



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Five Rivers Family Placement Services

**Belmont School
School Lane
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP1 3TA**

Lead Inspector
Sophie Barton

Announced Inspection
10th July 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 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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Five Rivers Family Placement Services
Address	Belmont School School Lane Salisbury Wiltshire SP1 3TA
Telephone number	01722 421142
Fax number	01722 421144
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.five-rivers.org
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Caroline Anne Kerley
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 31st May 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Five Rivers Family Placement Service is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from six branches across the country and in Ireland. The head office is at Fordingbridge in Hampshire. This inspection is of the main branch of the Family Placement Service, based in Salisbury, with a sub-office in Fordingbridge. This branch currently provides 96 placements within a 40-mile radius of Salisbury and has over 94 approved fostering households.

The Salisbury branch shares an office with Belmont School, a registered EBD school that fostered children can access.

Five Rivers Family Placement Service places a strong emphasis on providing sibling placements and at the time of the inspection they were providing a number of multiple placements for sibling groups. The service provides placements for children with a disability and mother and baby assessments. Both practical and emotional support systems are in place to maintain these placements.

As well as a number of qualified social workers, there are also family support workers and a psychotherapist within the team.

SUMMARY

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

The fostering service was provided with two months notice of the inspection. The inspection was carried out over five days between the 10th and 18th July 2006. The inspector was made very welcome by all those at Five Rivers Family Placement and was assisted thoroughly with the inspection process. During the inspection five fostering households were visited and five young people seen and spoken with. A second inspector was used to visit two of these carers and young people.

Three supervising social workers were interviewed privately, the inspector also met with the majority of the staff team at a team meeting, interviewed the two referral team workers, the psychotherapist employed by the service, the registered manager and manager of the sub-office, and interviewed the training officer.

Recruitment files were checked as were a number of foster carer and children's case files, including those where complaints or allegations had been made.

At the time of writing the report questionnaires were received from six children/young people, three foster carers, eight placing social workers and one parent. A Commissioning Manager of a Local Authority and a Child Care Team was also contacted for feedback about the service.

The judgements contained in this report have been made from evidence gathered during the inspection, which included a visit to the service and takes into account the views and experiences of people using the service.

What the service does well:

Many aspects of the service's management is excellent, efficient, and with clear accountability and organisation of staff. The manager is well qualified and has set up good monitoring systems of complaints, allegations, and accidents. The service and the manager are considered by other agencies to be professional, receptive and to have good quality carers. Outcomes for children in relation to health, contact with family, leaving care and stability are good, with carers providing a lot of input to children to ensure the best possible attainments for them. Carers are supported fully by the supervising social workers who visit regularly and respond quickly to any issues. Carers described the support given to them as "excellent", "brilliant" and "superb".

This level of support was also reflected by the young people as all of the young people who responded by questionnaire stated that they are "always" listened to by their carers. Of significant importance is that all responded that they "always" feel well cared for where they are living.

Carers are assessed thoroughly, and are provided with high quality and variety of training. The supervising social workers are also qualified social workers and are receiving post-qualifying training. This ensures that they have the skill and knowledge to support the carers to meet a range of children's needs.

Case records and files are very well organised, kept up to date and accurate.

Carers and workers are good advocates for children in relation to their rights to education, contact with family, and stability.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last announced annual inspection in October 2005 the service has proactively addressed the requirements and recommendations made. Where there were shortfalls in the written policies and procedures these have been addressed, and the fostering panel is no longer serving more than three branches.

There was also an unannounced random inspection on 31st May 2006 following a child protection investigation notification. Serious concerns were identified around matching, information obtained about children's backgrounds, and safe care and risk assessments. The manager immediately addressed these concerns by redeveloping procedures and ensuring all risk assessments and safe care assessments are completed prior to placement. The inspector saw evidence that the practice had improved and will continue to monitor this.

The service is working hard to ensure that it consults fully with children. The participation project is continuing to develop and is giving the opportunity for a group of young people to help develop the fostering information, and possibly support interviews and recruitment of new staff.

What they could do better:

Following this inspection four requirements have been made and 9 recommendations. One requirement related directly to the welfare of children. In three cases the supervising social workers did not follow the appropriate child protection procedures once they were notified of child protection concerns. The staff and the manager must ensure that child protection procedures are followed at all times, and that the area social services are the decision makers of whether a child protection investigation is required. The other requirements related to a one off breach of regulation concerning the quoracy of panel, and another one concerned the need for foster carer reviews to be carried out within a year. The inspector acknowledges that the majority of reviews have been undertaken but there continues to be some slippage.

Two requirements have been carried over from the previous unannounced inspection in May 2006. Although as stated above the service has worked quickly to address the shortfalls the Commission needs to ensure that the

practice improvements are maintained. The development of a 'Foster Placement Agreement' would ensure that supervising social workers and carers are provided with more detailed information from the Placing Authority.

In relation to the following areas listed below the inspector did not note any poor practice but instead areas where the service should improve to ensure that best/good practice is followed.

The training offered is good but the service would further benefit from carers who have training in pathway planning and physical intervention.

Children's case files were overall well organised, but they did lack a comprehensive record of events affecting the child while placed with Five Rivers carers. For instance if a child moves carers, the decision making for this should be evidenced on the child's file. Information in relation to agreed contact plans (for the child to visit family) also needs to be recorded, which will ensure plans are followed and that children are aware of the carers responsibilities. Although health needs of children were met well and health records were detailed, the consent to medical treatment for the child was not always obtained and this is a breach in regulation and can lead to conflicts in practice.

Carers files, again were well organised and clear, but the manager needs to ensure that a record is on the file detailing any complaints, allegations, significant events and that a clear list of children that have been placed with the carers is recorded.

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.

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

The fostering service is good at identifying, meeting and promoting the health needs of children, ensuring children receive health care services where needed.

EVIDENCE:

Of the questionnaires received back from placing social workers, two said the fostering service was “excellent”, five said they were “good” and one said they were “adequate” in enabling children to be healthy. On each child’s file seen there was a health record, and where appropriate a medication administration record. For one child who had significant health needs the record included details of immunisations, details of diagnosis and specialist assessments including a physiotherapy report. The ‘Looked After Children’ documentation from placing authorities had also been obtained in the majority of cases and these also detailed the children and young people’s health needs. However on four of the children’s files there was no evidence that medical consent had been obtained.

Case records evidenced that foster carers had recently requested specialist health support for the young people (consultant paediatrician, CAMHS). The inspector was also shown evidence relating to how a child’s health had particularly improved since they had been in placement. The fostering manager provided details to show that 100% of young people consenting to medical treatment had received an annual health assessment. The service has input (two days a week) from a psychotherapist. His role is to provide training to carers, and clinical guidance to carers and supervising social workers on particular children. The training therapeutic sessions with carers include child development and attachment.

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 and 30

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

The management and staff are qualified, and robust recruitment procedures ensure that all workers are suitable to work with children. Children are benefiting from foster carers that provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

The service has improved its procedures to ensure that children are matched appropriately with carers, and this needs to be sustained to ensure children are in suitable placements.

The service has not always followed satisfactory child protection procedures, which leads to the potential for children to be further harmed.

The fostering panel makes good recommendations and has an effective quality assurance role, although some improvements are needed to ensure it is run effectively.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector examined three personnel records of staff recently appointed. These records evidenced that safe recruitment practices are followed with the

service carrying out CRB and reference checks. Proof of identity and qualifications were obtained. The supervising social workers were registered with the General Social Care Council. Detailed application forms set out previous experience and covered any gaps in employment. In particular the Fordingbridge sub-office was a focus during the inspection and the inspector noted that the current staff team there has no previous experience in family placement. Two experienced members of the team had left last year. The new workers had however all undertaken training in family placement assessment and supervision. Three workers in the Salisbury office had previous family placement experience before joining Five Rivers. It is recommended that any future recruitment takes into account the importance of family placement experience.

The organisation has detailed recruitment and selection procedures that follow the need to meet the regulations. The manager confirmed that CRB checks are renewed every 3 years. The manager further reported that her CRB is current.

Five foster carers were visited as part of the inspection. All homes were adequately and comfortably furnished, with each child having their own bedroom. Each foster carer's file examined had a completed and up to date health and safety assessment. The panel is also proactive in ensuring that homes have suitable fire precautions, and gas safety checks.

All staff spoken with confirmed that matching is given a high priority. Requests from local authorities go through to the referrals team. This team reported that they request initial information about the child, which includes ethnicity, geographical considerations, and any risks (sexual, physical, offending, substance misuse, self-harm). The referral workers also stated that further assessments are requested from placing social workers. This information is passed to supervising social workers for consideration with carers about the appropriateness of a placement. The referrals team are also provided with profiles of carers from the supervising social workers, which includes the carers interest, likes and composition of the family. A file containing recent referrals to the family placement service was examined, and the notes evidenced that histories, backgrounds and known needs of the children are requested at point of referral and passed onto supervising social workers.

Carers spoken with confirmed that they are able to make informed decisions about placement, and are provided with satisfactory information. Of the three questionnaires received from foster carers, two said they received excellent information about the child before they were placed and one said the information was good. Workers and management confirmed that children are only placed following an appropriate match and that there is no pressure to fill any vacancies.

The Commission recently carried out an unannounced additional inspection to this service following a serious child protection allegation (31 May 2006). The

inspection highlighted significant concerns regarding this young person's placement with two different Five Rivers carers. Five Rivers Family Placement in Cheltenham and the Referrals Team had failed to pass on appropriate information to the Salisbury office. The needs of birth children had not been taken into account when considering a placement with the family. Safe care and risk assessments were not routinely being carried out prior to placements. The service has since improved its practice with the placement procedures now including the need for supervising social workers to obtain the initial referral form.

Risk assessments for each child should now be completed prior to a planned placement. A risk assessment was seen on three of the young people's files case tracked, in relation to offending and known aggressive behaviour, although these risk assessments were limited in detail. Individual safe care assessments were also seen on children's files as well as foster carers own safe care guidance/assessment. The inspector examined a file of a carer who had just had a young person placed with them. The case notes on this file further evidenced that safe care and risks were discussed during supervisory visits by the Five Rivers worker.

Safe care assessments have not been routinely dated or signed.

Incidents, accidents, complaints and allegations are recorded and monitored efficiently. The inspectors examined these files. The forms used to monitor the incident reports did not include a section on the action taken or outcome of the incident. One incident in particular concerned the inspector, as a comment from a child about sexually inappropriate behaviour from a sibling that should have initiated a child protection referral, was not formalised in writing, but actioned by the carer phoning the placing social worker. The incident was not investigated or assessed promptly, although the supervising social worker did contact the placing authority to follow up the initial concerns some time later.

Information also came to light about unexplained bruising seen on a child, and again the supervising social worker did not follow child protection procedures. Child protection procedures were also not initiated following an allegation made by a child against carers in June 2006. Since the last inspection in October 2005 there have been four allegations made against carers. Three of the investigations are on going and one carer has been de-registered. The manager is liaising with the local social services in relation to these investigations, and the manager has good oversight and understanding of these investigations.

The incident records seen also showed that one child was being restrained regularly due to challenging and aggressive behaviour. The carers have not received training in restraint. The manager had considered that the Commission did not view the need for foster carers to receive this training, however the regulations do indicate the foster carers must ensure that any

measures of control are reasonable. The manager agreed to look immediately for training for carers. The carers were receiving support from the psychotherapist on managing and understanding the child's behaviour.

The last three months of panel minutes were examined. These evidenced that first reviews and assessments are being brought to panel. Panel members are actively questioning carers abilities and commitments where appropriate and offering an independent view of the suitability of carers. Supervising social workers confirmed that the panel is thorough and challenge assessments appropriately. The agencies decision maker further clarified that the panel is effective and efficient. The minutes available for inspection and given to the decision maker would benefit from being clearer about the approval status of the carers, and detail the name of the people questioning and commenting. The inspector noted that on two occasions the panel was not quorate, as there was not a social work representative on the panel. In discussion with the manager this was an oversight and these cases will be brought back to panel.

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 and 13. (31 is not applicable to this service)

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

The fostering service values diversity, with gender, ethnicity, culture and disability being well considered when planning placements.

The fostering service actively promotes the educational attainment of children and young people, encouraged them to attain their full potential.

EVIDENCE:

The information provided by the manager stated that all but one child of school age were receiving educational input. The discussions with the team members also confirmed that the educational outcomes for children are promoted by the agency. During supervisory visits to carers the workers discuss the educational needs of the young people. Two young people case tracked had left school. The supervisory social worker and foster carers were arranging courses through Connexions for these young people and actively trying to get further training or occupation from them. Two foster carers visited who had younger children placed with them were liaising closely with the schools and attending meetings. Education reports, Personal Educational Plans and Individual Educational Plans were seen on the child's and carer's files. A support worker employed by Five Rivers Family Placement Service works alongside children who are having difficulties at school, assisting with homework or supporting them with work experience.

Other good practice examples include foster carers exploring work experience opportunities, foster carers supporting children with extra curricular activities (including Kumon homework), foster carers advocating for the rights of the children to full time education, and providing transport to schools out of the local area. The manager confirmed that children's attendance at school has improved since been in placements with Five River carers.

The manager stated that 71% of young people aged 16 had achieved at least one GCSE, as this is above the national average. None had achieved five or more GCSE's and therefore it is important for Five Rivers to further assess and rectify this. Five young people who sent back questionnaires stated that they "always" receive the right help so they can be successful in their education.

The service is currently accommodating 10 young people from ethnic minority groups and currently supervises two carers from a minority ethnic group. Initial matching forms prompts workers to consider ethnicity, culture and language. One carer visited explained how she had contacted a local mosque and asked for support for a young person, and has made herself aware of Muslim traditions. Carers receive training in diversity and challenging inequality. From the eight questionnaires from placing social workers, one stated the fostering service is "excellent" at addressing issues of equality and diversity, five said the service was "good", one stated "adequate" and one was "unsure". A comment from one placing social worker stated "specialist training needed re: disability/learning difficulties". A carer also commented that specific training would be beneficial in relation to caring for children with disabilities.

The inspector was informed of a good practice example of foster carers supporting an unaccompanied asylum seeker with obtaining English lessons and making contact with the local catholic church so that the young person can take mass. Another carer made contact with the 'Bristol Vietnamese Community' leader and regularly took the young person to events and celebrations provided by the BVC. Foster carers have also been given the opportunity to attend training in London on 'caring for black children'.

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 and 11

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

Contact with family and friends is well promoted ensuring young people maintain these links where appropriate.

The service is currently prioritising consultation with children, and is being innovative in gaining children's views.

EVIDENCE:

The manager stated that a high priority is given to maintaining and promoting contact between the young people and their families. Examples were given to the inspector of Five Rivers family support workers and foster carers supervising contact, providing transport and having contact in the foster carers homes.

There was a positive outcome for one child who had regular contact with her father while in placement, close liaison between the foster carers and father, and contact in the carers home. This child then went to live with her father. The carers continue to provide support when needed. A young person visited stated that the carers assisted him in arranging contact with his sister. However, the arrangements for contact were not always up to date on the child's or carers files. If they had changed, the new contact plans were not clear. It is recommended that supervising social workers monitor this with carers and develop agreed plans with social workers and young people. There was however evidence that supervising social workers do work closely with placing social workers around contact arrangements.

The foster carers, and or family support workers, proactively write a report about any contact sessions they observe.

The service has begun to improve its consultation with young people. They are starting to have 'exit' interviews with young people, discussing ways they considered Five Rivers could improve. A recent outcome of one of these interviews was the need for Five Rivers social workers to go through the welcome booklet with young people.

A worker is also arranging a consultation event with young people. All young people have been asked whether they would like to be involved and 16 have agreed to participate in the consultation events. The organiser for this event is considering young people taking part in interviews for staff and redesigning the welcome booklet. Young people visited stated that they felt listened to and out of the six questionnaires received from young people they confirmed that their carers "always" listened and took notice of their concerns. One young person commented "We discuss things together. Although sometimes I am not getting my own way but my opinions always listened to." Another child stated "when I say that something is unfair they listen to me when I explain."

Carers annual reviews undertaken by supervising social workers evidenced that the young people's views are taken into account. The children and young people are asked what they like about the carers, and if they want anything to change. Their views are recorded.

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):

14 and 29

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

Five Rivers help and advocate for young people preparing to leave care, providing a good level of support to ensure the young people are actively involved in the decision-making.

Allowances and expenses are sufficient and ensure that carers can provide adequate transport and material goods for the child.

EVIDENCE:

Two young people visited were aged 16 years old. They had Pathway Plans, which they were aware of and understood. The young people confirmed that they were involved in the decision-making, and were taking responsibility for certain tasks (choosing college course, looking for work). The foster carers were supporting the young person to engage in appropriate activities and liaising with Connexions. Supervising social workers informed the inspector of cases where they have had to advocate on behalf of young people to extend placements past their 16th birthdays in order for their welfare to be safeguarded.

A 15 year old who replied by questionnaires stated that he is “usually” helped to think about the future by “talking about jobs”. A 16 year old who replied stated she is “always” helped, and “had a pathway plan every six months”.

The manager informed the Commission that 79% of young people in their foster placements, of 15 years and over, have a Pathway Plan. A file evidenced that the supervising social worker had made contact with the placing authority to request work on the Pathway Plan.

Two members of the team recently attended training on the Leaving Care Act, and cascaded this back to other team members. It would be further beneficial for carers to be provided training on Leaving care legislation and Pathway Planning.

The foster carers visited confirmed that they are paid promptly and that the allowances are sufficient. The young people stated that they received adequate clothing and pocket money. One child spoken with stated that he attended a number of social / after school clubs and leisure activities. A questionnaire from a carer highlighted that payment increases and allowances are not always known to all carers, and they are not aware if they have had a pay increase.

The manager confirmed that notices of pay increases are notified to carers annually via a letter. The allowance/fee levels are also published on Fostering Network website. It is recommended that the agency also publishes their current allowance levels and gives this directly to carers. The current standard fee for one placement is £380.00 per week. This is considerably above the minimum allowances proposed by the Fostering Network, and this allows foster carers to be free from low income.

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, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25 (32 is not applicable to this service)

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

The service meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose and they provide good information to carers, children and other interested parties. The staff are qualified and competent, undertaking good quality assessments of carers that can meet a range of children's needs. The staff's supervision and

support to carers is very good, with effective systems and procedures put into practice to ensure that carers are competent at their role.

The service is very well managed and organised effectively, providing a clear and consistent service to carers and children.

Foster carers training is prioritised, with good quality and varied training providing carers with skills to meet the needs of children.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has a Statement of Purpose and a Welcome Guide for young people. The Welcome Guide was not reviewed at this inspection, and the reader should refer to previous reports that state that the Guide meets the minimum standards. The Statement of Purpose for the organisation is made available to carers and placing authorities and clearly sets out what services are provided for children who are placed by the service.

The Five Rivers Family Placement service in Salisbury also has a sub office in Fordingbridge. The Commission has previously required the service to inform the Commission of its future management arrangements for the two offices, as there was some concern that the Fordingbridge office should be registered in its own right as a fostering branch. The service has addressed this concern by adding another management layer to the fostering service. A new manager has been appointed to be the registered manager of the two offices, and will concentrate on the day to day management of the service. The current manager has been promoted to Deputy National Manager and will be involved more in the strategic development of the service. The Fordingbridge and Salisbury teams meet monthly as a team, there is a common record keeping and administrative systems, shared training and recruitment plan, shared referrals team, shared on-call and are close geographically. Comments from staff and managers are that it is an integrated service. The manager is available to both offices. The Commission is therefore satisfied with the current arrangements, but that the situation will be reviewed when the numbers of carers supported by the Fordingbridge office increases.

The management structure has clear lines of accountability. The current registered manager is well qualified, having a certificate in Health and Social Services Management in addition to an NVQ 4 in Management and the Registered Managers award. The registered manager and the manager of the Fordingbridge office have undertaken further training in supervisory skills, diversity, Special Guardianship, Attachment, Form F assessments, and Every Child Matters. The manager has very good monitoring systems, with information quickly available to inspectors in relation to complaints, allegations, accidents, dates of foster carer reviews, caseloads of supervisory

social workers, and training attended by staff and carers. Administration within the service is efficient, and team members confirmed that admin support is good. Carers also commented that the administrator at the Fordingbridge office is competent and knowledgeable. The service is commended on how it organises and manages staff.

There are 14 qualified social workers working within the agency, and they supervise and assess foster carers (the agency currently supports 94 fostering households). Within this group four of the workers are senior and line manage the other supervising social workers. Caseloads for a full time member of staff average about 12 carers, and all reported that this was manageable and allows for a high level of support to be given. There is one worker who is currently completing the Diploma in Social work. This worker has been supervising carers, although the National Minimum Standards stipulate that carers should be supervised by qualified workers only.

There are 5 family support workers, who help support carers with providing activities for young people, with transport and supervising contact. Some foster carers spoken with were not aware of the support available from the family support workers.

There is a designated member of staff responsible for organising training for staff and for carers, and an administrator with the duty to keep training records. The training programme offered to carers post approval covers a range of areas (e.g. mother and baby assessments, recording, challenging behaviour, safe care, child abuse and diversity). An audit was undertaken of the training and carers consulted about the programme offered. As of March 2006, 59 carers had achieved or were working towards an NVQ 3 in Caring for Children (or other relevant qualification). Pre-approval training to carers is provided by a member of the Family Placement team, and undertaken at a residential weekend.

Training for staff is provided in house and by external agencies, in particular Wiltshire Social Services, BAAF and Fostering Network. The training programme for staff is commendable and staff have themselves reported that training opportunities are good. Four qualified staff are undertaking post qualifying training at the local university, and this is on a rolling programme.

The service completes BAAF form of assessments. Workers have received training from BAAF, and assessments seen were comprehensive. Potential carers are thoroughly checked, with good practice recommendations followed in relation to the number of checks, visits and interviews carried out. The carers are supported well by the supervising social workers. Visits are undertaken at least every three weeks and include unannounced visits. Of the files examined all visits were up to date, regular and had clear aims and outcomes. Very clear records are made of supervision sessions with carers, with the agency using a proforma that is typed and signed by all involved. A

random number of files checked, showed that foster carer reviews had not been completed within a year.

Foster carers files identified that each had a foster care agreement that covered the necessary areas. Policies made available to carers include details around allegations, child protection and complaints. The manager records these issues clearly, and has a robust monitoring system.

Foster carer guidelines set out that carers have the opportunity to attend support groups, receive out of hours support, respite care when appropriate, and information and advice from a range of professionals (educational psychology, psychotherapist, family support workers). Carers visited said communication was open and that the supervising social workers link closely with the child's social worker. Comments included "brilliant, never felt unsupported, staff come out as soon as possible if needed", "brilliant support", "superb, supervising social workers work beyond the call of duty." Of the three questionnaires from foster carers, two stated that they receive "excellent" support from the fostering service and one responded the support was "adequate."

There are support groups set up for three different geographical areas, and the carers visited stated that the groups were informal but supportive. Carers stated that the 'children who foster' groups were also good, and fun days are also organised each year for carers, birth children and foster children.

A number of children's and carers files were examined. Overall they were considered to be in very good order, easy to read, accurate and up to date. The children's files contained a range of 'looked after children' documentation. Where these were not on file, there was a letter from the agency requesting these documents from the placing authority. The children's files did lack case notes about significant issues to do with the young person. For instance one young person moved from one set of carers to another. The reasons and details of this move were not recorded on the child's file, and therefore it did not provide a comprehensive case record. However, this information was clearly recorded on the carers files. As referred to under Standard 12 there also lacked medical consent for children. This and other significant information (contact arrangements, child's history) should be covered in the foster placement agreement and this was not seen on files, however the inspector is aware the manager is addressing this shortfall. The carer's files did not contain a clear list of placements on the file (although the inspector acknowledges that this is recorded in annual reviews).

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	3

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

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

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

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

YES

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	FS8	17(1)(3)	<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with him, a foster parent is given such information which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child. This includes referral information and previous history.</p> <p><i>(This requirement was made at the inspection dated 31/05/06. Although this has been addressed further evidence of good practice needed in order to show that this regulation has been complied with)</i></p>	01/09/07
2	FS9	11(a)	<p>The Registered Person must ensure that the welfare of children placed with foster carers is safeguarded, by having safe care guidelines and risk assessments completed for each child (prior to or immediately following placement if an emergency placement).</p>	01/09/07

			<p>Where there are allegations or concerns about the risk a young person poses to other children they must not be placed with other children.</p> <p><i>(This requirement was made at the inspection dated 31/05/06. Although this has been addressed further evidence of good practice needed in order to show that this regulation has been complied with)</i></p>	
3	FS9	12	Child protection concerns must be notified to the area social services where the incidents have allegedly taken place.	01/09/06
4	FS12	34 (Schedule 6)	<p>Before a placement is made there must be a Foster Placement agreement that covers all the areas in Schedule 6.</p> <p>Consent for medical treatment must be obtained from the person with parental responsibility for each child and a record on the file made.</p>	01/11/06
5.	FS21	29(2)	All foster carers should have a review of their approval at intervals of no more than a year	01/09/06
6	FS30	25	A fostering panel must not conduct any business unless at least 5 of its members meet as a panel (to include person appointed to chair, at least one social worker employed by the agency, and two independent members).	01/09/06

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 Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS9	<p>Any generic safe care policies should be personalised, sufficiently detailed, dated and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Safe care guidance needs to make reference to the needs of all children in the household.</p> <p><i>(This recommendation is brought forward from the previous inspection dated 31/05/06)</i></p> <p>Carers should undertake accredited training in restraint and physical intervention.</p> <p>Accident and incident records should include a section to detail the outcome and action taken following the incident.</p>
2	FS8	<p>There needs to be documentary evidence of matching considerations that includes known histories of the young person, and needs of other children in placement.</p> <p><i>(This recommendation is brought forward from the previous inspection dated 31/05/06)</i></p>
3	FS10	<p>There should be clearer details about the contact arrangements for each child on their file.</p>
4	FS11	<p>Continue to develop formal consultation systems with children looked after.</p> <p><i>(This recommendation is brought forward from the previous inspection dated 17/10/05)</i></p>
5	FS14	<p>Carers should undertake training in Pathway Planning.</p>
6	FS24	<p>Case records for children should be more detailed to include case notes about significant issues, any placement moves and support being received.</p>
7	FS25	<p>The list of children placed with carers (previous and current) should be made clearer on the carer's files.</p> <p>There should be a section on the carer's files that lists any</p>

		allegations, concerns or other significant events.
8	FS29	The foster care allowances made to carers should be published and readily available to carers.
9	FS30	Minutes from the fostering panel should be more detailed to include names of the people asking and answering questions and details of the carers terms of approval.

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