



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Time Out Fostering

**The Ropetackle Centre
Little High Street
Shoreham by Sea
West Sussex
BN43 5EG**

Lead Inspector
Ms V Khan

Key Announced Inspection
11th September 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Time Out Fostering
Address	The Ropetackle Centre Little High Street Shoreham by Sea West Sussex BN43 5EG
Telephone number	01273 467530
Fax number	01903 533669
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Time Out Fostering
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Alison Young
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration: None

Date of last inspection N/A

Brief Description of the Service:

Time Out has been registered as an independent fostering agency since 6th June 2005. The agency moved to its present address in August 2006. Mr Jeremy Cross is registered as the responsible individual on behalf of the agency and Ms Alison Young is the registered manager.

The agency has approved two foster carers, but no children have been placed to date. The agency aims to provide a variety of family placements for children, including emergency, long-term and short-term breaks.

Fees to placing authorities will start from £800 per week and the fostering allowance paid to carers will start from £350 per week.

SUMMARY

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

This is the first inspection of Time Out since registering with the Commission For Social Care Inspection in 2005.

Prior to the key inspection a review was made of the contact between the agency and the Commission for Social Care Inspection. This included an analysis of any correspondence that has been submitted by the agency.

As preparation for the inspection, a pre-inspection planning meeting was held with the registered manager, the responsible individual and a director. An annual quality assurance assessment and data collection sheets were e-mailed to the agency for completion.

The inspection focused on reading the agency's policies and procedures, the two approved carers' files and the staff recruitment records. The inspector met with the responsible individual and a director during the inspection. The registered manager was on maternity leave. Telephone contact was made with two foster carers and a letter was sent seeking the views of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. As the agency is very small with two carers and no children placed, some of the key national minimum standards were unable to be fully assessed at this inspection.

What the service does well:

The small size of the agency allows for frequent discussion amongst team members, who are keen to make a success of the service.

The panel is robust and members are thorough in their questioning.

What has improved since the last inspection?

What they could do better:

The agency must ensure the fostering assessments are comprehensive and completed to a very high standard.

Full recruitment checks and records need to be in place for all staff, including any locum staff and panel members.

Review all policies and procedures and amend as necessary to ensure they are accurate and in line with practice.

Make the children's guide more child-friendly and include details of how to complain.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

An overall quality rating for this outcome area has not been provided, due to no children being placed. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency is aware of the need to promote the health and development of children.

EVIDENCE:

This key standard was unable to be fully assessed on this occasion, due to there being no children in placement.

Policies and procedures are in place on smoking, HIV, hepatitis, health and safety, sex education, food hygiene, promoting health, drugs, alcohol and solvents, first aid, medication and hygiene.

Health issues are discussed with prospective carers during their assessments and at preparation training. The agency intends to enable carers to attend basic first aid training.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 15, 30

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The key standard 8 was unable to be fully assessed, due to there being no children in placement. The agency is aware of the need to undertake the matching process with care and attention.

The fostering service is aware of the need to protect each child from all forms of abuse.

The people carrying on and managing the service are suitably qualified professionals, with the knowledge and skills required.

In order to ensure the safety of children and young people when placed, recruitment procedures need to be tightened.

The foster panel is organised efficiently.

EVIDENCE:

Relevant checks were completed by CSCI on the responsible individual and the registered manager as part of the agency's registration in June 2005. There was no evidence of appropriate qualifications for one independent social worker, or references, an application form, or a CRB check, or that the independent social worker was registered with the General Social Care Council. There was no evidence of the independent social worker and the panel members being interviewed, or of written references being verified by telephone. There were no written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service for members of staff, and these need to be put in place. The utmost importance of the agency needing follow a robust recruitment procedure was discussed during the inspection.

Carers were not visited, but the inspector is confident that the fostering service is fully aware of the need of foster carers to provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation. Homes were checked by the assessing social workers as part of the fostering assessments, and will be reviewed when undertaking supervision and for carers' annual reviews. Health and safety issues are covered in preparation training and checklists were completed as part of the assessments. Carers are provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. It is recommended that any transport provided by foster carers be checked during the assessment stage and at reviews.

Due to there being no children in placement, standard 8 was unable to be fully assessed. All staff spoken with during the inspection were aware of the importance of appropriately matching children with carers.

Carers are provided with written information on caring for children who have been abused and how to protect them from any type of abuse. This is also discussed during preparation training and will be further explored in post-approval child protection training courses. Carers spoken with during the inspection confirmed they were aware that corporal punishment was unacceptable and that they had been provided with written information on behaviour management. A written procedure is in place for use if a foster child is missing from home.

The panel was observed in July 2006, when a prospective carer and her independent assessor attended. The previous minutes from the December 2005 panel were read and the Chair of the panel was interviewed. The panel worked well together as a team and the Chair showed commitment and enthusiasm for his role. The Chair is an experienced foster carer and has worked as a councillor. He recently attended a BAAF training course for panel Chairs. Other independent panel members include a foster carer for another independent agency, a previously looked after young person, a qualified nurse, a qualified teacher and a social worker who has experience of working in child protection and various community support projects. Panel members attended a training session in December 2005 on fostering assessments. The inspector noted that one panel member did not have a CRB check undertaken as part of her recruitment. References were not in place for two panel members and the agency had only taken verbal references on another panel member. A thorough recruitment procedure must be followed when recruiting panel members. It is recommended that the panel Chair and Vice-Chair have job descriptions that are relevant to their roles. The panel has written procedures in place about the handling of their functions. The December 2005 minutes showed that the agency decision maker observed the panel. It is recommended that the agency decision maker does not observe any future panel meetings in order to preserve her independence.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13, 31

An overall quality rating for this outcome area has not been provided, due to no children being placed. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency is aware of the need to ensure that children are provided with services which value diversity, promote equality and promote educational achievement.

The agency is keen to develop short-term breaks for children.

EVIDENCE:

These key standards were unable to be fully assessed at this inspection, due to there being no children in placement.

The agency is aware that children need to be provided with appropriate services, which will meet their diverse needs. Preparation training covers the need for carers to provide care, which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, cultural and linguistic background.

Education is seen as a high priority by the service, having close links with Springboard education project.

Short-term breaks is an area the service is keen to specialise in. Staff are aware that in these instances, birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs. The service is also intending to offer a service to local authorities, providing community support to children in need and their

families. Documents read by the inspector stated that the community support service is registered and regulated within the Time Out Fostering Group. The agency is reminded that such services do not come under the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and national minimum standards and their documents must be reviewed and amended accordingly. The agency has been advised that if they are going to provide personal care to children in the community, of the need to register as a domiciliary care agency with CSCI. The agency has also been advised to seek advice from Ofsted about providing day care to children aged under 8.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10, 11

An overall quality rating for this outcome area has not been provided, due to no children being placed. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency is aware of the need to promote contact arrangements and of the importance of consultation.

EVIDENCE:

These key standards were unable to be fully assessed at this inspection.

Staff and carers spoken to were fully aware that contact for children is extremely important. Equally, all agreed that children's opinions should be sought over all issues, which are likely to affect their daily life and future. However, the agency has not specified in the review of approval of carers' policy and procedures, that placing authorities and children in placement must be consulted. The agency must ensure that this policy and procedures is further developed in line with Regulation 29(3).

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

EVIDENCE:

These standards were not assessed at this inspection.

Management

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)
- 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)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 2, 5, 17, 21, 24, 26, 32

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Appropriately knowledgeable and committed people manage the service, and there are good prospects for the development of this service. However, failure to undertake full recruitment checks on an independent social worker who is

covering the registered manager's maternity leave, could mean that any children placed could be put at risk.

Policies and procedures must be reviewed and amended to ensure their accuracy and that they are in line with practice.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has a registered manager who is a qualified social worker. The registered manager and the responsible individual both obtained the NVQ Level 5 qualification in management, and are awaiting their certificates.

The Commission was informed in writing in July 2006 that the registered manager was on maternity leave. In her absence, the directors are being assisted to manage the agency by an independent social worker. It was not possible to meet with the independent social worker during the inspection, as she was on annual leave. It is disappointing that the agency have not undertaken full recruitment checks on this person who is covering the registered manager's role.

The responsible individual is very hands-on with the development of the agency and will be monitoring the matters listed in Schedule 7.

There is a public liability and professional indemnity insurance in place for all staff and carers.

Due to the small size of the agency, the directors staff the out of hour's telephone service, with the registered manager sharing in this cover when she returns to work. The staffing complement is satisfactory at the present time.

The agency uses the BAAF Form F assessment report form on prospective carers. Two fostering assessments that were completed by two different independent assessors were examined during the inspection. The inspector is in agreement with the agency that the first assessment would benefit from being more detailed, whereas the second assessment was of a more satisfactory standard. Assessors are reminded of the need to comprehensively explore aspects of prospective carers relationships with their own children and families and any queries raised in references need to be tested out as part of the assessment process. One assessment was not signed and dated by the applicant. Several questions were asked at both panels about these types of matters that should have been more clearly explained in the assessments. In addition, all references for prospective carers, or staff, from their present or most recent employers must be obtained, and these must be on company headed paper. It is recommended that the most recent BAAF Form F template (2005) rather than the 2000 version be used when completing the assessment of prospective carers. Suggestions were made about how the portfolios of prospective carers could be improved upon. When the agency decision maker approves carers, they are given a letter, but they need to be issued with a notice of approval in accordance with Regulation 28 (5).

The responsible individual and a director were asked about their knowledge of the Protection of Children Act 1999 (POCA), as there is nothing written in any of the policies and procedures about this. Both were aware of the need to check against the POCA list when applying for CRB checks, and the inspector reminded them that it would also be their duty in certain circumstances, to refer people for consideration to be included on the list. It is recommended that further research is undertaken about POCA 1999 and information be incorporated into relevant policies and procedures.

The supervision and support for carers' policy states that carers will receive supervision every three weeks, whereas the statement of purpose states that supervision will take place every four weeks. The agency needs to decide about the proposed frequency of carers' supervision and ensure the policies and procedures are accurate in this respect. There is nothing documented in the policies and procedures about respite. It is recommended that this be written into the policies and procedures.

It is recommended that the person who writes them signs any diary recording sheets. It is recommended that the carers' staff information forms include details of when the Enhanced CRB check was undertaken, as is on the staff files.

The agency must change the policy and procedures regarding the storage of records for prospective carers who do not, for whatever reason become approved. The child protection policy states that records are kept for six months, which conflicts with the case records and recording access and retention policy, which states such records be kept for three years. The agency must review the child protection policy to ensure it is in line with the requirement that such records be kept for three years as per Regulation 32(3) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The child protection policy also notes that checks can be portable, with another one applied for after six months. The agency is reminded that CRB/POCA checks are not portable and need to be undertaken by the agency before employment commences.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the agency. The staff interviewed showed commitment to ensuring the agency meets its stated aims and objectives. A children's guide has been produced, but this would benefit from being made more child-friendly and including independent helpline/contact numbers, along with details about how to raise any complaints.

Time Out moved to its current premises at the end of August 2006. The service operates from a town centre office, on the third floor of a purpose-built building. The office is a bright, modern, well-equipped space with good security systems in place. There is disabled access to the premises.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	X

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	2
8	X
9	3
15	1
30	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	X
13	X
31	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	X
11	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	X

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	2
2	3
4	X
5	3
16	2
17	3
18	3
19	X
20	X
21	x
22	2
23	X
24	X
25	2
26	3
27	X
28	X
32	X

N/A

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS15	20	<p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) he is of integrity and good character; (b) he has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work he is to perform; (c) he is physically and mentally fit for the work he is to perform; and (d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of the following matters- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) except where paragraph (4) applies, each of the matters specified in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 1; (ii) where paragraph (4) applies, each of the matters specified in paragraphs 1 and 3 to 7 of schedule 1. 	11/12/06

			Ensure full recruitment information and checks are obtained, as per Schedule 1.	
2	FS25	32(3)	The records compiled under Regulation 30 (5) shall be retained for at least 3 years from the refusal or withdrawal, as the case may be, of the application to become a foster parent.	11/12/06
		28(5)	<p>If a fostering service provider decides to approve a person as a foster parent it shall-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) give him notice in writing specifying the terms of the approval, for example, whether in respect of a particular named child or children, or number and age range of children, or of placements of any particular kind, or in any particular circumstances; and (b) enter into a written agreement with him covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (in these Regulations referred to as the "foster care agreement"). 	
		32 (3)	The records compiled under Regulation 30 (5) shall be retained for at least 3 years from the refusal or withdrawal, as the case may be, of the application to become a foster parent.	
3	FS11	29 (3)	<p>When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider shall-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) seek into account and 	11/12/06

			<p>take into account the views of –</p> <p>(i) the foster parent;</p> <p>(ii) (subject to the child's age and understanding) any child placed with the foster parent; and</p> <p>(iii) any responsible authority which has within the preceeding year placed a child with the foster parent.</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS15	<p>Any social work staff employed by the agency to undertake the assessment of foster carers need to have experience of foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment.</p> <p>Telephone enquiries need to be made to verify written references.</p> <p>Obtain confirmation that all social workers are registered with the General Social care Council.</p> <p>All references obtained on staff and carers need to be obtained on their employer's company headed paper.</p> <p>Staff information forms include details of when their Enhanced CRB check was undertaken.</p>
2	FS25	<p>The agency needs to review all policies and procedures to ensure that the written information is in line with practice.</p> <p>The person who has made the recordings should sign all recording sheets.</p>

		The information requested by the inspector prior to the inspection (Annual Quality Assurance Assessment and Data Set) need to be electronically forwarded to the Commission.
3	FS1	Consider producing the children's guide in a more child-friendly format, with details on how to complain.
4	FS17	<p>Ensure all assessments on prospective carers are sufficiently detailed, with any queries raised in references followed up as part of the assessments.</p> <p>The 2005 version of the BAAF Form F should be used when assessing carers.</p> <p>Carers should sign and date their Form F assessments.</p>
5	FS6	Any transport provided by foster carers needs to be checked during the assessment stage and at reviews.
6	FS30	<p>Issue the Chair and the Vice Chair of the panel with specific job descriptions.</p> <p>The agency decision maker should not attend panel meetings.</p>
7	FS22	<p>Include arrangements for respite (if any) into the policies and procedures.</p> <p>Ensure the arrangements for the supervision of carers is accurately described in the policies and procedures.</p> <p>The responsible individual and the registered manager undertake further research into their responsibilities under POCA 1999.</p>

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Southampton HO

4th Floor, Overline House

Blechynden Terrace

Southampton

Hampshire

SO15 1GW

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI