



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Five Rivers Fostering

**South Park Business Centre
306A Green Lane
Ilford
Essex
IG1 1LQ**

Lead Inspector
Sharon Lewis

Announced Inspection
12th – 15th February 2007 10:15 am

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Five Rivers Fostering
Address	South Park Business Centre 306A Green Lane Ilford Essex IG1 1LQ
Telephone number	020 8599 5251
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.five-rivers.org
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Usha Jobanputra
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 14th November 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Five Rivers Family Placement Service is a national organisation with the head office situated in Wiltshire. It was initially established in Salisbury in 1989 to provide a therapeutic setting, in high quality "family-like" residential care homes.

In accordance with the development of children's social care the organisation has extended the development of their fostering services. There are a total of six branches of the foster service throughout the country.

The East London branch of Five Rivers Fostering Service has been operational since September 2001. It has a block contract with the London Borough of Haringey, along with serving other London boroughs, Essex and surrounding counties.

Fostering services include both short and long-term services for children and young people aged between 0-18 years. The service aims "to provide an accepting and emotionally warm family environment for children to live in; whilst at the same time offering clearly defined programmes of care."

SUMMARY

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

This Announced Inspection was undertaken over four days in February 2007. The overall objective of this Inspection is to ensure children are receiving the best possible care and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Two foster placements were visited. Individual interviews were held with the Registered Manager, Senior Practitioner and the Supervising Social Worker. Discussions were additionally held with the two Administrative Officers and the Regional Manager.

Foster carers files, children's files, staff supervision files, policies and procedures and a range of relevant documentation were examined. A tour of the premises was also undertaken.

The Inspector would like to thank all children, foster carers and staff members for their assistance with this Inspection.

What the service does well:

The agency promotes good health outcomes for the majority of children who are fostered. Foster carers have to undertake first aid and food hygiene training. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged and the emotional and mental well-being of children is recognised. Children benefit from the provision of a Consultant Therapist, who can provide individual sessions and assists with foster carer training.

Children benefit from nurturing placements that enhances their quality of life and meets their specific cultural, emotional, educational, mental and social needs. Foster carers homes were found to be clean, comfortable, warm, well furnished and decorated. Children's bedrooms reflected their individual interests and personalities. Children's well-being was promoted by age appropriate and culturally reflective books, toys and equipment. All foster carers interviewed demonstrated a genuine commitment to their role and responsibility to improve the quality of life for children placed in their care.

The agency evidenced careful consideration of matching which promoted the child's individual needs and the strengths and experience of the foster carer. Discussions with staff evidenced that social work staff had a good understanding of foster care and possessed the appropriate personal qualities, knowledge and skills.

Children are listened to; their views and experiences are taken seriously and viewed as central to a safe service, including their views about their own safety and risks to themselves. The agency has two specific policies which address family and individual safe care issues. Each child has an initial risk assessment.

It was felt that the Panel was organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Foster carers' preparation, training, handbook, policies and procedures incorporate the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality. The service's leaflets are available in different languages, which includes Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu. Interpreting arrangements are available to support foster carers in meetings, reviews, training and in the assessment process.

Young people feel they are encouraged and supported to their achieve goals and ambitions. Children participated in a range of activities. These included swimming, sailing, golf, gym, horse riding, choir, drama group, youth clubs, martial arts, guitar lessons, Brownies and Rangers. Foster carers were seen to have bought children a laptop computer and mountain bike. Children had opportunities to go on holiday with foster carers. Countries visited have included America, France, India, Kenya, Mauritius and Spain.

Foster carers evidenced they had developed good relationships with schools and other education providers. Children reported that they are given support with their schooling and education. Evidence was seen of children receiving home tuition. Children's files evidenced certificates of achievement. It was commendable to see that children had won various awards. An example being 'Pupil of the Year'.

The agency is commended for being awarded a five-year contract with Haringey Social Services. A social worker and administrator are assigned specifically to manage this work. Monthly monitoring meetings are held with Haringey.

The Registered Manager is well-supported by a robust management planning structure, focused on delivering a national service which meets and promotes the needs of children. Regular staff meetings are held and there is good administrative support.

The fostering agency has a permanent and stable workforce. Personal development is addressed through the staff appraisal system. Annual appraisals are in progress for all staff. Post qualifying training is promoted for staff.

Foster Carers benefit from a flexible support package, which includes a babysitting service. Respite can be arranged for carers as needed. All foster carers receive membership of the National Foster Carers Association. This provides links to independent support and legal advice. Foster Carers receive professional social work supervision and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training.

Five Rivers has a designated finance team. Budgets are regularly monitored and reviewed. The Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis to review the monthly management accounts and discuss all areas of finance. These meetings are supported by the expertise of an external financial consultant, who advises on general financial matters and liaises with the Company's bankers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Changes have been made to the organisation of the Five Rivers Fostering Panel. As required the Fostering Panel now serves three branches only in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

What they could do better:

This Inspection resulted in five requirements and eleven recommendations being made. Fiver Rivers Ilford branch continues to provide a good quality service. The below areas highlighted would further enhance good practice.

The agency would benefit from more robust systems to deliver a more effective and efficient service. The agency must ensure foster carer reviews are undertaken at intervals of no more than a year. Where possible foster carers must not accept children out of their approval category. Documentary evidence must be available which ratifies this decision.

Written evidence must also be available which details the agency's communications to obtain children's Personal Education Plans (PEP). The agency should ensure at least one unannounced foster carer visit is undertaken every year. It is also advised that the allegation log and outcome are consistently detailed in the Schedule 7 record.

It is recommended that the Panel membership is more culturally diverse. The Panel should reflect the children and communities which are served in London and surrounding areas. A service development plan must be developed. The agency should also consider having an Away Day to share the vision of service development. A comprehensive foster carer recruitment strategy should also be developed.

The fostering premises should be well maintained and promotes good health and safety practices. Proof of fire equipment servicing and portable appliances testing must be available. Items stored overhead on top of filing cabinets should be removed. It is also recommended that the flooring in the entrance office area is repaired or replaced.

Staff would benefit from more sound employment support practices. Staff study leave arrangements should be formalised. It is recommended that reflective practice and flexible working is encouraged. Social work staff should also have the opportunity to meet on a regional scale to share good practice and ways of working.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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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.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering agency promotes children's health and development.

EVIDENCE:

The Foster Carer's Handbook outlines the organisations value statement concerning health issues. It details, "Good health care is essential in developing both physical and emotional well being, and social adjustment." Examination of policies and procedures, children's and foster carer's files evidenced good health outcomes for the majority of children who are fostered. The agency evidenced this through various systems.

Children's health needs are identified in their placing authority assessment. Health record includes immunisations. Files evidenced that children's health needs were addressed in the review process, monthly placement monitoring summaries and as part of the supervisory visits with each foster carer.

Foster carer's are supported in securing a good standard of health care for children. Children were seen to be registered with a doctor and had regular health appointments. Foster carers have to undertake first aid and food hygiene training. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged, which includes a balanced diet and exercise.

The emotional and mental well-being of children is recognised. The agency has partnerships with other key agencies and professionals to further develop health care planning for children placed by the service.

The organisation has access to a Consultant Therapist. Individual therapeutic work is available at an additional fee and evidence was seen of referrals being made. This therapist additionally assists with therapeutic training for foster carers, which includes attachment. Where possible the agency also assisted in referring for the therapeutic input of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Child protection enquiries are responded to appropriately. Improvements in placement approval, allegation recording and Panel membership would promote a more robust service.

EVIDENCE:

SUITABLE FOSTER CARERS

The Foster Carer's Handbook states, "All children/young people are entitled to receive warmth, acceptance, safety and security." Two foster carers' homes were visited during this Inspection. Foster carers homes were found to be clean, comfortable, warm, well furnished and decorated. Children's bedrooms reflected their individual interests and personalities. Children's well-being was promoted by age appropriate and culturally reflective books, toys and equipment. Placements evidenced the ability to meet the specific cultural, emotional, educational, mental and social needs of each child.

Foster carers understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process. All of the foster carers visited and interviewed during the Inspection, positively contributed to the process. All foster carers interviewed demonstrated a genuine commitment and responsibility to improve the quality of life for children placed in their care. Health and safety is a key element of foster carers core training. All files contain a health and safety report with risk assessments.

MATCHING

The fostering agency has produced matching procedures. The agency endeavours to give children profiles of foster carers prior to the placement. Transracial or transcommunity placements are rarely made and only on a short term basis. The agency evidenced careful consideration of matching which promoted the child's individual needs and the strengths and experience of the foster carer.

Evidence was seen of matches, which initially were outside foster carer approval category ranges. In most cases these were noted to be in the child's best interests and were supported by the Fostering Panel. One occasion was found where; no written evidence of formal approval was available. The agency must ensure where possible foster carers do not accept children out of their approval category. Documentary evidence must be available which ratifies this decision.

CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection training and clear procedures are detailed in the Foster Carers Handbook. Children are listened to; their views and experiences are taken seriously and viewed as central to a safe service, including their views about their own safety and risks to themselves. Evidence was seen of foster carers advocating for the children in their care and challenging incidents of bullying.

The Registered Manager stated and documentation evidenced that staff discuss safe care and if age appropriate safe sex issues with young people. The agency has two specific policies which address family and individual safe care issues. Each child has an initial risk assessment. Areas of discussion include affection, bathroom, dress, play, bedrooms, bedtime, going out, car, secrecy, bribery and talking. The Family Safe Care Policy is individualised to reflect each foster family and includes their aims, family rules, style of discipline and sanctions.

The fostering service keeps a record of all allegations. Subsequent outcomes however were not consistently recorded. It is advised that the allegation log and outcome are consistently detailed in the Schedule 7 record. Foster carers should also be informed in writing of this information, to promote open communication. Since the last Inspection there has been two child protection allegations, which have both been unsubstantiated.

FOSTERING STAFF

Discussions with staff evidenced that social work staff had a good understanding of foster care and possessed the appropriate personal qualities, commitment, knowledge and skills. Five Rivers has an organisational recruitment procedure, which provides clear written procedures for appointing staff.

FOSTERING PANEL

During this Inspection the Fostering Panel was not observed. Five Rivers has a Panel for their other fostering branches and an Inspector from the South West Region of the Commission for Social Care Inspection recently undertook observation of its operations. Feedback was received from the Inspector who had recently inspected the Salisbury office. It was felt that the Panel was organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Panel membership documentation and staff discussions regarding the Panel were held. The majority members are of White British origin. The Registered Manager is aware of the need for a more diverse Panel and is currently working on establishing a Panel to cover the branch in Ilford. It is recommended that the Panel membership is more culturally diverse. The Panel should reflect the children and communities which are served in London and surrounding areas.

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.

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

7 & 13

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering agency promotes diversity. Foster carers endeavour to promote educational achievement; further assistance however is needed in relation to the provision of children's Personal Education Plan (PEP).

EVIDENCE:

VALUING DIVERSITY

Foster carers' preparation, training, handbook, policies and procedures incorporate the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality. Valuing Diversity training for foster carers is scheduled to take place shortly.

The Registered Manager has strong links with the Asian community groups in the local area and is aware of available resources. A Muslim Directory is available which includes a range of national contacts.

Leaflets for service are available in different languages, which includes Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu. Interpreting arrangements are available to support foster carers in meetings, reviews, and training and in the assessment process. Where English is not first language evidence was seen of sessional worker used to undertake the assessment.

Young people a card from the agency for their birthday. The agency ensures that each child has encouragement; equal access and opportunities, to develop and pursue her/his talents, interests and hobbies. It was evidenced that children participated in a range of activities. These included swimming, sailing, golf, gym, horse riding, choir, drama group, youth clubs, martial arts, guitar lessons, Brownies and Rangers.

Foster carers were seen to have bought children a laptop computer and mountain bike. Children had opportunities to go on holiday with foster carers. Countries visited have included America, France, India, Kenya, Mauritius and Spain.

EDUCATION

Staff and foster carers understand and support children's educational development. Foster carers visits and files evidenced foster carers are aware of their role in regards to promoting the importance of education and creating an environment where learning is valued.

Foster carers evidenced they had developed good relationships with schools and other education providers. Children reported that they are given support with their schooling and education. Evidence was seen of children receiving home tuition.

Children's files evidenced certificates of achievement. It was commendable to see that children had won various awards. An example being 'Pupil of the Year'. Foster carer's encouraged young people to consider further education and supplementary employment opportunities, which including assistance in finding a part-time job.

Children would further benefit from foster carers being provided with copies of their Personal Education Plan (PEP). Although the provision of these is the responsibility of the placing authority, the agency must provide documentary evidence of their discussions to obtain this document. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 highlight the need for the service to promote the educational attainment of children placed with their foster carers.

SHORT BREAK CARERS

The fostering agency does not offer a specific short break service for children with disabilities.

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.

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

10 & 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Contact is appropriately promoted and a more effective children's consultation system is being developed.

EVIDENCE:

CONTACT

There are clear procedures detailing how appropriate contact arrangements for each child are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. Contact arrangement procedures are included in the foster carers' handbook. Foster carers are encouraged and supported to maintain contact in a manner consistent with the child's care plan and any contact order.

CONSULTATION

Currently children's views are obtained by informal telephone calls, discussions and local authority consultation documentation completed with the child prior to their statutory review. The Registered Manager has given all young people her mobile number in event of emergencies.

The agency demonstrated that systems for children's participation in discussions and decision-making about their futures are being developed into service policy and planning. The agency is aware of the need to promote more formalised consultation processes for children. It is hoped the reintroduction of the family support worker post will assist in this work. Plans include a young people questionnaire, text messaging, age appropriate children's group and mentoring.

There is a children's guide provided to all children at the time of placement, which gives information about how to access an independent advocate, how to make complaints and includes the provision of useful contact details.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

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

14

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering agency meets the needs of young people preparing for independence.

EVIDENCE:

PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD

The fostering service undertakes to help young people develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult life. The Foster Carer Handbook provides clear written requirements of what is expected in terms of preparing young people for independent or semi-independent living. Foster carers assist in saving monies for young people.

Young people are proactively supported, in ways that are tailored to their individual needs, in developing and learning independence skills. Foster carers were noted to continue to offer good support to young people approaching adulthood in their transition towards independent living.

Evidence was seen of joint Pathway planning and independent living skills. The daily living skills assessment includes accessing resources in the community, making health appointments, house keeping, money management, personal hygiene and cooking.

Young people feel they are encouraged and supported to achieve their goals and ambitions. In addition to having opportunities to continue with and develop new interests and experiences.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 & 30

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The agency is committed to delivering a good quality foster care service and has an experienced and stable management and staff team. The service would be further enhanced by the provision of more robust systems.

EVIDENCE:

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Statement of Purpose covers all information detailed in Regulation 3, The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Statement of Purpose is due to be updated in April 2007, in line with the changes in the regulation of Children Services and the creation of the New Ofsted.

MANAGEMENT OF THE SERVICE

Five Rivers Ilford branch endeavours to deliver the best possible childcare. The Registered Manager is an experienced social work Practitioner with over twenty-one years experience in the childcare field. The Registered Manager has a certificate in Memorandum Training and a National Diploma in Business Studies. The Registered Manager has successfully set up and managed the Ilford Branch for over five years. The Registered Manager is commended for swiftly addressing issues identified during the Inspection. The Registered Manager demonstrated the commitment to providing a quality service through the formulation of plans of action to further improve the service.

The Registered Manager is well-supported by a robust management planning structure, focused on delivering a national service which meets and promotes the needs of children. Monthly management reports are sent and quarterly Service Managers meetings are held. In addition to the Registered Manager being supported by monthly supervision. The Registered Manager reports to the Regional Manager who has built up a good relationship with staff and foster carers. The Registered Manager has an open door policy and informal support is available.

Five Rivers Family Placement Service is also a member of the British Quality Foundation, and has the prestigious Investor in People Award. The organisation is committed to providing foster care which meets the complex needs of children and is a member of the Fostering Network and the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

The agency is commended for being awarded a five-year contract with Haringey Social Services. A social worker and administrator are assigned specifically to manage this work. Monthly monitoring meetings are held with Haringey.

Regular staff meetings are held. During the Inspection a team meeting was observed. The agency has a structured agenda that includes the Haringey

contract, systems and expectations, new applications, allocations, new placements, recruitment, health and safety and training.

Discussions with staff and management acknowledged the need for social work staff to have greater networking opportunities. Social work staff should have the opportunity to meet on a regional scale, to share good practice and ways of working.

Quality Assurance evidenced the introduction of various feedback forms. Panel have an opportunity to comment on the quality of assessments and annual review reports. Social workers and prospective foster carers additionally have an opportunity to feedback on how they found the Panel experience. The agency has not developed a specific, measurable service development plan, which addresses all aspects of improving the quality of care. A service development plan must be developed. The agency should also consider having an Away Day to share the vision of service development.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

The agency has a transparent management structure with clear lines of accountability. Discussions with staff and staff files evidenced the provision of professional supervision and consultation. There is good administrative support and adequate equipment.

The agency is effectively staffed by the provision of a Senior Practitioner, one Social Worker, a full-time and part-time Team Administrator post. Gaps in staffing resources are identified and there is a clear plan to address this, through recruitment to the vacant Family Support Worker post. This would enhance the service through assistance with practical tasks including escorting and crèche duties. Job descriptions were seen for all roles within the agency.

All fostering social workers understand the role of the children's social workers, and there is a clear understanding about how the fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together.

Staff records evidenced that they receive regular supervision. Examination of records and staff discussions highlighted that supervision was task orientated and staff did not have the opportunity to reflect on the underlying issues informing their work. It is recommended that reflective practice is encouraged. Personal development is addressed through the staff appraisal system. Annual appraisals are in progress for all staff.

SUFFICIENT STAFF/CARERS

Staffing

The fostering agency has a permanent and stable workforce. Social work staff hold social work qualifications. Post qualifying (PQ) training is promoted for staff. One staff member has completed PQ 2-5. Another has just commenced the PQ1. The Registered Manager is also scheduled to undertake their management qualification. Discussions with staff and management evidenced the need to confirm staff study leave arrangements. It is recommended these are formalised to enable staff to meet their individual learning objectives.

Foster Carer Recruitment

The agency is scheduled to meet with the organisation's Marketing Officer to formally work on their foster carer recruitment strategy. The Registered and Regional Managers are aware of the needs of the children requiring foster care and recognised the need for a targeted recruitment strategy. It is agreed that a comprehensive foster carer recruitment strategy should be developed.

Five Rivers has a clear assessment process. The Foster Care's Handbook outlines the value statement that "The assessment of foster carers is a process of mutual learning involving foster carers learning about fostering and Five Rivers Family Placement Service gaining further information about the foster carers." Foster Carers are expected to be competent in three core areas.

- Child care skills and knowledge
- Working in partnership with families, the Five Rivers Family Placement Service and responsible authorities and other professionals
- Open to Personal progress and change

FAIR & COMPETENT EMPLOYER

Five Rivers has corporate procedures to promote sound employment practices and support for staff and foster carers. There are management systems for carer supervision, appraisal and support. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy, which meets the needs of children, foster carers and staff. The agency has adequate insurance and a whistle blowing policy is available.

MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT OF CARERS

Foster carers benefit from a flexible support package, which includes a babysitting service. Respite can be arranged for carers as needed. This provides time out for the child or family. Respite is arranged by placing with other foster carers and where possible introduction meetings are held, which enable the children to meet the new family. Emergency stopovers can also be arranged.

The support group has been relaunched, due to the previous low attendance these had been terminated. The Registered Manager recently held a meeting with foster carers to decide on how they wished to be supported. Foster carers stated they would like to meet once every two months for two hours. The first hour and a half they would like to meet informally amongst themselves to discuss issues pertinent to them. The last half hour a member of staff from the agency will be present to update on information and answer any concerns. Crèche facilities will be available.

There is ongoing support of through the provision of support groups, telephone networks and twinning systems. In addition to 24 hour 'on call' support, 7 days a week. Foster carers have the opportunity to meet socially and have enjoyed several outings together. At Christmas foster carers decided they wanted a pantomime trip and in August 2006 they enjoyed a day trip to the seaside. A Fun Day was also held.

All foster carers receive membership of the National Foster Carers Association. This provides links to independent support and legal advice. The agency was also noted to be supportive of foster carers individual needs and situations. An example was seen where a foster carer was sent flowers after a period of ill health.

Foster Carers receive professional social work supervision and National Vocational Qualification training. Six foster carers have completed this qualification and a further two are working towards this qualification. On completion foster carers are paid a further £25 per week. Support is given to undertake this training including home tuition and childcare if needed.

Annual reviews are usually held. The agency has a system where foster carers have their first review presented to the Panel and after that is reviewed internally. Reviews are then presented to Panel every three years, unless any concerns, allegation, complaints or changes occur. Examination of files found a case where a review had not been undertaken for four years. The agency must ensure foster carer reviews are undertaken at intervals of no more than a year.

SUPERVISION OF FOSTER CARERS

The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the foster carer. Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support.

All foster carers are provided with a Foster Carers' handbook. All foster carers interviewed fully understood their fostering responsibilities. Foster care agreements ensure foster carers have a full understanding of what is expected of their roles.

Supervisory social work visits are undertaken on a regular basis; the agency should ensure at least one unannounced visit is undertaken every year. There is a clear agenda and structure for supervisory visits.

CHILDRENS CASE RECORDS

Five children's files were examined for tracking purposes. Information was available with regards to the basis of the placement and their legal status. The only issue found was in relation to a child's name being inaccurately spelt on a review form. The agency should ensure children's names are accurately recorded.

Documentation evidenced that appropriate, accessible records are kept, in relation to the fostering service and the individual foster carers and foster children. There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files. This clarifies what information is kept on the foster carer's files and what information is kept on the child's files.

Visits to foster carer's homes evidenced that children's information was stored securely. Foster carers maintain a record of significant events and monthly reports are completed which contribute to the monitoring of the child's welfare.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Confidential records are stored securely at all times and there is a clear policy on access. There is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff for the keeping and retention of case files.

The fostering agency keeps and updates separate records for staff, foster carers, children, complaints and allegations. Information about the procedures for dealing with complaints is widely available. There have been no complaints

from children or young people. One complaint was made by a prospective foster carer, which was partly upheld. The agency responded appropriately and further staff training was recommended. Records of accidents and incidents are kept. The Registered Manager signs off all incidents and relevant notifications are made to Social Services and other relevant agencies.

PREMISES

The agency is located in a small business centre off Green Lanes, near Ilford town centre. The premises are in a prime location with shop front windows, which enables the agency to display recruitment posters. The nearest station is Ilford British Rail and several bus routes run along Green Lanes. The premises has a small car park and unrestricted street parking is available.

There is an entrance/reception area with desks for two staff members. A medium sized team room with three desks. The Registered Manager has their own office and a larger office with comfortable seating is also available. Facilities include a small kitchenette and a water cooler.

The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records. Records are securely stored in filing cabinets. The premises and its contents are adequately insured. The agency was found to have adequate administrative and information technology systems.

There have been uncertainties in reference to the refurbishment or extension of the premises and a possible move next door. Plans are due to be finalised shortly. It is recommended that the flooring in the entrance office area is repaired or replaced. Health and safety should be better promoted. Proof of fire equipment servicing and portable appliances testing must be available. Items stored overhead on top of filing cabinets should be removed.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY and PROCESS

Five Rivers has a designated finance team based in Fordingbridge. Financial procedures have been developed in accordance with the appropriate professional standards as set out by the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The Financial Controller and National Fostering Manager review all of the financial policy and procedures annually.

Procedures exist to manage situations of financial crisis. Budgets are regularly monitored and reviewed. The Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis to review the monthly management accounts and discuss all areas of finance.

These meetings are supported by the expertise of an external financial consultant, who advises on general financial matters and liaises with the Company's bankers.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	2
9	4
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	4
13	2
31	N/A

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

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? No

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS8	34 (1)	The agency must ensure where possible foster carers do not accept children out of their approval category. Documentary evidence must be available which ratifies this decision.	01/05/07
2.	FS13	16 (1)	The agency must provide documentary evidence of their communications to obtain children's Personal Education Plans (PEP).	01/07/07
3.	FS16	42 (1) (b)	A service development plan must be developed.	01/07/07
4.	FS21	29 (2)	The agency must ensure foster carer reviews are undertaken at intervals of no more than a year.	01/07/07
5.	FS26	23 (1)	Proof of fire equipment servicing and portable appliances testing must be available.	01/05/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS9	It is advised that the allegation log and outcome are consistently detailed in the Schedule 7 record. Foster carers should also be informed in writing of this information.
2.	FS16	The agency should consider having an Away Day to share the vision of service development.
3.	FS16	It is recommended that reflective practice and flexible working is encouraged.
4.	FS17	A comprehensive foster carer recruitment strategy should be developed.
5.	FS19	Staff study leave arrangements should be formalised.
6.	FS20	Social work staff should have the opportunity to meet on a regional scale to share good practice and ways of working.
7.	FS22	The agency should ensure at least one unannounced foster carer visit is undertaken every year.
8.	FS24	The agency should ensure children's names are accurately recorded.
9.	FS26	Items stored overhead on top of filing cabinets should be removed.
10.	FS26	It is recommended that the flooring in the entrance office area is repaired or replaced.
11.	FS30	It is recommended that the Fostering Panel is more culturally reflective of the community it serves.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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