



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Rochdale Social Services Fostering Services

Foxholes House
Foxholes Road
Rochdale
OL12 0ED

19th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Rochdale Social Services Fostering Services

Address

Foxholes House, Foxholes Road, Rochdale, OL12 0ED

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

01706 710750

Address

Foxholes House, Foxholes Road, Rochdale, OL12 0ED

Fax No:

01706 715033

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

17/03/03

Date of Inspection Visit		19th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mark Kersh	078210
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Steve Garner	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Rochdale Social Services Fostering Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

This is the second announced inspection of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service since the introduction of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services were implemented on 01/04/02.

Rochdale Fostering Service provides temporary foster carers these are people who take children on a temporary basis until they can return home, temporary care includes placements that are made in an emergency as well as placements planned in advance. Permanent foster carers provide an alternative to adoption for those children who cannot return to their birth family. Friends and family carers provide care to children already known to them before their full assessment and approval in an emergency situation. Placements with friends and family carers provide a valuable service to children, who enable them to stay within their own family or network and is a more normal and less stigmatising experience for them. Support foster carers (respite), provide care to children and their families as part of a family support service. Young people carers provide care to young people over the age of 11, focussing on behavioural change and development. Contract carers provide care for children with very special needs, where the only alternative recommended placement is residential care or the child's emotional and behavioural difficulties require a carer at home full time with no other children in placement. This is a fee-paying scheme.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This service has been inspected for the second time against the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 introduced from 1ST April 2002. The first inspection of this service took place between 17/03/03 – 21/03/03. This inspection took place on site and off site of Rochdale Fostering Services between 19/01/04 – 25/01/04. The inspector received pre inspection information from the service prior to this inspection. The acting manager, chair of panel, ten staff and six carers were interviewed, the inspector arranged 2 dates for carer's group discussion however, only 1 carer attended. The inspector attended a group discussion with 5 young people during the children's rights officer's regular meeting. Visits to four carers homes were undertaken and discussions with carers and children were carried out, and observations at the panel meeting. Tracking took place of Staff, children and foster carers files. Verbal and written feedback was given to the acting manager.

The manager of Rochdale Fostering Service left to further pursue a career in September 2003 and the manager of the authorities children's provider service is acting manager of the Fostering service. The manager of the under 8's child and family support is acting assistant manager of the Fostering Service. Both have other managerial responsibilities outside of the Fostering Service and recognise the importance of strategic planning in order to run an effective and efficient service and employing a permanent manager. Advertisements have been placed and remain ongoing in professional publications to recruit a permanent manager to the Fostering Service. The acting manager, acting assistant manager and members of the staff team are aware of the shortfalls and the need for improvement. There are ongoing plans for recruitment and development and a willingness to improve and make changes. This requires continued support from senior managers and elected members. Recruitment of 1 social worker, 2 support workers and a recruitment and marketing officer have been successful and are all due to take up posts before April 2004. There is a need to revise and update existing policies and procedures in line with the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services. During the previous 12 months staff have been working under constant pressure due to the staffing difficulties and the demands for the need for places for Looked After Children. Within these constraints staff are committed to the Fostering service and promoting good practice.

Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose does meet the National Minimum Standards but not the Regulation to notify the Commission of date of revision or supply the Commission with a copy within 28 days of any such revision. The Fostering Service has produced a Children's Guide which meets the National Minimum Standards and plans are being made to supply a copy of this to all carer's and children of appropriate age as specified in the Regulations.

Fitness to Provide or manage a Fostering Service

The acting manager and acting assistant manager are both suitably qualified and experienced in providing services for children. Currently not all personnel files meet the Regulation.

Managing of the Fostering Service

The acting manager and acting assistant manager have other managerial responsibilities outside of the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service has no monitoring system in place or collation centrally of information relating to child protection. A system to monitor complaints failed as a result of no networking between two departments.

Securing and promoting welfare

The carer's visited as part of this inspection were found to be providing safe, healthy and nurturing environments and this was confirmed during discussions with children/young people and on questionnaires received from children/young people as part of the inspection process. Some carer's have no allocated workers and children/young people no allocated placing social worker, some statutory reviews have not taken place, as cases are stacked within the authority. Carer's annual reviews have fallen behind as a result of staffing difficulties and the lack of carer's sometimes makes matching suitable placements difficult.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carer's

Recruitment of carer's is intended to increase with the post of a recruitment and marketing officer being appointed. Staff and carer's stated that the Fostering Service provides regular good quality training opportunities and involves other professionals as guest speakers. Support and supervision of carer's does not meet the Regulation.

Records

Some children/young people's records are not maintained and updated as required by the Regulations. Some key documents for example Looked After Children documentation and care plans and placement agreements. Some carer's foster care agreements have not been updated as a result of annual carer's reviews not taking place.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Service is commended on the operation of the panel. Professional approaches by all involved and a system to have recommendations made at panel speedily agreed by the authorities decision maker is in place

Friends and family carer's

Not all friends and family carer's are known to the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service should identify the total number of friends and family carer's they are supporting and ensure that the placements made by the placing social workers are being supported so as no children/young people are left vulnerable. The Fostering Service has a dedicated worker for friends and family carer's. However, funding through Quality Protects has now ceased and this workers contract will not be renewed. A worker from the Fostering Service should be identified to support friends and family carer's. Currently annual reviews do not take place for friends and family carer's.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

That 2 written references are on individual staff files.

That the Fostering service has a full complement of permanent staff.

That all Looked After Children (LAC) documentation on young people's files is updated.

That the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide is kept under review and where appropriate revised and that the Commission is notified of any such revision within 28 days.

That a strategic plan must be implemented during the absence of a permanent manager to further reduce the responsibilities the acting manager and acting assistant manager have within other roles and duties in order to carry on and manage the Fostering Service.

That a system must be introduced to evaluate, collate the outcomes of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in a foster home. This information must be scrutinised on a regular basis.

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council must ensure that all Looked After Children have an allocated social worker and that Statutory reviews take place, as specified in Children and Young Person's Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4.

That Inspectors have access to Criminal Records Bureau disclosure documents.

That within the first year of placement a visit must take place within 1 week from its beginning and then at intervals of not more than 6 weeks, then subsequently, at intervals of not more than 3 months. On each occasion when a person that is authorised visits a child to carry out such a visit a written report is made of the visit. In the case of an emergency placement then a visit to a child must be made at least once a week.

That complaints are carried out within the timescales of the Local authorities complaints procedure.

That all panel members have Criminal Record Bureau Checks.

That the support and training needs including annual reviews of friends and family carer's must be assessed and met in the same way as for any other carer's.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	5 & 7 & 20	FS3	That 2 written references are on individual staff files.	31/03/04
2	12	FS9	That a system is in place to collate and evaluate information in relation to allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care.	31/03/04
3	30	FS24	That all Looked After Children (LAC) documentation on young people's files is updated.	31/03/04

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Mark KershSignature DE Cottrill

Second Inspector _____

Signature _____

Locality Manager DE CottrillSignature DE Cottrill

Date _____

10/02/04

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	4	FS1	That the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide is kept under review and where appropriate revised and that the Commission is notified of any such revision within 28 days.	31/07/04
2	8	FS2	That a strategic plan must be implemented during the absence of a permanent manager to further reduce the responsibilities the acting manager and acting assistant manager have within other roles and duties in order to carry on and manage the Fostering Service.	31/03/04
3	20	FS15	That Inspectors have access to Criminal Records Bureau disclosure documents.	31/03/04
4	35 () (c) (i) (ii)	FS17	The Responsible Person must ensure that the Authority is satisfied about the welfare of each child in placement and ensure the supervision of placement meets with Regulation 35.	31/03/04
5	Children Act 1989	FS22	That complaints are carried out within the timescales of the Local authorities complaints procedure.	31/03/04
6	20	FS30	That all panel members have Criminal Record Bureau Checks.	31/07/04

7	28	FS32	That the support and training needs including annual reviews of friends and family carer's must be assessed and met in the same way as for any other carer's.	31/07/04
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GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	That the Statement of Purpose contains a reference to the Fostering Services policies and procedures in relation to child protection, complaints and behaviour management.
2	FS4	That the acting manager is to monitor the matters as set out in Schedule 7 Fostering Services Regulations 2002, and if in relation to the Fostering Service, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 8 Fostering Services Regulations 2002 takes place, the acting manager shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.
3	FS9	That the foster care handbook is updated in line with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, which is, dated 1998. That the policies and procedures are updated in line with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
4	FS10	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council should ensure that all Looked After Children have an allocated social worker and that Statutory reviews take place, as specified in Children and Young Person's Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4.
5	FS29	That the fostering Service adds all extra expenses to the regular weekly payment and that the responsibility for budgeting the full cost of caring for each child would be with the carer.
6	FS32	That the Fostering Service identify the total number of friends and family carer's they are supporting and ensure that the placements made by the placing social workers are being supported so as no children/young people are vulnerable.
7	FS32	That a worker from the Fostering Service is identified to support friends and family carer's.

- Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	19/01/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	79

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- **There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.**

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Rochdale Family placement team has revised the Statement of Purpose following the announced inspection carried out on 17/03/03; the Statement was received by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) prior to this inspection along with pre-inspection information. However the actual date of the Statements revision or a copy was not notified to the Commission within 28 days, Regulation 4 (b) Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Statement of Purpose must include the date and any future date when amended. The Statement of Purpose includes all of the required information as stated in Standard 1 Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The Acting Manager agreed to make arrangements as specified in Standard 1.3 Fostering Services National Minimum Standards which states: - The registered provider (in the case of a Local Authority, the elected members) formally approves the Statement of Purpose of the Fostering Service, and reviews, updates and modify it where necessary at least annually. Rochdale fostering Service team has produced a Children's Guide, which includes all of the necessary information including a contact address and telephone number of the National Care Standards Commission. Good practice Recommendations have been made for the Statement of Purpose to contain a reference to the Fostering Services policies and procedures in relation to child protection, complaints and behaviour management.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Rochdale Fostering Service follows the Local Authorities policy and procedures on fair recruitment and selection. The permanent manager left the Fostering Service in September 2003 to further pursue a career. Advertisements have been placed within professional publications to recruit a permanent manager along with an additional assistant manager's post; both posts remain vacant. The acting manager is currently the children's service manager of provider services and the acting assistant manager is currently the under 8's child and family support manager both are experienced in child care services and are suitably qualified. Meetings with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) Head of Child Care and the acting manager continue to plan a strategy to ensure that the Fostering Service is operating efficiently and effectively. Consultation between senior management and the National Care Standards Commission remain ongoing and a strategic plan must be implemented during the absence of a permanent manager to further reduce the responsibilities the acting manager and acting assistant manager have within other roles and duties in order to carry on and manage the Fostering Service, Regulation 8(1) (a) (b) Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

Inspection of personnel files provided evidence that the fair recruitment and selection policy is followed. Two written references were in place on staff files with exception of two files. These files had only one written reference in place, (outstanding requirement from the inspection carried out on 17/03/03), Regulation 20 & Schedule 1 Fostering Services Regulations 2002. There was little evidence of checks via interviews and references made on staff that had transferred within Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to the Fostering Service. The main personal files are kept centrally within the authority and not at the Fostering Service Offices. All staff within the Fostering Service has now completed Criminal Record Bureau checks. The inspector sampled 7 files, from these two permanent members of staff had only 1 reference on file. A student on placement had references on file. Although students are not normally counted in staffing numbers as such, the NCSC would expect that students having unsupervised contact with children/young people are subject to the same checks as paid employees.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Policies and procedures supplied to the NCSC prior to this inspection provided evidence that systems are in place in relation to financial procedures. This includes charges for each of its services, statements of the amounts paid to foster carers and itemised amounts paid for wider services. Carers spoken with during this inspection confirmed that this information is sent to them. The Fostering Service does not have any form of formal monitoring system and good practice Recommendations have been made for the acting manager to monitor the matters as set out in Schedule 7 Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and if in relation to the Fostering Service, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 8 Fostering Services Regulations 2002 takes place, the acting manager shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

The Fostering Service is not currently managed effectively and efficiently as a result of staffing (sickness) and management difficulties (in recruitment) as mentioned in Standard 2 of this report. The acting manager, acting assistant manager and all staff are and have been working under intense pressure to deliver a service, which they recognise, should be improved. Requirements and good practice Recommendations have been made throughout the body of this report to ensure that the Fostering Service is operating in line with National Minimum Standards and Regulations. The Acting Manager and Acting Assistant Manager do not have clear job descriptions in relation to the fostering service, which means that the levels of delegation and responsibility of the Acting Manager and Acting Assistant Manager are not clearly defined.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>During this inspection four visits were undertaken to foster carers homes. The carer's homes were comfortably warm, clean and adequately furnished to accommodate all who live there. Prior to being approved prospective foster carers undertake training which covers health and safety issues. Young people interviewed during these visits were satisfied with the care they received, young people who completed questionnaires and returned them to the National Care Standards Commission prior to this inspection also agreed this. The Fostering Service prior to this inspection informed carer's by letter that they may be interviewed as part of the Commissions inspection process.</p>		

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Fostering Service has some carer's to meet the diverse needs of the children/young people requiring care. Successful recruitment of an Asian social worker will further identify needs of children/young people. Each individual young persons file inspected during this inspection had written information in relation to gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. Training and policies are in place to address and deal with all forms of discrimination. The Fostering Service has arrangements in place to ensure appropriate equipment and adaptation of homes for children with disabilities. Young people in placement have access and are encouraged to pursue their interests and hobbies. Some feedback from carer's questionnaires prior to this inspection indicated when emergency placements have been accommodated not all appropriate relevant information about the young person was received.</p>		

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Fostering Service ensures as far as is reasonably practical to carefully match children with a carer/carers capable of meeting his/her needs. This cannot always be achieved, due to a shortage of foster carers not only in Rochdale but also across the whole of England. The Fostering Service carries out detailed checks during the matching process and takes into account the young persons care plan and written assessments undertaken by the placing authority. The panel that makes recommendations to approve foster carers consists of professionals relevant to assessing the skills of foster carers. The Fostering Service has been successful in recruiting in addition to the Asian social worker 2 support workers and a recruitment and marketing officer, all are due to commence employment before April 2004. Evidence was seen in particular to long – term permanency placements of good practice in relation to matching, introducing and supporting children/young people in placement. However some long – term placements had been developed out of emergency placements.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Prospective foster carers undertake training including additional sessions in relation to child protection, behaviour management and children who have been abused. Each foster carer receives a comprehensive handbook, which covers all of the Fostering Services guidelines and procedures. Good practice Recommendations have been made to update the foster care handbook and the policies and procedures in line with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, which is, dated 1998. Clear written information is given to foster carers in relation to corporal punishment not being acceptable. An outstanding Requirement remains from the previous inspection on 17/03/03 that a system must be introduced to evaluate, collate the outcomes of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in a foster home. This information must be scrutinised on a regular basis, Regulation 12 Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The National Care Standards Commission has attended 2 strategy meetings these were not notified to the Commission by the fostering service. A good practice Recommendation has been made in Standard 4 of this report in relation to notifications under Schedule 8 Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Bullying is addressed in the handbook and in procedures. The handbook also gives information and guidelines to follow when young people are missing from home, carers demonstrated their knowledge in relation to this during discussions during this inspection.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

100

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

Procedures and the handbook cover contact arrangements for young people in foster care. Emphasis is placed on the importance of maintaining contact during the pre-approval training of prospective foster carers. Evidence within children/young people's files showed that some Looked After Children documentation and care plans are not up to date, including arrangements for contact. Some Statutory reviews have not taken place due to unallocated placing social workers. Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council should ensure that all Looked After Children have an allocated social worker and that Statutory reviews take place, as specified in Children and Young Person's Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4. The Social Services Inspectorate also identified this during an inspection of children's services in January 2002.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Pre approval training of prospective foster carers covers the importance placed on children's opinions and those of their families and significant others and listening to children. Carers and young people confirmed that expressed views and opinions are ascertained in day-to-day matters. Foster children have access to the departments Children's Rights Officer and regular meetings with the Children's Rights Officer occur to ascertain children/young people's views on the service they receive. The Fostering Service continues to plan more events to consult with children/young people and carer's.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Fostering Service maintains links with the local authority Looked After Children health worker, who is also a panel member. All foster children are registered with a local General Practitioner and dentist, this information is contained within each of the young persons individual case file. Health needs are addressed before a placement is made including in emergency placements. The Looked After Children health worker provides training to carer's on health care.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The Fostering Service maintains links with the local authority Looked After Children Education Teacher. Emphasis is placed on the importance of education during the pre-approval training for prospective foster carers, and carries on during placement by carers. Carers and young people gave positive examples during visits to the carer's homes during this inspection. Carers have made professional links with educational facilities and participate in parent's evenings and meetings at school. Training sessions on procedures and responsibilities regarding Personal Education Plans for teachers, social workers and other professionals remains ongoing. Sessions have been arranged for an opportunity for networking and sharing information for all those involved with Children in Public Care – Raising Achievement Project (CHIP RAP). Personal Education Plans (PEP) are in place on individual children's case files.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Fostering Service maintains a professional link to the Local Authority Young Person's Support Team. Procedures and guidelines from the leaving care team are in conjunction with the Children's Leaving Care Act 2000, and pathway plans. Carers and young people confirmed that day-to-day preparation is in place in relation to semi independence skills and moving on.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council has a Fair Recruitment and Selection process, which the Fostering Service follows. A Requirement has been made in Standard 3 of this report in relation to references under Regulation 20 & Schedule 1 Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Reference is made in Standard 3 of this report in relation to all staff now having Criminal Record Bureau checks. However the only evidence seen during this inspection was of names and the date of the check on a database, within the Fostering Service. Consultation has taken place with the head of personnel and the National Care Standards Commission along with guidance sent in relation to Inspectors having access to Criminal Records Bureau disclosure documents. These must be available for inspection Regulation 20 & Schedule 1 Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Total number of staff of the agency:

10

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

All staff confirmed during interview that supervision is carried out by the acting manager and acting assistant manager. Delegation of this process has been shared between them. All staff know to whom they are accountable. Some questionnaires received by the Commission prior to this inspection indicated that some carers did not feel supported although clearly from most of the questionnaires most do feel supported by the Fostering Service. Annual reviews are not taking place for all carer's although the Fostering Service is addressing this by allocating reviews at weekly meetings. The Fostering Service has insufficient administration support to cope with the backlog of reviews to be undertaken. Supervision of placements have not been carried out as specified in that within the first year of placement a visit must take place within 1 week from its beginning and then at intervals of not more than 6 weeks, then subsequently, at intervals of not more than 3 months. On each occasion when a person that is authorised visits a child to carry out such a visit a written report is made of the visit. In the case of an emergency placement then a visit to a child must be made at least once a week. The Fostering Service must comply with Regulation 35 Supervision of Placements Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Carer's and staff stated that the Fostering Service provides good quality training opportunities.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The Fostering Service does not have a full staff compliment Regulation 19 fostering Services Regulations 2002; this is an outstanding Requirement from the inspection carried out on 17/03/03, contingency plans to resolve this include the use of two agency workers who are known to the service and carers and advertising for relevant posts. Staff sickness in the period from January 2003 to June 2003 has contributed to the service not having a full compliment of staff. Policies and procedures are in place for guidance on staffing, training, supervision and terms of conditions. Carers are given support by having events laid on for the children/young people during training evenings. Recruitment drives occur aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of the children and young people. The Fostering Service has a clear assessment process for carers; this was evidenced through discussions with staff, carers and observations of the panel meeting. The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose provided evidence of a vacant post. The Acting Manager and Acting Assistant Manager hold responsibilities in other departments within the local authority. The responsible authority must take this into consideration in order to fully comply with the National Minimum Standards.</p>		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Policies and procedures are in place within the Fostering Service in relation to staff and carers all of the policies and procedures and the foster carer's handbook need to be revised and updated to meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, a good practice Recommendation has been made in Standard 9 of this report. Foster carers have appropriate out of hour's services to contact if needed through the Local Authority emergency duty team (EDT). The Fostering Service has comprehensive Health and Safety and a Whistle blowing policies however these was not known to all carer's.</p>		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>During discussion with staff on this inspection they confirmed that training and development is addressed and planned through supervision with the acting managers. Confirmation was also given in relation to a comprehensive induction process for new staff. Appraisals take place annually. The acting managers ensure that the staff team are familiar with new legislation for example the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2002 the Adoption Bill Standards and Regulations. Fostering Service staff undertake training jointly with foster carers and professional guest speakers attend courses.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities but this was not supported by a range of appropriate policies and procedures and these should be revised or where they do not exist created. Good practice Recommendations have been made in Standard 9 of this report.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Fostering Service has a strategy, which is under regular review in the absence of a permanent manager as mentioned in Standard 2 of this report. Carer's and staff are clear about each other's roles. The system for annual reviews of carers is thorough with detailed reports prepared for panel. However, a number of the reviews are out of date and the Fostering Service has some catching up to do as mentioned in Standard 16 of this report.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)		
The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
<p>The supervision of carers is not carried out as specified in Regulation 35 Fostering Services Regulations 2002 as mentioned in Standard 16 of this report. The Fostering Services Statement of Purpose under the heading of – complaints – states Since April 2003 there have been no formal complaints. However, evidence of the Fostering Services complaints monitoring system showed that a formal complaint had been made in April 2003, the monitoring system within the Fostering Service showed the complaint to be passed to the Local authority customer relations complaints department in July 2003, when an investigation was commissioned by the head of the child care department. The final outcome of this complaint was in December 2003. The Authorities complaints procedure failed in the timescales to address the complaint and no communication was recorded of the two services communicating with each other from July 2003. The Authorities complaints procedure in this complaint was unsatisfactory, in that, there is potential for complaints to be lost in the system, Children and Young Persons, Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991 The Children Act 1989 Volume 4.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There is ongoing training for carer's and staff in conjunction with the Fostering Network and staff within the Fostering Service have been trained to train prospective foster carer's on the "choosing to foster" course. All of the training follows the local authorities framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. The fostering Service provides ongoing programmes of training, self-development and training in safe caring throughout the induction.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Fostering Service has policies in place that establish the purpose, format and contents of files. Foster carers through discussions confirmed that information as to why young people are in foster care is mainly supplied by the placing social worker and link worker, which includes the legal status of the child/children. Foster carers actively encourage children to understand their history; children bring and keep memorabilia within the foster home. Foster carers demonstrated their understanding in relation to confidentiality. Four children's individual case files were tracked during this inspection, some of the Looked After Children documentation must be updated, these include the Essential Information Plan, Care Plan and assessment and action record Regulations 22 & 30 Fostering Services Regulations 2002, outstanding Requirement from the inspection on 17/03/03.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Some of the records that the Fostering Service maintains are stored securely within the social services departments away from the Fostering Services office. For example personnel files and children's individual case files. All files within the Fostering Service are stored securely. Access to these records by the Fostering Service staff is accessible. Policies and procedures are in place for the retention of case files as specifies in Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

For number of placements as specified within the Fostering Service refer to Standard 32 in this report. Current weekly payments are under review.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		X
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £
		X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering service is situated within the building of Foxholes House in Rochdale; other departments within the local authority share this building. Systems are in place within the Fostering Service and understood by all staff on confidential matters with regard to children and carers. Administration is provided within the service and information technology systems are in place. Insurance is provided by Zurich through the Local Authority.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Local Authority Fostering Service. Not inspected during this inspection.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Local Authority Fostering Service. Not inspected during this inspection.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Policies are in place for fostering allowances these are reviewed annually and each carer is provided with this information (currently under review). Payments are made promptly and at agreed times. Foster care allowances and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child/young person placed are broken down and are not paid directly to the carer. An example of this is holiday allowances carers have to request this. A good practice Recommendation has been made that the fostering Service adds all extra expenses to the regular weekly payment and that the responsibility for budgeting the full cost of caring for each child would be with the carer. A Requirement has been made that all panel members have Criminal Record Bureau Checks.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Policies and procedures are in place about the functions and numbers of panel members. During this inspection the inspector had a discussion with the chair of the panel and observed a panel meeting-taking place. Observations of procedures being followed were undertaken during the panel meeting. All decision-making and recommendations made at panel are recorded. Panel has access to medical expertise (paediatrician) is a panel member. The panel operates professionally and all panel members contribute to the process of making recommendations. Recommendations from panel are presented to the Local Authority decision maker on the same day after the panel meeting. Arrangements are in place to ensure decisions are made promptly during annual or sick leave. The manager stated that enquiries have been made to have a representative from education as a panel member. A good practice Recommendation has been made to continue with these enquiries.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Procedures are in place for short term breaks for children in foster care.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Information within the Fostering Service systems and the Statement of Purpose indicates that there are 77 approved foster carer's with 82 children placed and 42 approved friends and family carer's with 61 children placed. However, not all friends and family carer's are known to the Fostering Service. Payments to friends and family carer's are made through the Fostering Service and all names are on the register. Placing social workers arrange friends and family carer's outside of the Fostering Service. A good practice Recommendation has been made that the Fostering Service identify the total number of friends and family carer's they are supporting and ensure that the placements made by the placing social workers are being supported so as no children/young people are vulnerable. The Fostering Service has a dedicated worker for friends and family carer's. However, funding through Quality Protects has now ceased and this workers contract will not be renewed. A good practice Recommendation has been made that a worker from the Fostering Service is identified to support friends and family carer's. A Requirement has been made that currently friends and family carer's are not reviewed annually, the support and training needs including annual reviews of friends and family carer's must be assessed and met in the same way as for any other carers. (Reg 28)

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 19th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by Thursday 11th March 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of RMBC Fostering confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of RMBC Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

“Providers comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.”