



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Orchard Care

**Orchard Care (North East) Limited
Tursdale Business Park
Durham
DH6 5PG**

Lead Inspector
Stephen Smith

Announced Inspection
6th April 2006 09:30

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	Orchard Care
Address	Orchard Care (North East) Limited Tursdale Business Park Durham DH6 5PG
Telephone number	0191 3779988
Fax number	0191 3779988
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Orchard Care (North East) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Andrew Johnathan Parker
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

1. The Responsible Individual must not undertake any foster carer assessment functions of the agency.
2. The Responsible Individual as the agency decision maker must not attend the Fostering Panel or be involved in any decision making processes of the aforementioned panel.
3. The Registered Manager must undertake training in foster carer assessment, supervision of foster carers and fostering panel before 31/10/06.
4. The Registered Manager must receive fortnightly supervision from the Responsible Individual for a six month period from the date of this certificate.
5. The agency must supply details to the CSCI of all foster carers registered/deregistered by the agency within 14 days of the decision.

Date of last inspection Not applicable.

Brief Description of the Service:

Orchard Care (North East) Ltd is a small independent fostering agency based at the Tursdale Business Park near Durham. At the time of the inspection the fostering service had only been operating for a few months and had three approved foster carers each with a child in placement. Additionally a number of prospective foster families were undertaking the assessment process. The service aims to provide family placements for children aged between 0 and 17 years of age and provides a supervising social worker, an education manager and a teacher as well as support workers and clerical and administrative staff. The agency's fees range from £595 to £1200 per week.

SUMMARY

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

The inspectors would like to thank the children, carers and staff for the way they helped the inspectors do their job and find out what the fostering service is like. The inspectors also would like to thank children's social workers and other professional people who filled in forms or who told inspectors what they think of the fostering service. Staff in the fostering team, carers and children spoken to were very helpful and people spent time filling in questionnaires and sending them to the inspectors before the visit to the service. Information and facts in this report come from questionnaires sent to foster carers, fostered children and placing social workers and from written information supplied by the manager as well as from the things the inspectors saw and the people they talked to when they visited. Inspectors visited two of the three approved foster carers and spoke to two of the three young people fostered by the agency. Inspectors also talked to many of the people who were being assessed by the agency to see if they were going to be the right sort of people to foster children. Questionnaires were returned from two foster carers and three prospective foster carers; the inspectors also spoke to most of these people. The local authorities for two of the three children fostered gave the inspectors information as well.

A team of two inspectors spent just over two days with the fostering service and gathered information by:

- Talking individually with children, carers and fostering staff;
- Visiting foster carers homes;
- Group discussion with prospective carers;
- Reading children's, carers and staff files;
- Reading records;
- Studying the questionnaires and other information sent back to us by various people;
- Watching the fostering panel and reading records of its meetings.

This inspection has found that, although it is new, Orchard Care (North East) is providing a service that is meeting the needs of the children well. It needs to get better at getting and recording information about children, however, to make sure that it keeps on providing good outcomes for children as it gets bigger. Foster carers said things like "I think they do excellent work."

What the service does well:

Although Orchard Care (North East) is a very new fostering service this inspection has found that there are already things that it is doing well.

The service has carefully checked out the foster carers it has to make sure they are the right sort of people to foster children. It is doing a good job of

checking out that new foster carers know what they need to know and have the skills they need to look after children.

The service has written good reports about the people it has checked out who want to become foster carers. These reports are given to 'panel'; this is the group of people who look at these reports and recommend whether people should be foster carers or not.

The fostering panel is made up of people who know a lot about what children need and the things that are important to them and it is careful when it decides who should be able to foster.

The service gives foster carers good support to help them look after children properly. Several foster carers said that support for carers and children is the best thing about the agency. One said, "The staff are all caring, hard working, very professional and will always be prepared to go the extra mile for the children and carers, nothing is too much trouble for them."

The service has started out by giving foster carers good training that they enjoyed and thought was helpful and has good plans to make sure that foster carers keep getting the training they need. All foster carers have been trained in what to do if they are worried that a child might be being hurt by someone.

The staff of Orchard Care and the foster carers are working hard to make sure that children live with foster carers who they like and can meet their needs.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This was the fostering service's first inspection.

What they could do better:

The most important thing the fostering service needs to do better is to make sure that it gets to know everything it can about a child that it is going to place with foster carers and get all the papers about the child from the social worker. It needs to do this so that it can make sure that it finds the right foster carer for the child and to make sure that the foster carers can meet all the child's needs and keep them safe.

The service also needs to make sure that the agreement it makes with foster carers about how the child needs to be looked after has all the information in it that the foster carer will need to know.

The fostering service needs to make sure that any information about a child's care is written down properly with full details in the child's file so that this information is there to help people make decisions in the future. It needs to

make sure that everything that it thinks is kept in people's files is actually there and some of the records it keeps need to be written down better.

The fostering service needs to write down for foster carers and staff what they should do if they are worried that a child is being hurt and it needs to make sure that all foster carers have written down how they will make sure that children are cared for safely in their home.

Foster carers should all get training in first aid to they know how to help if a child has an accident or is poorly.

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

Children have their health needs met and their health promoted. The service does not keep good enough records of or information about young peoples health needs and how they are to be addressed.

EVIDENCE:

The service's foster carer agreement requires foster carers to promote young people's welfare and register them with a doctor. Visits to foster carers showed that young people had been registered with a doctor and that carers were actively promoting their health. Foster carers and young people spoken to gave examples of how young people's health is promoted including promoting healthy diets and lifestyles. One young person said, "I have a hobby that keeps me fit."

Foster placement agreements with regard to both young people whose foster placements were case tracked contained health sections but these were not fully completed. One agreement did not mention the important medication taken by a child, though there was evidence to show that the fostering service is taking steps to get this information from the placing authority. The agency was also seeking more information in the placement plan and agreement about another young person whose foster carers had joined the agency two weeks prior to the inspection. The child had been placed with these foster carers through another agency for a year and Orchard Care should have ensured that full information was in place prior to the foster carers joining them.

Young people's files contained a section for health information but these were empty and files did not record the name and details of the young people's doctors. No information was in place in either young person's file to show when their last Looked After Children (LAC) medical took place.

In discussion the Responsible Individual for Orchard Care told inspectors that she acknowledged that monitoring of the recording in young people's files had not been as effective as it should have been.

First aid training is available to carers. At the time of the inspection one of the three approved carers had completed this and the responsible individual said that the others would do so.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

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

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

The fostering service is managed by people who are suitable and competent to do so and provides carers with safe homes though recording needs to be improved. Matching arrangements have been effective but need to be more robust in future. The agency's arrangements are suitable to keep children safe and its staff recruitment procedure is robust. The agency's panel is well comprised and makes good decisions and recommendations to the decision maker.

EVIDENCE:

Orchard Care (North East) Ltd and its manager have recently been registered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and at registration were considered suitable to operate the agency. Examination of staff files showed that telephone checks are made to follow up references and a system is in place to record dates and details of all checks including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosures. The agency has a system in place to ensure that CRB checks will be renewed when they are three years old but, being a new service, all checks were new.

Visits to two foster carers' homes showed that both were suitably furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard; both were appropriate environments in which to bring up children. Both foster carers made the

inspectors welcome and cooperated openly with the inspection process. Both home appeared to inspectors to be free from obvious hazards. Health and safety checklists had been completed for both foster carers' homes during their assessment and were in place in their files. The responsible individual said that health and safety issues would be discussed in foster carers' supervision sessions. Foster carers visited and prospective carers spoken to in a group meeting said that their initial training during the assessment process had covered health and safety.

Records of the foster carer assessment process showed it to be thorough with good and detailed reports produced for panel. Records of this process showed, in some places, that papers had not been signed or dated. This is dealt with in more detail in the section of this report dealing with the Management group of standards.

Of the two foster carers visited only one placement had been made since the carer's approval with Orchard Care. A 'Form E' document containing information about the child to help the matching process was in place in the young person's file but this had not been signed by the young person's social worker or social work manager. Additionally the young person's LAC Placement Plan was not dated and important contact issues for the young person were not included in this document. Some information about contact was contained in Orchard Care's Placement Agreement but this was not detailed and was unsigned. The other foster carers visited had transferred to Orchard Care from another agency with a young person already in placement. The Placement Agreement for this young person was also not fully completed and was not signed by the foster carer or Orchard Care. This young person also did not have a LAC Placement Plan Part 1 or 2 on file his file either. Children's files observed contained a section for a description and photograph of the child but these were not in place for the two young people case tracked. One young person's LAC Care Plan was out of date and his Essential Information Record was not dated with one of the filed copies contained information removed by the use of liquid paper. The responsible individual said that agency has been trying to get more information and full documentation from the placing authority. The agency must make sure that full information and documentation about a young person is available prior to any placement being made to ensure that placements are appropriately matched and able to meet children's needs.

Only one of the two carers visited had a safe caring policy for the home in place. The responsible individual said that the supervising social worker would be working with the carers to develop one as they had transferred from another agency without a policy in place.

The young people spoken to said that they are happy in their placements. One said, "I'm in the right place, we get on well. I like living here, I've got lots of friends around." A young person and foster carer told the inspector of an

interest and hobby they have developed together.

The commissioning manager from the local authority responsible for one of the fostered young people told an inspector that he is "impressed" by Orchard Care's effectiveness in seeking information about young people and making sure that it can meet their needs. He cited examples in which the service had decided not to offer placements to particular children as it considered it could not offer a suitable match with a foster carer. He said that with regard to the placement made the service has worked hard to make sure the young person's needs are met and his wellbeing promoted.

The fostering service has bullying, behaviour management and unauthorised absence policy and procedures in place. Foster carers' files contained signatures showing they had received these documents and carers visited confirmed this. The agency did not have a child protection procedure for foster carers in place but all approved foster carers and seven prospective carers had undertaken child protection training. The foster carer agreement requires foster carers to comply with Regulations 12 and 13 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 but does not state what these are. This agreement should be amended to ensure that carers know what regulations they are agreeing to comply with and the implications of these. Young people's files contained a 'Risk Management' agreement as part of the Foster Placement Agreement but these documents were not fully completed and were not signed by all parties involved. Foster carers said that they know what they need to about the young person placed with them but children's files did not contain full LAC documentation.

The fostering service has developed an effective system for recording and monitoring any complaints or allegations and for making notifications to CSCI. At the time of the inspection this record had not been used as no allegations or complaints had been received.

Records in staff recruitment files showed that an effective procedure is in place and had been followed, although evidence of staff members' medical fitness was not available. Records contained evidence to show that CRB disclosures and two written references, followed up by telephone, had been received prior to appointment. Staff members' photographs in some files would benefit from being of better quality and more up-to-date. Discussion with a newly appointed supervising social worker confirmed that she had been subject to a thorough recruitment process.

Minutes of panel meetings observed were comprehensive and showed thorough consideration of the assessment and any issues raised. The recommendations made by panel to the agency decision maker were clear, specific and accurate as was the subsequent notice issued by the decision maker. In one situation a discrepancy was noted in the dates of the panel meeting and the notice of approval. The foster carers and the responsible

individual explained this but the discrepancy in the record needs to be recorded and explained on the file.

All panel members have been subject to CRB disclosures and evidence showed that panel chair had appointed and interviewed panel members. Make up of panel includes people with health and education backgrounds as well as a foster carer and ex-looked after child and includes people from differing ethnic backgrounds. This make up meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

Panel observation demonstrated that a structured process is followed, careful consideration of each presented assessment takes place and panel performs a quality assurance and advisory function for the fostering service.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

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

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

7, 13, 31

Children are being provided with services that reflect their individual needs but the information gained from placing authorities and provided to foster carers does not support their care well enough. Educational needs are being met well but, again, information held by the fostering service is not detailed enough to fully support young people's educational development.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has an equal opportunities policy in place but this does provide guidance to foster carers on their responsibilities. The foster carer agreement includes the requirement of foster carers to meet the needs of young people as set out in their care plan. The foster placement agreement includes a section for information about a child's background and culture and any care issues arising from these to be identified. These sections were not completed in full detail in the plans examined and LAC information was not complete in relation to either child case tracked.

Foster carer assessments inspected included a consideration of the carers' attitudes and, knowledge and abilities to work with children from different backgrounds and with different needs and to promote diversity.

The service's panel includes people from different ethnic backgrounds. One foster carer told an inspector how they have sought informal support for a young person from a friend from a similar ethnic background.

Discussion with foster carers and young people during visits showed that foster carers are supported by the agency to support young people's individual needs and to help them develop their own interests. Examples cited included support to help a young person achieve a cycling proficiency award and work to support a young person to develop his motor cycling hobby. Games, learning materials and leisure equipment belonging to the young people were evident in their foster homes.

Evidence was available in a young person's file and confirmed by the foster carers and staff of the agency of a great deal of support being provided to transport a young person to school some distance away while decisions about the young persons' future were being held. It was also evident that the fostering service is engaged in discussion with the placing authority and the foster carers to attempt to ensure the young person's educational needs are met as effectively as possible. It was clear that there is good liaison by carers and Orchard Care staff with teachers at school. Another young person spoken told the inspector that he discusses his education with his foster carers around the courses and results needed for his chosen career and gets support and help from them. His foster carers told the inspector of the action they had taken to ensure the young person could move to a school that would meet his needs better than the one he was attending. A young person said, "I don't love school but I don't hate it, I know I need to go – I want to be a plumber."

Foster placement agreements contains sections to record children's educational needs and the help required although these were not fully completed and were not signed by all parties to the agreement. One young person's file did not contain a LAC Personal Education Plan (PEP). The fostering service employs an education manager and part time teacher to help support foster children with their educational needs. Foster carers visited said that they had already received support from these people.

The agency has become a member of the North East Chamber of Commerce. The responsible individual said that this was because of that organisation's commitment to training and work opportunities for young people aged over 16 in the region and the consequent opportunities that this might afford fostered young people.

The service does not provide short breaks for children living with their families.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

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

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

10,11

Arrangements to date for consulting with children have been effective and now need to develop as the service grows and develops. Children's contact with their families is supported and promoted where this is in their interests. More detailed recorded information is needed to help the service to be more effective in this area.

EVIDENCE:

The agency's foster placement agreement contains a section to record and set out the arrangements to be made regarding children's contact with their families or friends. This information was not completed in any detail in respect of one of the young people case tracked and LAC documents Placement Plan Parts 1 and 2 were not available for this young person. The responsible individual said that she is trying to get more information from the young person's social worker. The foster carers concerned told the inspector how they support contact and keep a record of when contact occurs and any issues or outcomes arising from the contact. The young person living with these carers confirmed this and discussed his contact with family and friends with the inspector. He was satisfied with the arrangements and the support received from his carers.

Other carers told inspectors of the work done by the agency to arrange contact for a young person when the young person's own social worker was unable to do so. The supervising social worker and records confirmed this. These foster carers and their supervising social worker were clearly aware of some issues regarding contact for the young person and were working pro-actively with the young person's social worker to clarify and address these.

The fostering agency provides good information for young people in the Children's Guide and the 'pocket guide' given to them. The children's guide contains full details of how to make a complaint and to whom. The young person's 'pocket guide' contains a tear off slip with a stamp attached to enable young people to ask for help and to be contacted by the agency. This asks the young people how they want to be contacted, whether it is safe to write to them or phone them. This effort to make it as easy as possible for young people to express their views or any concerns is commendable.

One young person spoken to said he is consulted by his carers about matters affecting him and it was clear that activities undertaken are based around his needs. He also said he had been informed about the transfer of his carers to Orchard Care from another agency and that Orchard Care had asked his opinion of his carers when the assessment of their application to become foster carers for Orchard Care was being considered. The agency's responsible individual described her plans for consultation with young people about their care and the running of the service and at foster carers reviews. The newness of the service meant that it was not possible to gain evidence of this consultation in action.

The supervising social worker and other agency staff visit foster carers' homes regularly and ensure that they spend time with and speak to the young people in placement.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

29

Foster carers receive payments that allow them to care properly for the child placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has structured arrangements in place regarding payments to foster carers and the foster placement agreement sets out how payments will be made. At the time of the inspection the service was very new with only three approved foster carers having children in placement. All carers were consulted with nobody raising any issues relating to the level of payments of the arrangements for them to be made.

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, and 24 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, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24

Foster carers' suitability is rigorously assessed though records of this process need to be improved. Arrangements for management, support and training for foster carers are suitable for the agency's early stage of development but the work in these areas is being let down by weak recording. Better, more comprehensive information is needed in children's files to assist in their care.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a statement of purpose in place that reflects the agency's early stage of development. The responsible individual said that the statement is due to be revised now that more permanent staff are in post. The statement needs the addition of more detailed information about staff members' qualifications and experience, the numbers of approved carers and young people placed and a section to record the number and outcome of any complaints or to record that none have been received. The young person's guide is useful and the 'pocket guide' with the stamped and addressed slip that young people can send off confidentially to ask for help is a commendable attempt to give young people another way to express any concerns.

Orchard Care is a new fostering service and is still recruiting staff as it begins to grow. Foster carers, prospective foster carers and staff spoken to thought that there are sufficient staff for its current size and all spoke very highly of the support provided by the agency, the manager and responsible individual.

The assessments undertaken to assess the suitability of prospective foster carers (known as Form F assessments) seen during the inspection were thorough and detailed with a good use of checklists to identify where competence to foster is identified in the assessment. There were, however, areas throughout the forms that had not been dated or signed by the person completing them and as such these documents are of limited value. One assessment on file had not been signed by the prospective foster carers, the social worker or the agency representative. Another prospective foster couple's declaration had only been signed by one applicant and forms consenting to references being sought had not been signed.

In another case the foster carers views and comments sheet had not been signed by the prospective carers so it could not be certain that the information in the form was fully accurate. This form also contained an error in the requested terms of approval, although panel had made the correct recommendation. It was also noted that in a situation in which an approval notice had been drafted and then approval was delayed for a month, the document had not been amended so, in fact, contained the wrong approval date. Other areas of recoding deficits were noted with examples of evidence being available to show that checks and references had been undertaken but checklists on files not being completed.

Foster carers and prospective foster carers spoken to told inspectors that they felt the assessment process was very thorough. One foster carer who had transferred from another agency with a child in placement said that the entire assessment process had been carried out on her again before she joined the agency.

Foster carers consulted said that they are well managed and supported but, again, weaknesses in recording were evident. Records of contact with foster carers by the agency had not been consistently used and some visits reported by the supervising social worker and foster carers had not been recorded. In one foster carer's file no records of contact had been made for nearly a month despite visits taking place. The clarity and detail of some records was also not sufficiently developed and again were not always signed. As an example, one record read "Jim and I attended LAC review" was not signed so there was no indication who "I" was. One child's file did not include details of the supervising social worker or support worker from Orchard Care. Additionally some other records including a report from a planning meeting were poorly recorded in manner that left the detail of the purpose, discussion and decision points unclear. Files did not contain full evidence to support checklists stating that action had taken place. For example no evidence of car MOT, tax and insurance arrangements were in place in foster carers' files despite the completed Health and safety checklists stating that these had been checked and were on file.

In interview the responsible individual explained that the manager had suffered a recent period of ill health and was off sick at the time of the inspection visit. She said that the service had needed to use agency supervising social workers to complete assessments, particularly where carers were transferring from another agency with a child in placement because of the need to make the transition within notice timescales. The responsible individual said that these factors might have combined and resulted in monitoring of the assessment and recording processes being weaker than it should have been. Accuracy and consistency and comprehensiveness in recording needs to be improved in order to better reflect and support the work carried out by the agency.

Foster carers visited and prospective carers spoken to spoke very positively about the quality and frequency of contact with the agency. One carer was very pleased with the support provided to them and the young person placed with them with transport to and from school and in helping communications with the young person's placing authority. One foster carer described Orchard Care as "a breath of fresh air" compared to a previous fostering experience. Other, newly approved carers spoke very highly about the responsible individual and manager and were very positive about the support received so far. A carer said "We are very impressed with the support from Orchard." Another said "Somebody is always at the other end of the phone and will come for a home visit if and when needed."

Foster carers visited confirmed that they have received a foster carers handbook and record keeping sheets. Carers were aware of the agency's arrangements for their supervision, which are clearly set out in the foster carers agreement. The newness of the service meant that only one approved foster carer had received supervision at the time of the inspection. One carer

who had only been approved for two weeks said that she had been visited twice by Orchard staff in this time including a visit by the Education manager and teacher.

As the agency is very new arrangements for training are in their early stages. Choosing to Foster training has taken place with all three approved carers and all applicants at the appropriate stage of the assessment process having completed this. Carers and prospective carers have received child protection training and one has undertaken first aid training. Foster carers are required by their foster carer agreement to attend 80% of training and 50% of support groups. The responsible individual and foster carers said that support sessions also have a training element and this is recorded. The agency's statement of purpose sets out and the responsible individual said the agency aims to train its foster carers through the NVQ process; foster carers were aware of this.

Children's files inspected did not contain all the necessary LAC documentation and some information was incomplete. One young person's matching form (Form E) was not signed by his social worker and his LAC Placement Plan Part 1 was not dated. This Placement Plan did not contain information about contact arrangements and although some information was contained in the foster placement agreement this was unsigned. The foster placement agreement for another young person was not fully completed and had not been signed by either party and this young person did not have a LAC Placement Plan Part 1 or 2 on file. Additionally, this young person's Care Plan was out of date, his Essential Information Record (EIR) was not dated and the file held no health information and no Personal Education Plan (PEP). Children's files include section for a description and photograph of the child, these were not in place for either two young people case tracked. The responsible individual said that the agency has asked the placing authority for more details and full documentation.

Files did, however, contain minutes of the last reviews of the young people and several reviews prior to these. One young person's file contained a chronology that would help the young person to understand his background and the things that have happened to him.

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	2

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	2
31	N/A

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

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

N/A

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	FS7FS8FS9 FS10FS12	11, 14, 15, 16, 34	Foster placement agreements must be fully completed and contain full information about the young person prior to the placement taking place.	16/06/06
2	FS12FS24	11, 15, 30	Full information about children's health needs, checks, treatment and medication must be retained in their files along with contact details of any healthcare professionals working with them.	22/07/06
3	FS7FS8FS9 FS10FS12F S13FS24	11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 30	The agency must make sure that full information and LAC documentation about a young person is available before any placement is made to ensure that placements are properly matched, able to meet children's needs and keep them safe.	16/06/06
4	FS9	12	The fostering service must develop a child protection policy for staff and foster carers	22/07/06
5	FS15	20	Evidence of staff members' medical fitness for employment must be retained in their files.	22/07/06
6	FS17FS24	30	The quality, accuracy, comprehensiveness and consistency of recording within foster carers' and young people's files must be improved.	16/06/06

7	FS21	11,12 30	Evidence of foster carers' car tax, MOT and insurance arrangements must be retained in their files.	22/07/06
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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	FS12	All approved foster carers should complete first aid training as soon as practicable.
2	FS9	The foster carer agreement should be amended to make clear to carers the policies they are required to comply with under Regulations 12 and 13 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.
3	FS9	All foster carers should have a safe caring policy for their home that is updated regularly based on their circumstances and those of the child placed with them
4	FS15	Staff members' files should contain photographs that are more up-to-date and of better quality than those present at the time of the inspection.
5	FS7	The fostering service should produce written guidance for foster carers relating to valuing diversity and anti-discriminatory practice.
6	FS1	The statement of purpose should include more detailed information about staff members' qualifications and experience, the numbers of approved carers and young people placed and contain a section to record the number and outcome of any complaints or to record that none received.

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