knowledge of, equality and diversity issues. This might in some cases mean caring appropriately for children with learning or physical disabilities or sensory impairments. The agency expects that the needs of children and young people placed in its care will have been identified at and set out in a placement plan and placement agreement at the outset. This will include needs such as those mentioned earlier and also those related to the children and young people's sex and sexuality. Where disability features among the needs of children being looked after by the agency, this is seen to be addressed satisfactorily. Although in some instances children are placed in an emergency and their carers have no prior experience in caring for children with their particular disabilities, the carers are not only eager to learn, they are effective in the care they are providing and are proving effective advocates for the children. The children who fall into this group say that, apart from one or two specific issues which they agree should be fed back to the agency, they are well satisfied with how they are being looked after. The records in these cases also show that the agency has not considered or arranged with sufficient speed the compensatory support measures that the carers need in light of their lack of experience in caring for such children. The agency provides written guidance for foster carers on what is expected of them in promoting and supporting children's education and reflected in the Foster Care Agreement is the expectation that they will support children's education. The monthly report on each child that the agency expects carers to provide includes a section on educational progress. This is to enable the agency to monitor inputs, impacts and outcomes in this connection. Carers are newly approved and some have not had a placement as yet, but feel confident about being able to support the education of children placed since they have successfully supported the education of their own children. The carers with children placed with them have similarly been successful in supporting their own children's education. They demonstrate a good understanding of children's current education situation and in some cases, like good parents would, are taking steps to make known their concerns. Carers recognise the

academic potential of the children placed with them and cite examples of what they are doing to encourage learning. Introducing children and young people to the local library, researching special learning aids where this is indicated; and promoting hobbies and leisure interests for their inherent enjoyment and contribution to formal education are among the examples cited.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Arrangements that the agency has made are likely to provide children in its foster care with a variety of opportunities to make a positive contribution to decisions about their own lives and how they are looked after day-to-day in their foster placement. The agency, as a general principle, regards as important opportunities for children and young people to maintain contact with their families and or others who are significant to them, unless this is considered contrary to their best interests and official restrictions have been imposed in this regard. Indeed, the agency informs prospective foster carers of the requirement for them to facilitate, where required, children's contact with their parents, and part of the carers' assessment to be approved as foster carers takes account of their ability to undertake this task. This is further enshrined in the Foster Care Agreement, the contract between the agency and its foster carers. For their part, foster carers say that in their motivation to act in this capacity, they fully expect to enable children to have contact with their birth family where permissible. The agency expects that the arrangement for each child's contact with their family or others who are significant to them will be agreed at the outset and set out in the placement agreement and placement plan. The agency also considers it important that the children are aware of the arrangements for their contact with their family and it provides a space in the Children's Guide - a copy of which is given to each child - for details of contact arrangements to be inserted. In the cases examined at inspection, it is noted that contact arrangements are documented and all parties are aware of them. The agency has only recently started to look after children, therefore, assessment of its performance against the standard that focuses on consulting children is largely limited to the arrangements it has made for so doing rather than how this is being reflected in practice. Accordingly, it is noted that the monthly placement summary that foster carers complete includes a section for feedback from the children and young people about their care experience. This is intended to provide ongoing feedback to the foster carers, the agency and the local authority responsible for the child. It is also observed that the agency has planned for supervising social workers to see the children on their monthly monitoring and supervisory visits to the foster home. This is so that they can seek the children's views and opinions about how they are being looked after and use information from this together with that gleaned from the children's own social workers, who make similar visits, to act on any difficulties that emerge and any positive feedback that might be used to reinforce the care inputs that the children value. The agency has an acceptable complaints procedure, which is promoted in the Foster Carers Handbook and the Children's Guide. The information given to children about how to complain also includes details about other approved agencies such as Ofsted, Office of the Children's Rights Director and Child Line. This gives children a range of options in terms of the range of agencies they might approach with any problems, complaints or concerns they might have. The manager says no complaints have been received and examination of records indicate none has been recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children are likely to benefit from the arrangements that the fostering agency has made to secure their economic well-being though the guidance that it gives foster carers to prepare children for adulthood needs to be more expansive. The agency provides general guidance for foster carers, in their handbook, on promoting independence, but this is limited to a single statement. More information needs to be provided on how carers might approach teaching the children independence living skills according to their age. Also there needs to be guidance on the deliberate ways in which foster carers might approach the preparation of young people who are nearing the time when they will graduate to semi independence or independent living. The nature of the Pathway Plan and its application is also deemed not to have been adequately explained. Foster carers do, however, recognise the need to teach children independent living skills as part of their normal development and in an age related way. Children seen in their placements during the inspection exhibit independent skills in daily living as befit their age, such as being able to dress and feed themselves. Children's economic well-being is deemed to be properly safeguarded by the agency, which has made acceptable arrangements for their financial upkeep. The agency pays foster carers a mostly all-inclusive weekly rate in keeping with that recommended for Fostering Network, a national organisation for foster carers. The rates paid in accordance with the age and needs of children and paid in mostly all-inclusive form, enables foster carers to provide the children with a good material standard of living and in ways that do not negatively emphasise their looked after status. Foster carers say that the foster care allowances are reasonable and they have no current concerns about how they are administered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's welfare is being safeguarded by the management arrangements for the agency, though some aspects need to be strengthened and, in time expanded, in line with increases in the numbers of foster carers, children and staff for which it is responsible. Some five months ago the agency was registered. This happened, in part, on the basis of the people responsible for it demonstrating in written form that it will be operated on the basis of a sound set of working principles or rationale. This takes account of its purpose, aims, objectives and the methods it employs to ensure that the children in its care are properly looked after. Also, that the people registered to operate the agency are suitable in terms of their character, professional qualifications and experience to be responsible for owning and managing it. Nothing has changed, since the agency recently became operational, to call into question the appropriateness of its statement of purpose (the working principles). It is also noted that, as required, the agency has summarised the contents of the statement of purpose into a Children's Guide - one version for those aged under eight and another for those who are older. The guides are deemed to be more than adequate in providing the children with an understanding of how the agency intends to care for them. The only critical observation about the guides is that they are formal in presentation and may not engage children in the way they might if they are illustrated and more colourful. Nothing emerges during the inspection to cause any concerns about the propriety with which the agency is being managed. Currently, the only employee is the manager though systems are in place that will enable effective lines of communication and accountability for when there are more employees. Being only recently established, the volume of work with which the agency has to deal is low hence the manager currently being the only employee and some professional services, such as the assessment for prospective foster carers, being commissioned. There is no clear evidence that persons commissioned to provide services on behalf of the agency are accountable in terms of their job descriptions, contract, conditions of

service and supervision arrangements. Whilst the manager is able to describe the arrangements for a suitable person to deputise and manage the functions of the agency in the manager's absence, these arrangements are deemed too informal and in any case have not been properly communicated to foster carers and placing authorities. At the time of inspection the agency has only three approved foster carers' households and fewer than six children placed. There are systems for the organisation and management of staff, but no permanent staff other than the manager who fulfils all the duties concerned with the supervision and support of foster carers. The manager is deemed to have the necessary experience and skills to do this and to supervise others in so doing. Although there is a system for assessment, approval and review of foster carers, the assessment function relies heavily on sessional workers. The manager oversees their work and provides their professional supervision though no formal evidence, such as supervision records, are available to confirm this. Administrative procedures and the office equipment to facilitate them are satisfactory, but the level of administrative support is only currently acceptable because of the low volume of the agency's work. There is a programme of ongoing post-approval training for foster carers and the manager recognises that there needs to be similar in-service training for staff when they are employed. All the current approved carers have only recently completed their preparation and skills to foster programme for which they have commenced a training portfolio, which will serve as a record of their progress and assessed competencies. The agency has commissioned the services of a social work consultant to provide professional advice and it is noted that among the fostering panel members are those whose expertise in education and in health it is able to seek. Whilst there are no concerns about the agency's approach to the recruitment and assessment of foster carers, which is being currently being conducted in accordance with the quality indicators Standard 17, if overall standards are to be maintained in those and other aspects of the agency's functions, more full time equivalent staffing will be needed as the volume of work grows. There will also need to be a proportionate increase in the administrative and other support facilities, such as office space and equipment. The manager recognises this and plans to introduce these resources as appropriate. Since there are no permanent staff presently employed in the agency except the manager, who says he is supported by the person who owns the agency and receives professional support from a consultant in social work, it is not possible to assess staff accountability and support in the precise terms of Standard 20. The manager says, however, that he supervises the work of the social workers that the agency employs on a sessional basis; they are accountable to him and the quality of the agency's professional work is scrutinised by the fostering panel. Foster carers consider that they are effectively managed and this is corroborated by the evidence in the records and accounts that the manager gives in this connection. Foster carers say that they have received formal confirmation of their approval to foster for the agency and the details of the category and number of children they are permitted to look after. They are aware of their duties as set out in the Foster Care Agreement and in the guidance in the Foster Carers' Handbook. All concerned are aware of the frequency of foster carers' supervision and the monitoring, including unannounced visits by agency's staff to the foster homes, that the agency will conduct in its effort to safeguard the children's welfare. Practical support that the agency provides foster carers includes around the clock social work and management support. The manager says that its foster carers are insured under the agency's public liability and professional liability insurance and that an application has been made for group membership, for all its carers, of the Fostering Network - a national association for foster carers. Whilst the agency recognises that carers might, for various reasons, sometimes need short breaks from their fostering duties, it has decided not to build in any structured respite arrangements. This is on the principle that its foster carers are recruited on the basis of their commitment to the full

time care of the children placed with them, who the agency expects to be treated as any other child in the family. Therefore, it expects foster carers, with its support and approval, to make similar arrangements for the looked after children as they would for their own children, if short breaks from their caring duties are necessary. In the event of it being necessary for foster carers to make representations, there is no reference in the Foster Care Agreement of the agency's procedure for so doing. The procedure for events of foster carers being neutrally suspended pending the outcome of an investigation of any allegations against them, as currently set out in the guidance, needs to be more detailed. In particular, the support arrangements for carers in such events needs to be made clear. The premises currently being used by the agency are a multi-occupancy office complex. The agency rents one exclusive office sufficient for its current volume of work. The office rental arrangements provide for the agency to have access to a conference room and reception service. This arrangement will not be suitable once there are more than five foster carers' households and a greater volume of work in terms of children placed, recruitment, assessment and ongoing training and support of foster carers. The agency's accounts are not examined, but nothing emerges from the aspects of its operations examined to cause any concerns about its financial viability. The persons in charge of it present a business plan as part of their application for registration, which is deemed acceptable. There have been no complaints from foster carers or those commissioned to do work for the agency of it being unable to meet its financial commitments. The manager says that there is a financial system that underpins the agency's operation, which is overseen by its business advisor and will be scrutinised by the accountant.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
20	records must be kept, for inspection and verification, of the vetting and selection process of all persons who work in or for the agency	28 September 2007
5	must ensure that the arrangements, for a suitable person to deputise and carry on all the agency's functions in the manager's absence, are formalised, records are kept in this regard and they are made known to foster carers and other significant stakeholders	28 September 2007
15	must ensure that the suitability of all sessional workers and others commissioned to do work for the agency and maintain records in this connection including job descriptions, contracts and supervision events	12 October 2007
24	must ensure foster carers have or are provided with the means to store children's records securely	28 September 2007
12	must ensure the fullest information is available to foster carers, before or soon after placement, about children's health needs	28 September 2007

	and the arrangements for consent for them to receive any medical treatment as might be necessary	
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- should continue to pursue to a satisfactory conclusion, the outstanding matter of the Criminal Record Bureau disclosure in the case cited at inspection
- should ensure foster carers and the agency keep records of all occasions when it is necessary to physically restrain children, and the circumstances surrounding those events
- should expand on the single statement in the Foster Carers' Handbook about preparing children for adulthood and provide foster carers with information on the more structured independence planning and preparation programmes for young people nearing the time when they will cease to be looked after
- should present the Children's Guide in a more child-friendly way using illustrations to explain text for those who might have difficulty with reading
- should increase staffing levels proportionate to the functions of the agency and the volume of work as it expands
- should provide sufficient office space and equipment, and clerical and administrative support in ratio the the range and volume of the agency's work
- should make clear in the Foster Care Agreement and the Foster Carers' Handbook the procedure by which foster carers may make representations to the agency
- should make more detailed the guidance to foster carers on the procedure for their neutral suspension from fostering, in the event of serious allegations being made against them, pending the outcome of any investigation, and the support arrangements for them during this time
- should ensure that where children are known to exhibit challenging behaviours, particularly those likely on occasions to necessitate their being physically restrained, there is a risk assessment, a behaviour management plan and the foster carers receive necessary training including safe physical restraint.

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12)

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.