

# inspection report

# FOSTERING SERVICE

**Child Care Bureau Ltd** 

H1 Blackpole Trading Estate (East)
Blackpole Road
Worcester
WR3 8SG

Lead Inspector
Jacqueline Dunster

Announced Inspection 17th May 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

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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 <a href="https://www.dh.gov.uk">www.dh.gov.uk</a> or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: <a href="https://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop">www.tso.co.uk/bookshop</a>

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**

Child Care Bureau Ltd Name of service

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Worcester WR3 8SG

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Name of registered provider(s)/company

(if applicable)

Child Care Bureau Ltd Mr G R Hemming

Name of registered

manager (if applicable)

Jennifer Foster

Type of registration Fostering Agencies

# SERVICE INFORMATION

# **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection** 20th June 2005

# **Brief Description of the Service:**

Child Care Bureau Ltd (CCB Ltd) is a family run, private limited company operating as an independent fostering agency. Two of its directors were foster carers for a number of years. It has been operating since June 2000 and was registered in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 on March 4th 2004. CCB Ltd state that their primary aim is to offer foster placements of a high standard in a stable, nurturing, safe and caring family environment for children and young people who are looked after. It offers a wide range of placements: short term, long term, task focussed, respite, pre-adoption, bridging, parent and child, leaving care and emergency. These placements are provided to children and young people from 0-18 years old. The agency also undertakes a range of fostering support services. CCB Ltd is based in Worcester and has carers in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Gloucestershire and Walsall. At the time of the inspection CCB Ltd supported 25 fostering households with 25 children and young people in placement.

# **SUMMARY**

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

During this inspection the agency's policies and procedures were examined. The manager completed an Annual Quality Assurance Assessment and Data Sheets. Twelve questionnaires were returned from foster caring households, twelve from children in placement and eight from placing officers. Letters were sent to 8 Safeguarding Children Boards. Worcestershire was the only one to respond and raised no concerns.

Three fostering households were visited with carers and one young person and one child in placement being interviewed. Their files were examined. Discussion was held with a group of carers, the social work staff at the agency, the registered manager and an independent professional supervisor. The minutes of panel meetings for the last year were examined.

The last inspection found that the agency was effectively managed, provided an excellent level of support and supervision to carers, had developed policies and procedures suitable to the task and responded well to the demands of regulation. Given this the inspection focussed on key standards and those areas where requirements and recommendations were raised by the last inspection. All standards not assessed were fully met at the previous inspection. The current inspection confirmed that these standards continue to be met.

Child Care Bureau was awarded an Investors in People award in March 2004. This remains effective until March 2007.

#### What the service does well:

The agency has a strong and capable manager who has striven to maintain the wellbeing of carers and children at the heart of the decision-making process.

The staff team are skilled, committed and supportive of each other and the manager.

The carers are offered a highly responsive service from the social work team. The supervising social workers provide high levels of support for the entire fostering household.

The agency has developed structures and practices which increase the likelihood of good matching of children's needs to carers' skills.

The agency has developed robust processes for consultation with stakeholders. This has contributed to the development and change of practice.

The agency has met 10 of the 11 requirements raised in the last report demonstrating the serious approach they adopt to the regulation and inspection processes.

# What has improved since the last inspection?

Risk assessments are now routinely undertaken. They are put in place at the outset of placement and in response to specific need. They are regularly reviewed and monitored.

The foster placement agreement is now in place for each individual placement. It is completed in a timely fashion and includes an outline of plans for the placement. It is regularly reviewed.

The agency has strengthened its position in requiring relevant information from local authorities. All staff are aware of the necessity of demanding this information from the outset of discussions.

The agency has improved expectations about education, specifically the role of the carer in providing constructive activity for children and young people who are not in school. They are supported in this task by the social work staff.

# What they could do better:

There is evidence through outcomes of good practice around supervision, risk assessments, monthly meetings with children and other activities carried out by social workers. There needs to be a more robust and full recording of the processes which took place within these events to demonstrate work and

enable assessment of effectiveness. This would also assist in the development of short and long-term strategies for working with children and young people.

Staff whose job is to include unsupervised contact with children must not take up their posts until the CRB has been received by the agency. Updated CRBs should be submitted with adequate time for their return before the previous one runs out of date. Files should evidence safeguards put in place when staff take up posts pending receipt of references.

The agency has introduced a new employee handbook which required some amendments. They are advised to continue the current review of the handbook in consultation with staff to ensure they are maximising the likelihood of recruiting and retaining good quality staff.

Risk assessments, matching processes, foster placement agreements and safe care policies could be further integrated so that change in one is reflected in another. The safe care policies should reflect the assessed needs or risks of the specific child placed.

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

The report of this inspection is available from <a href="mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk">enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk</a> or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

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

Children's health needs are considered from referral to review. The agency places a high priority on meeting these needs.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Initial referral forms address the health needs of children referred and health is part of the matching considerations undertaken. Monthly supervision, foster carers' monthly reports and the Foster Care Agreement deal directly with the health needs of the children. Foster carers report on children's health to statutory reviews. These processes ensure that the health of the child is kept on the agenda.

The agency has introduced a new health record which is maintained on each individual child. It provides a comprehensive history of health interventions relating to the child's placement and information for the carer on the child's health needs. Carers also maintain comprehensive records of medication administered which are regularly monitored by the registered manager.

There is evidence in children's records of working with CAMHS and other therapeutic services. One set of carers visited had been instrumental in instigating a new assessment of a child by CAMHS, responding to their day-to-day assessment of the child's needs and behaviours. Another set of carers described the support they are given in handling the aftermath of the challenging therapy one of the children is undertaking. They were enabled to

appreciate the long-term benefit of the work and assisted in dealing with its short-term consequences.

Work with one young person was being undertaken in collaboration with external health agencies to address a complex range of damaging behaviours and low self-esteem. The carer was undertaking excellent sexual health work with the young person.

Policies are based on a holistic view of wellbeing and include advice on physical, mental, sexual and emotional health.

Attention is given to the needs of children who have difficulty communicating through the provision of specific training. Training is provided on health and safety, first aid, sexual identity, drugs, Looked After Children and health.

# **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, 8, 9, 15, 30

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

The service continues to be managed by suitable persons, to provide suitable foster carers and to employ staff who are suitable to work with children and young people.

Staff whose job includes unsupervised contact with children must not start work before receipt of the CRB check. Safeguards must be put in place where they take up their position pending the receipt of full references. Requests for updated CRB checks after 3 years must be submitted with adequate time for their return before lapse of the original check.

The fostering panel is becoming increasingly effective, extending its quality assurance role and developing its own understanding of good practice.

The agency has developed the use of risk assessments, safe care polices and matching processes to increase the safeguards for children. These need to be further integrated. The safe care policy should demonstrate attention to the particular needs of the individual child in placement.

The agency has embedded rigorous reviewing of foster placement agreements and risk assessments which increases the likelihood of positive outcomes for

## **EVIDENCE:**

The staff files indicate that employment is contingent on the receipt of satisfactory CRB and reference checks. It is acknowledged that staff did not work unsupervised with children while these checks were outstanding. On occasion staff have taken up their post before receipt of the CRB check. The files do not demonstrate the measures put in place to safeguard the wellbeing of children while awaiting the outcome of reference checks. The agency is required to ensure this information is in place. Renewed CRBs have not been achieved on directors before the lapse of the previous check. The agency should ensure that the files evidence the efforts they have taken to meet these deadlines and the safeguards put in place. Trainee social workers are supervised and directed in accordance with regulations.

Unannounced visits and health and safety checks for carers are regularly undertaken and monitored by the manager. On one occasion the agency carried out an unannounced visit in response to concerns raised by the local authority demonstrating their seriousness about monitoring carer's practices.

Foster homes visited were comfortable and welcoming. They were well looked after and provided sufficient space for children placed. Almost all the placing officers' questionnaires were positive about the work carers were undertaking with children. On one occasion where this was not the case the agency has undertaken to carry out a case review.

There has been progress in ensuring that the local authorities provide all the necessary information to enable well-matched placements of children. The social workers are committed to retrieving this information and management has taken a tougher line with local authorities who fail to meet this need.

The agency has sound policies and practices relating to child protection and safer caring. Significant steps have been made in the use of processes to protect children, including risk assessments and matching documents. It is recommended that household safe caring policies be amended in consultation with the fostering household, including the child in placement, and the placing social worker to reflect the individual needs of the particular placement.

The risk assessment, matching and safe care policies should be viewed as contingent on one another in order to produce an integrated and comprehensive response to the safeguarding of children. The development of strategy following risk assessment or incidents should be recorded and planned. The agency should move from recording immediate response to developing short and long-term plans and assessment. On occasions the paperwork does not reflect that short and long-term planning is taking place.

Children and young people are generally well matched to carers by Child Care Bureau. Carers and staff identify the new post of placements and referral officer as pivotal in this. The appointment has consolidated the good work which had already been achieved in this area. This process clearly identifies gaps in matching and how they are to be addressed. Case tracking demonstrated that these plans are being put into effect.

Foster Placement Agreements and risk assessments are subjected to regular audit by the manager and by the fostering social workers through carer supervision. This has increased the relevance of the documents over time and assisted in strategic intervention with children and young people in placement.

The foster panel minutes indicate that the panel is increasingly robust in its testing of assessments presented to it. The panel undertook an extensive observation and consultation exercise with the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) which highlighted changes which needed to be made and training needs for the panel. The agency has sought to implement the changes and strategies recommended by BAAF.

# **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 outcome in this area is good. This judgement has been made using the available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency has a positive attitude to meeting the needs of children who are disabled or from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Children placed at Child Care Bureau are enabled to achieve educationally.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Child Care Bureau undertakes a number of initiatives to improve outcomes for children from minority backgrounds. Training is provided in improving the resilience of black children and valuing diversity. Through supervision direct training in culture and religion has been provided to support transracial placements. Relevant books and literature are provided to carers with learning needs. Case tracking evidenced efforts to ensure one young person in a transracial placement had a support worker who reflected their identity and had knowledge of the specific cultural needs of the child. The senior practitioner has attended training around providing for the needs of black children and has provided direct support to carers in meeting those needs. The referral process identifies gaps in cultural matching and outlines how these deficits can be addressed.

The agency employs a member of staff with an extensive background in disability. This has enabled the agency to identify and provide for the needs of children and young people with disability, particularly in relation to the communication needs of those with learning disability or developmental delay. Case tracking demonstrated that one young man with complex needs was being encouraged and enabled to fully participate in his social world.

The agency has put a new education policy in place. It places an onus on carers to provide constructive activity for those not attending school. Three children's files were sampled illustrating the programmes which were put in place for these children and young people and the support offered to the carers by the fostering social workers. The manager has agreed that the records should better reflect strategy and review for such arrangements.

There was evidence of constructive liaison with Worcestershire's ISL to gain support for young people and children in education. One carer was working closely with an education establishment to increase the self-esteem of a young person who had been in and out of school for a long period of time. This strategy also involved working with Connexions. Educational and training resources are made available to carers to support specific children. Carers visited spoke positively of the benefits of education and their role in facilitating it.

# **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 outcome in this area is excellent. This judgement has been made using the available evidence including a visit to this service.

Contact is regarded as important by staff and the foster carers with the agency strongly promoting contact arrangements for children and young people.

Child Care Bureau treats consultation with stakeholders, including placing authorities, carers and children, seriously and has embedded consultation into its daily routine. The agency demonstrates particular strength in this area.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The requirements for contact are considered at the referral and matching stages. They are addressed and reviewed through the foster placement agreement. Contact is considered in supervision and carers' assessments of contact are communicated to the children's social workers.

In one case considerable planning and negotiation had gone into establishing a format of contact which would maximise the chances of rehabilitation of the child to his birth mother. The carers and the fostering social worker had listened to the child's views and they had taken responsibility for working with the local authority to address his wishes. In discussion with this child he indicated that he was much happier with the arrangements for contact. This

fostering household is supporting very onerous contact demands with good spirit and a positive attitude.

Foster carers in the carers group also reflected this positive attitude to the long-term benefits of contact whatever the short-term problems it could cause.

Redesigned Children's Guides are provided to all children and young people in an age appropriate format. The guide looks interesting and is accessible. Foster carers are trained in communication with children who have communication difficulties.

A process of consultation is firmly embedded within everyday practice at Child Care Bureau. Fostering Social Workers meet with children in placement every month. They also meet regularly with birth children. Fostered children are consulted formally every six months. A consultation event is to be provided for foster and birth children. Both provide information to foster carer reviews. Birth children are involved in the assessment of prospective carers. In one case studied the birth child had taken part in skills to foster and subsequent training. She was observed to set clear and reasonable boundaries during a very constructive interaction with a foster child. She had been involved in establishing the safe care processes within the household.

Children in placement are encouraged to read and contribute to records the carers maintain on them. Children responding to our own questionnaires were positive about the service and the carers.

The agency undertakes regular consultation exercises with other stakeholders and recognises the value of these processes in identifying where change is necessary and where things are working well.

# **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 outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using the available evidence including a visit to this service.

Child Care Bureau has made its payments to carers increasingly transparent and comprehensible. The agency ensures that carers payments are accurate and timely.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Carers were awarded a 2.4% increase this year. Foster carer questionnaires and review of agency and carer files did not reveal concerns about financial provisions for 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):

## 1, 2, 4, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24,

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

This agency has a clear statement of purpose which reflects its ethos and practices. It is managed effectively, in a way which encourages staff and carers to strive for best practice. The continued progress made by the agency is in large part due to the effective leadership of the manager, a fact acknowledged by carers, staff and directors throughout the inspection.

The agency has greatly improved its monitoring practices.

Records are much improved with just one outstanding matter from the previous inspection.

The agency continues to excel in the level of support it offers to carers.

A new staff handbook concerning terms and conditions of service may reduce the likelihood of recruiting and retaining high calibre staff.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

There is a clear statement of purpose which covers matters required by regulations. There are age appropriate children's guides which enable children to understand the functions of the service.

There has been continuity of management at the agency over the last two years with a capable and respected manager in place. The manager has continually undertaken relevant training and is supported in her professional development by an independent supervisor. Staff and carers credit the manager with the improvements in the agency and find her knowledgeable and supportive. A number of carers concurred with the view expressed by one that "..we have an excellent manager who is very supportive...since (she) became the manager everything has been sorted out and we are now an excellent company to work with".

Lines of accountability are well understood within the organisation and the role of the senior practitioner has been developed in a way which supports management function.

Foster carers state that they receive an exceptionally high level of support through supervision, support visits and in crisis. Both longstanding and novice

carers reported that they are always able to access support and that supervision meets their needs. The agency is to be commended for maintaining this continued level of support to carers. A placing social worker stated that the service "provided good support for the placement and are supportive of the local authority in managing the child". One foster carers' view that "If we need help, advice or support at any time, day or night, CCB would be there....we feel we will be fully supported.." was typical of the feedback from carers.

The manager has agreed that the detail of recording should be greater and more explanatory to better reflect the good work that is taking place with carers.

Records maintained by the agency now reflect the demands of regulations except for Regulation 30(3)(a) which remains a requirement. Considerable work has been undertaken by the manager in regularly auditing all records. A culture of expectation in relation to these regulations is being firmly established by the manager.

Details of approval are not always consistent across the entirety of the carers' record. This should be corrected to reduce the risk of confusion.

The agency has introduced a new staff handbook concerning terms and conditions of service. The agency was advised that some elements of the handbook did not reflect the intention of legislation. This review has commenced since the inspection. The director in charge of human resources has advised that this has already resulted in some increases in benefits, the whistle blowing policy being improved and other matters being kept under review. The agency is advised to continue this review of the handbook along with the staff to re-establish lines of communication on these matters.

The standard of assessments of prospective carers continues to improve. The views of the assessor of the Skills to Foster training and the household safe care policies are now provided in the pack presented to panel on prospective carers.

The agency has in place good models for capturing statistical information. These are now subjected to longitudinal evaluation which allows them to inform practice within the agency.

# **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		
Standard No	Score	
12	3	

STAYING SAFE		
Standard No	Score	
3	2	
6	3	
8	3	
9	3	
15	2	
30	3	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING		
Standard No Score		
7	3	
13	3	
31	N/A	

MAKING A POSITIVE		
CONTRIBUTION		
Standard No	Score	
10	3	
11	4	

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC		
WELLBEING		
Standard No	Score	
14	X	
29	3	

MANAGEMENT		
Standard No	Score	
1	3	
2	3 X 3 X	
4	3	
5	X	
16	X	
17	X 3 2	
18	2	
19	X	
20	X	
21	3	
22	4	
23	X	
24	X 3	
25	X	
26	X	
27	X	
28	X	
32	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	FS3	5, Sch 1	The agency must ensure that it acquires renewed CRB checks on directors before the previous CRB lapses. Where this is not achieved the records should indicate safeguards which have been put in place to secure the protection of children.	30/06/06
2	FS15	20, Sch 1	Staff must not take up post before the receipt of CRBs. Staff files must evidence safeguards put in place to protect children when references are not in place at the start of employment.	30/06/06
3	FS24	30(3)(a)	Records of placements with foster carers must meet this regulation. (Timescale from last inspection not met)	30/06/06

## **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	Good Practice Recommendations
	Standard	

1	FS8	The agency should further integrate its matching, risk
		assessment and safer caring policies.
2	FS18	The agency should continue to review the current staff handbook to ensure it reflects the demands of accepted
		industry standards and legislation.
3	FS24	Records should be maintained which provide a fuller account of the work which is being undertaken at every stage of the fostering task.

# **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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