



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**Synergy Fostering Ltd**

**Langdale House  
11 Marshalsea Road  
London  
SE1 1EN**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Rossella Volpi**

*Announced Inspection*  
**July / September 2006**

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

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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](http://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](http://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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Miss Shobha Patel
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      31 May 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

Synergy Fostering is an independent fostering service, in operation since May 2000, but from different premises. The primary role of the agency is to recruit, approve and support foster carers, from diverse backgrounds and skills, for looked after children needing substitute family care.

The agency states that it is dedicated to providing safe and nurturing foster placements through their culturally diverse carers.

The main aim is that of meeting the needs of the children and working in partnership with all involved in their care. The agency aims to do so by providing stability of placements, advocating on behalf of children, promoting the child's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background, giving careful consideration to matching, developing carers' skills through training and providing appropriate support.

Synergy Fostering is a private limited company with three directors. One of them is the registered manager and the designated decision maker. (At the time of this inspection she was on extended leave and while retaining the role of decision maker, the day to day management had been delegated to a senior supervising social worker, who was the temporary acting manager). The other social work director is the designated responsible individual. Additionally there is a commercial director.

The premises are offices, located in a commercial building.

At March 2006, there were 23 approved fostering households and 24 children placed.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection activities were conducted mainly during July 2006, but were concluded on 29 September 2006, with observation of a panel session, discussion with the chair of panel and a final discussion with the responsible individual.

The inspection included discussion with the acting manager, with one supervising social worker, with the administrator and with the responsible individual. Visits were made to three carers, where children were in placements. Part of one carers' training session was observed and a group discussion held with about 15 carers.

Files and other documents were looked at. Questionnaires were sent to children, carers and to placing social workers. The directors prepared written information about the service, to inform the inspection, including their annual quality assurance assessment of Synergy Fostering.

## **What the service does well:**

Children overall expressed satisfaction about the service received. They considered that their carers looked after them well, gave them good advice to keep them healthy and supported them with their education. For example, children said:

"I am regularly advised on which foods are healthy and unhealthy, which foods are the most nutritious and the effects of eating certain foods are explained to me".

"I am regularly advised of what to do if I am unwell and, likewise, the steps I can take to monitor my wellbeing".

"I am always told that education is important if you want to become something that you want."

"I am told that I can go to college and then university to do a degree."

"I am well cared for because I get what I want and need."

"I can talk to my foster carer or my social worker or my guardian."

"Whenever I say something, my carers always listen."

The positive comments from the children were echoed by the two placing social workers who returned the questionnaires. They considered most aspects of the service received by the children to be good. For example, some comments to illustrate this were:

"The child has balanced meals and participates in activities."

"(The agency) ensures that the child has appropriate toys and activities that encourage development."

"(The agency) ensures that the child's needs are met appropriately with ongoing support and guidance"

“(There was) good communication, guidance, working together with positive outcomes.”

Many carers valued the support and the training received from Synergy and liked being part of this agency. Examples of comments by carers were:

“Equality and diversity issues are brought up at training meetings and during supervision meetings and come up naturally”.

“Training is provided to help meet any needs on certain issues. Training on sex education, drugs education, safer caring, managing difficult behaviour, first aid, and attachment. All very useful to promote a healthy lifestyle”.

“The fostering service is very good, they give me a lot of support, especially my social worker”.

“They give good advice and support especially when things get difficult”.

“Always at the end of the phone and willing to visit as required or attend meetings as requested”.

“They reassure you when you doubt yourself and are ready with support or respite if required”.

“Our fostering service fully supported us in our effort to enable our last placement to achieve their best possible educational outcome”.

The above led to the conclusion that the agency was valued by its users and that it endeavoured to promote positive outcomes for children.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The service had acted on previous requirements.

For example an annual training programme for carers had recently started, to incorporate all core training. An anti-bullying policy had been developed. The responsible individual had completed her managerial qualifications.

Synergy had introduced a competency based framework for supervision of carers. An office manager had been appointed who was developing business support systems to better aid the work of the agency.

## **What they could do better:**

This inspection has found that there were some significant matters for the agency to address to make safeguarding and its management more robust, as discussed in this report. This would impinge on all other areas of the provision and most directly on health.

For example, it would be difficult to ensure that needs are well met consistently for each child if carers’ reviews are very late, if assessments are not consistently thorough enough, if the safeguards that an objective panel and decision making process should bring are weakened because of conflict of roles.

However, on this occasion, the scoring under health, education, etc. have not been affected. This is because of the assurances given by the responsible individual and the acting manager that the failings were, mostly, temporary challenges and because of their stated commitment to remedy them quickly. The steps that they intend to take would be specified in the agency's action plan, following this inspection.

Other issues, brought up by children, were that some did not consider that the agency involved them enough or sought their opinions enough (although most said that they could speak to carers).

Although most carers valued the one to one support, some found that the turn-over of supervising social workers was having a negative effect on the support they received and on the relationship they had with the agency. Some carers said that they had not received adequate information about the children before placement began and this affected their ability to look after the child well.

For example, some comments regarding what should be improved were:

"When supervising social workers leave there should be some sort of continuation even if it is a skeleton service, regardless of my ability to manage".

" (There have been) changes of supervising social workers a lot and at times there has been miscommunication, misunderstanding, so it does have an effect on my caring".

" (There should be) more training, support groups, more placements, access to child's file prior to placement with carers, changes of supervising social workers should be less often".

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](mailto: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:**

### **12**

Quality in this outcome area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to the service.

Synergy Fostering continued to make a good contribution to the promotion of the health and development of children placed with its foster carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Young people considered that they received advice and support to help them keeping healthy. They, or the carers, gave examples that showed that young people received guidance about matters such as, for example, healthy living, keeping safe, sexual health or the risks associated with smoking, drugs or alcohol consumption.

Carers were clear of the agency's expectations; they usually took swift action to ensure that each child / young person would be registered with a general practitioner, dentist and optician as soon as possible after the placement. In one case considered during the inspection, where this had not been possible due to parental consent not being obtained, there was evidence of much dialogue amongst carer, agency and social services to resolve the situation.

There continued to be evidence, from care plans reviews, or other documents on children's files, that the fostering agency and relevant professionals were monitoring and addressing a range of identified health care needs in accordance with documented care plans. Contact with specialist health services would be maintained or instigated when necessary.

The provider said that first aid training for carers had already been provided. She also said that, as a response to the pattern of referrals (i.e. to an increase in children with conduct disorders) they had incorporated information about this in the 'skills to foster course' that all carers being assessed would be

required to attend. The agency had included, in the annual training programme for carers that had recently started, sessions on autism or other health needs.

# **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, 9, 15, 30**

Quality in this area was poor. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

The agency took steps to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect. Some gaps identified (about the assessment, review and approval of carers), made this area not robust enough.

There was potential for the weaknesses to be addressed promptly.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The provider and the registered manager were assessed as suitable for the position as part of the registration process. The agency assessed the suitability of their staff to work with children.

The responsible individual assured that the requirements from the previous inspection, regarding checks on staff, had been complied with. She discussed the vetting procedure in place. Random inspection of a sample of staff and panel members' files showed that the procedure had been complied with. The responsible individual assured that written references had been followed up by telephone call. In one case noted, when the agency had not yet completed the criminal record check for a panel member, the responsible individual explained the exceptional circumstances of that case and the risk assessment conducted.

It was found at the previous inspection that there was evidence of sound child protection policies in place, with the exception of an anti-bullying policy. The policy had been developed. Apart from following up this requirement, the policies were not looked at again on this occasion, as it was understood that there had been no major change.

Children or carers confirmed that the children knew how to make complaints. The agency had systems for recording allegations of abuse and complaints; none were outstanding.

Risk assessments were conducted about carers' premises and also individual family's guidelines on safer caring were in place.

There was evidence that providing suitable foster carers was the aim of the responsible individual and the acting manager. They spoke with commitment about how they had endeavoured to do so. Carers seen and the supervising social worker interviewed also demonstrated commitment to the children, during the discussion. The satisfaction expressed by the children and by the placing authority's social workers, was additional evidence that the service was valued. The responsible individual said that disruption rates had been low (less than 5%).

Despite the evident strengths, outcomes for children in safeguarding could be seriously undermined by a few, but significant weaknesses or omissions noted on this occasion about the assessment, review and approval of carers, from the cases followed up and files inspected. These were discussed during the inspection.

For example, one carer was approved even though the result of the criminal record bureau (CRB) check initiated had not yet been received.

The carer had not attended the 'skills to foster course'. This was picked up by the panel, who recommended that no child should be placed before the carer completed such course. The panel's recommendation was ignored by the

agency who placed children before the carer had attended the course and even before the CRB check was completed. Furthermore approval before the skill to foster training is inconsistent with the aim of such course, which should be part of the assessment of suitability of the carer.

Both in this and in another case looked at, the panel's recommendation on the terms of approval were not endorsed by the decision maker; the way this was done raises some doubts about the soundness of the process.

The decision maker added additional categories, to the ones the panel had considered the carer suitable for. There was neither a clear recorded reason for this, nor was there evidence of a discussion with the panel about this important difference of opinions.

In another case the information on file said that a CRB check had been conducted, this was not correct. The CRB was not, probably, necessary at the time. However the incorrect information meant that the need for such CRB could be overlooked if the situation changed.

Another file looked at indicated that there were some significant gaps in the assessment of the carer. These were discussed in much detail with the acting manager. They were also discussed with the responsible individual, who, although did not agree with all the concerns raised about this during the inspection, nonetheless agreed to act on them.

The details are not repeated here as they could identify the person. They related to lack of thorough following up and exploration of vulnerabilities brought to the attention of the agency by a referee; also to lack of evidence of thorough exploration of the relevance, or not, of convictions. The assessment, which went to panel, did not make the panel fully aware of such vulnerabilities (indeed this could not be properly done until they were fully explored) and again this was not done for the review.

It is stressed that it is not implied here that those carers' households approved, without all expected checks having been conducted, were not suitable. It is pointed out that parts of their assessment were not robust enough and this undermines protection of children.

There were strengths in the panel. It benefited from an independent chair with much experience at a senior level in fostering and adoption and from a range of members with differing backgrounds. It had recently been able to recruit a person who had been in care and who, it was noted during the session observed, contributed with much insight to the discussion. The chair facilitated the panel's debate.

Some of the issues discussed above also show that the agency did not enable the panel to fulfil well enough its role of providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process.

Furthermore during the session observed it was noted that some reviews/ issues presented to panel were, by then, quite out of date. (This had been due to a combination of the frequency of meetings and cancellation of a previous panel). In one case some relevant new facts were not included in the review. The carer updated the panel and the panel discussed the new information. However, this still meant that panel members did not have the benefit of being able to consider the facts in advance of the meeting, when they looked at the papers prepared by the supervising social worker.

From records it was noted that there was not always a clear separation between the assessment process and the panel, because at times a social worker involved in the assessment had also sat on the panel. Although the agency assured that such had happened in one or two exceptional cases, it happened again during the session observed.

Due to one of the agency social workers having to leave before the panel session had ended, she was replaced with another (otherwise the panel would have not been quorate). Not only this is generally unsatisfactory, but also the social worker had been the one who had, up to that point, been presenting the cases to the panel. Furthermore, for the next case, while she was by then part of the panel, she was also the person answering all the panel's questions about the carers.

There was not a clear division between assessments and decision-making. The registered manager was the agency decision maker. However, she was also involved in the assessments as, being a small agency, the manager had been working closely with the staff. While it was appreciated that the agency had gone through a difficult time with shortage of staff, records showed that this had not been only a recent issue.

Overall there had been a lack of recognition of the importance of ensuring objectivity and separation between decision-making, assessment of carers and consideration of approvals by members of the panel.

The matters discussed above would also impinge directly on matching, because they impinge on the safe caring of children. However, in recognition of the assurances given by the agency about remedying the weaknesses, the assessment of this standard is postponed to the next inspection.

The agency's assurances about the steps that would be taken to remedy the weaknesses identified above were an important factor in concluding that there was potential for those to be addressed promptly. Although the responsible individual did not fully agree with the findings (related to her during the inspection), she agreed to act on them.

# 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**

Quality in this area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

Efforts were made to promote anti-discriminatory practices, although the work of the acting manager and staff needed to be better supported by the provider's policies.

The service placed emphasis on promoting education. This would encourage children to achieve to the best of their abilities.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The carers with whom this was discussed and many who responded to the questionnaires, recognised that addressing children's needs in terms of gender, culture, race, differing abilities, sexuality or language were integral to good child care. They demonstrated commitment to this, they had often used their initiative to find out more on issues where they were not so sure about. They confirmed that the agency had made their expectations clear and that how they valued diversity and promoted equality was monitored by the supervising social workers.

There had not been formal guidance from the provider to support such work, for example by having a clear policy on transracial / transcultural placements, which were made. It was positive though that when discussed with the provider during the inspection, she promptly acted on it and, by the end of inspection she had completed such a policy. (A copy of it was then sent to CSCI).



In recognition of the commitment shown by the carers, of the prompt response by the provider and also taking into account the positive findings from the previous inspection report, the relevant standard is considered met. However there were some parts of the policy that would benefit from expansion; this would be followed up at a future occasion, when also its effectiveness can be considered.

Children confirmed that they received help with homework. Foster carers were clear that they were expected to support education. This also included providing space and equipment for homework and attending necessary school events, for example parents' evening and personal educational plans meetings. The carers visited showed much commitment to this and had endeavoured to ensure that the children could achieve to the best of their abilities, in one case with outstanding results.

Carers provided a summer activity programme at the start of the holiday to demonstrate to the agency the range of activities that they would involve their foster children in. Carers said that supervising social workers gave them help and advice about this and, if necessary, even researched what was available locally. For example the agency provided information for specialist play schemes, such as for children with autism, physical disabilities or other needs.

The provider said that the agency ensured that carers with transracial placements facilitated children in exploring their heritage by attending festivals and using appropriate community resources.

(Short-term breaks to families were not provided by the agency).

# **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**

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

The fostering service promoted appropriate contact arrangements for children and young people in placement, to ensure that children would maintain relationships.

Efforts had been made to seek children's opinions and those of significant others. However comments received from some children, lack of clear recordings about when the child had been seen, or poor participation by carers at events organised to widen communication with children, had weakened evidence of effective consultation, despite the provider's efforts.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There continued to be evidence, from what children and carers said and from files reviewed, that contact arrangements between children and their parents (or other significant people in their life) were well supported, if in the interest of the child. Efforts were made to ascertain the views and wishes of the child or young person in relation to contact with their family.

The provider confirmed that the agency had policies in place designed to ensure that each young person would be encouraged to maintain and develop family contact and friendships as set out in agreed care plans. The supervising social worker's visits were expected to monitor contact on a regular basis and record the details on file.

Children, with one exception, said that they could talk to their foster carer and knew how to raise a complaint. However the responses regarding whether they were helped to think about the future or whether they knew whom to speak to, if they were not happy, were mixed. Participation of young people in statutory childcare reviews was encouraged, although not always taken up. Children and young people were asked their opinion as a component of foster carer annual reviews.

There was evidence that the agency had made efforts to widen consultation by organising events for carers and children to attend, as a first step towards getting children involved. However, as carers commented, these had been poorly attended.

Supervising social workers were expected to see children, when possible, when they visited carers, as an important means to ascertain children's views. However, as this had not been systematically recorded, it was difficult to find evidence of how often this would happen. (This was discussed with the provider during the inspection and it was positive that she immediately changed the format of the record of visits, to include the above for the future).

The fact that there had been some recent changes in supervising social workers, carers commented, made it difficult for some carers and their fostered children to feel properly consulted. This had also been exacerbated for children when there had been inconsistency in their own childcare social work support.

# 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):

### 29

Quality in this area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

The agency had made provision to ensure that foster carers would receive regular payment of agreed allowances.

### EVIDENCE:

Foster carers generally commented that allowances and agreed expenses were promptly paid by the agency.

The fostering agency had a written policy on fostering allowances. The service had administrative and financial systems that facilitated prompt and accurate payment to foster carers.

Some carers raised that they considered the allowances and agreed expenses not to be competitive in relation to other agencies. (This is also referred to above about leisure activities). This was discussed with the responsible individual, during the inspection, who said that she would follow this up with the carers.

# 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):**

**4, 17, 21, 23, 24, 26**

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

The agency was managed with the aim to deliver a good quality foster care service.

This had been undermined, at times, by lack of consistently effective quality assurance, by a recent shortage of staff and by poor separation of roles between decision-making, assessment of carers and consideration of approvals by members of the panel. However, because of the assurances given by the responsible individual during the inspection and therefore the potential of the agency to address the shortfalls, management has been assessed as adequate.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The previous inspection found that the managers of the fostering service were appropriately qualified and experienced in relevant social work, but lacked management qualifications. On this occasion the responsible individual said that she had completed her managerial qualification. The acting manager was going to start a managerial course in Autumn 2006, but she already had a certificate in management.

The previous inspection imposed a requirement regarding carers' training. The agency had put in place a training programme for carers, that had started two months previously and aimed to ensure that, by the end of 12 months, all carers would have undertaken identified core training, including that relating to child protection and health and safety. The training session observed was well attended, skilfully led and carers participated fully. Whether the programme would be maintained and fulfil its objectives would be assessed at a future inspection.

The previous inspection found that while one to one support was good, there was a need for foster carers to gain mutual help and advice from each other and that the agency should develop support groups. This was still the case. The agency had started some support groups, but they had not been well attended and had not happened consistently. Carers said that they wanted effective, well run and well attended groups.

Some carers commented that the turnover of social workers had had a negative effect on the support they had been receiving and, for some, in their willingness to discuss issues with the agency. However they spoke highly of the acting manager and they recognised the efforts that she had been making to help them through what some experienced as a difficult transition. Some carers said that they did not receive a positive response when trying to use the 24-hour emergency service.

The agency employed a bookkeeper and accountants. One of the directors was responsible for overseeing business matters of the service.

The reason why the standard regarding monitoring and controlling is considered not met is because of the weaknesses discussed under the area "staying safe". Such weaknesses indicated that the agency did not always

have an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and lacked some quality assurance mechanisms to ensure consistently proper assessment and approval of carers.

Social work staff involved in the assessment and approval of carers were not all qualified social workers. At the start of inspection, when staffing was discussed with the acting manager, only the acting manager and the responsible individual were fully qualified social workers. The rest of the team consisted of a recently appointed supervising social worker, a last year social work degree student and an administrator. The acting manager said that she was very satisfied with the skills in her team. However she would gate keep the work of the student and the newly appointed social worker, (as expected by the national minimum standards in cases when assessing and supervising social workers are not fully qualified). This involved doing joint visits and assessments, as well as having her own caseload. The agency was recruiting staff.

Individual case records for children were kept. These and other records were held securely and with due regard for confidentiality.

The premises were offices, equipped to be used as a fostering agency. They were located in a commercial building and have the use of additional rooms when required, suitable for training or meetings.

It was noted that the terminology on letters from the provider to carers, to confirm approval was incorrect and needed amending. Furthermore it was noted that the register and other documents incorrectly stated the date when carers were approved (i.e. it was stated as the date when the approval was recommended by the panel, as opposed to when the carer was actually approved by the decision maker).

# 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>
<b>12</b>	3

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	3
<b>31</b>	N/A

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	x
<b>29</b>	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	x
<b>2</b>	x
<b>4</b>	1
<b>5</b>	x
<b>16</b>	x
<b>17</b>	2
<b>18</b>	x
<b>19</b>	x
<b>20</b>	x
<b>21</b>	2
<b>22</b>	x
<b>23</b>	3
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	x
<b>26</b>	3
<b>27</b>	x
<b>28</b>	x
<b>32</b>	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	FS6 FS9 FS30	11 (a), 28 (2) (3), 29 (1)	The registered provider, having considered the issues discussed during the inspection and summarised in this report, must develop a strategy to ensure that the assessment and approval of foster carers, including consideration by panel, is consistently robust enough to protect children.	01/02/07
2	FS4 FS17	8 (1) 11 (a) 19 (a) (b) 26 (1) (2)	<p>The registered provider, having considered the issues discussed during the inspection and summarised in this report, must develop a strategy to ensure robust performance management.</p> <p>To this end the strategy must include:</p> <p>i) Ensuring an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and appropriately qualified staff, to meet the needs of the fostering service.</p> <p>This must take account of the regulations regarding the</p>	01/03/07

			<p>composition of the panel, to ensure that the agency has sufficient staff to sit on the panel, without having conflict of roles.</p> <p>ii) Recognition of the importance of ensuring objectivity and separation between decision-making, assessment of carers and consideration of approvals by members of the panel.</p> <p>iii) Effective quality assurance mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service.</p>	
3	FS4	28 (5) 29 (6)	<p>The registered provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correct the terminology used in the letters sent to carers to notify them of approvals / continuation of approvals</li> <li>- Ensure that the register of carers and other documents have the right date of approval.</li> </ul>	01/12/06
4	FS21	17(1)	The registered provider must make provision for the development of effective foster carer support group meetings.	01/03/07

## 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.	FS9	That the provider follows up with placing authorities the carers' concerns that at times they do not receive appropriate and sufficient information about the child.
2.	FS11	That the provider, as part of their annual development plan for the service, considers ways to widen consultation with children, families and others significant to the child and incorporates these in the plan.

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