



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **City of Salford Family Placement Service**

Avon House

Avon Close

Little Hulton

Manchester

M28 0LA

9th February 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**

City of Salford Family Placement Service

**Address**

Avon House, Avon Close, Little Hulton, Manchester, M28  
0LA

**Local Authority Manager**

Carolyn Williams

**Tel No:**

0161 799 1762

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Avon House, Avon Close, Little Hulton, Manchester, M28  
0LA

**Fax No:**

0161 790 4892

**Email Address**

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**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 ?**

**Date of last inspection**

10/2/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		9th February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Chris Tucker	074724
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Lolly Warren	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Carolyn Williams, Principal Manager, Family Placement.	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

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**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**

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**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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- 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**

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## 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 City of Salford Family Placement Service. 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.

Salford Family Placement Team provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Salford. It provides short term, long term and permanent placements for children “looked after” by the City of Salford. It also provides short term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being “looked after”.

It recruits, assesses, approves and supports the foster carers it provides and operates two fostering panels. Friend and family carers are usually assessed by social workers in the area based teams but their approval is considered by the relevant panel.

It is a centralised based team, based in an office in Little Hulton in Salford, in a building also occupied by the Child Protection Unit and the Management of the City’s children’s homes. The team is made up of 1 Principal Manager, 3 Team Leaders, 12 Family Placement Workers, 4, Family Placement Support Workers and 1 Training Co-ordinator.

## **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.)

#### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

The Service has a Statement of Purpose which meets the requirements of the regulations and is close to producing, in consultation with young people, a children's guide to the service.

#### **Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)**

The Manager has the qualifications and experience to manage the service and the service appeared well managed. A CRB check has been obtained for the manager.

#### **Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

The running of the service was effectively monitored and there were clear lines of accountability within the team.

#### **Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)**

Assessments are carried out on foster carers and they are reviewed annually. The team are alert to issues of diversity and seek to meet needs arising from this. While there is a limited choice for placements made at short notice the team seek to match need to placement and work with more choice when longer term placements are made. Foster Placement Agreements need further attention. The team was seen to address issues of child protection concerns that are brought to their attention. Maintaining contact between the child and his or her family was seen to be the expected practice in the team and with carers. Children were consulted about different aspects of their care. Health care needs and educational needs were addressed and carers receive training in working towards independence for young people.

#### **Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15-23)**

The City of Salford operate a sound recruitment process for staff. The staff are organised into teams that reflect different areas of the work and all appeared to be well aware of different people's responsibilities. Staff confirmed that they were fully supported and received regular supervision. With the exception of the Training Coordinator all staff posts were filled and this had allowed the service to allocate its tasks although the team was still stretched in meeting the demands on the service. Foster Carers were generally positive about the support provided. There is an established training programme for foster carers.

#### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

Not all the LAC(Looked After Children) documents were seen to be completed on the children's files and the files also indicated that children were not being visited at the frequency set by the regulations. The administrative records were efficiently maintained and



met all the requirements of the regulations.

**Fitness of Premises for use as a fostering service (Standard 26)**

The offices used by the team were very full and alternative premises were being sought.

**Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)**

The service appeared to operate to sound financial systems. Foster carers confirmed that payments were paid regularly and there was a newly established system for remuneration of carers.

**Fostering Panels (Standard 30)**

Salford operate two fostering panels and they were seen to be operating effectively and within the regulations.

**Short Term Breaks (Standard 31)**

The Service has a well established short break care provision, with procedures that are relevant to the service. Families of children placed retain their responsibility for the child.

**Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)**

The Family Placement Team were well aware of the issues arising from friends and families as carers and were seeking to address them.

## **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:

NO

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:**

The failure to meet the regulations, while they do relate to the welfare of the children placed, for example in respect of frequency of visiting children in foster placement, are not indicative of a wider failure to meet the needs of children. The Children and Families Service has responded positively to the requirements made in the report of the previous inspection and there is no reason to suggest they would not wish to respond similarly to the requirements made in this report.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

**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	

**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.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      Chris Tucker      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      Lolly Warren      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**      \_\_\_\_\_      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**      \_\_\_\_\_

## 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	34	FS8	If the LAC documents are to form part of the Foster Placement Agreement, they must be fully completed.	31/5/04
2	35	FS24	Children placed with foster carers must be visited at intervals that are in accordance with the regulations.	31/7/04
3	35	FS24	Children placed with foster carers must be seen on their own in accordance with the regulation.	31/7/04

### 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	The Statement should include information on whether the complaints had been dealt with on an informal basis or whether the concerns were taken to a further stage.
2	FS26	The Local Authority should look at ways of providing training space for the training and preparation of foster carers.
3	FS26	Consideration should be given to increasing the capacity of the telephone system used by the Family Placement Service..
4	FS25	The member of staff writing a record in the foster carers files should put their name by each entry and record when a visit has been carried out unannounced.

\* 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	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• 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	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• 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	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	9/2/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?

3

The Fostering Service has a Statement of Purpose that clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service and its role within the City of Salford's Community and Social Services Directorate. It includes its management structure, the services it provides, the number and qualifications of the staff, the number of foster carers, number of children in placement as at March 2003 and the procedures for recruiting, assessing, training, supporting and reviewing carers. It gives the number of complaints. The manager told the inspector that all these were responded to at an informal level and that the complainants did not take their concerns to a further stage. The inspector suggested that this information was included in the Statement.

The Children's Guide has been drafted and a copy of the draft was given to the inspectors. Children are currently being consulted about the final draft and it is planned to issue the guide in Spring 2004. The guide is attractively designed and is written in a style that would be readily understood by a good proportion of children. It meets the requirements of the regulations.

## 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?

3

The Principal Manager, Carolyn Williams, has been the manager of the team since April 1999 and was a team leader in the service from April 1992. She has worked in family finding since 1988 and so has long experience in the field of family placement. She has a social work qualification and is likely to complete an NVQ Level 5 in Strategic Management in March 2004.

Members of the team were clear in their understanding of the function and running of the team and the foster carers also showed a clear understanding of people's responsibilities.

The information for the inspection was presented in an organised and thorough manner and the inspectors formed the view from their contact with those involved with the service, that it is effectively and efficiently managed.

### 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?

3

Since the last inspection, a CRB check had been obtained for the manager, replacing the police check that had previously been obtained. Record of this CRB check and of other members of staff were seen by the inspector when looking at the personnel files. A record was kept of the checks and references obtained.

## 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?

3

The inspectors were given a copy of the Unit Monitoring Report for the year ending March 2003 which was produced in September 2003. This was a detailed report record of the progress of the team towards meeting the targets set for the service. The inspectors were also given a copy of the business plan for the year 2003-2004 which set out the Action Plan for the Fostering Service. These two reports indicated that the activities of the team were being effectively monitored.

There were clear lines of accountability within the team and between the fostering service and the wider Community and Social Services Directorate.

The Fostering Service is not required to notify the NCSC of the matters listed below

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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?**

**3**

All members of the team have job descriptions. The manager does not hold a similar position in any other organisation and there are clear lines of accountability within the team and between the team and the wider department.

## 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
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On the basis of observing the fostering panels and reading of files, the inspectors formed the view that a full assessment is carried out on the ability of foster carers to provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. In those situations where concerns had been raised about the quality of the care provided, the inspectors noted that these concerns were openly addressed and that assessments were undertaken to establish what action was in the child's best interest.

A system had been set up for the annual review of foster carers and this review looked at the issues of health and safety in the home. Health and safety training and fire safety training had been provided for foster carers, although comments were made to the inspectors that these courses had a bias towards work place issues rather than home based ones.

The Foster Care Agreement contains the information that the carers may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.

### 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
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The Community and Social Services Directorate has an Anti Discriminatory Practice Policy and an Equality of Service Delivery Policy and these issues are covered in the preparation training undertaken by foster carers.

Members of the team spoke of their awareness that the population of Salford is predominantly white and that particular attention needed to be given to meeting the needs of those children whose background or culture was different to this. A piece of research was carried out by the Bibini Centre to look at the placements of black young people in Salford. An action plan has been drawn up as a result of this research.

The service has established links with the Jewish community in the borough and carers from the orthodox community spoke of the attention given to their dietary needs during training.

The short break fostering service provides care primarily for children with disabilities and has strong links with the team providing social work services for families of children with disabilities. The inspectors were informed that extensive adaptations had been carried out to the homes of 4 carers in order to enable them to continue to provide short break care to children with disabilities. These carers have their own support group.

**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?**

2

Members of the team spoke of how, when seeking a match for a child at short notice they attempt to place with carers who can fully meet the needs of the child. However, at times there is a limited choice. In the week before the inspection around 17 placements had been made which had had the effect of limiting the choice available.

When making a match for a child on a longer term basis then the team felt they were able to provide carers able to meet the child's assessed needs.

Foster carers, through the questionnaires and in discussions with the inspectors, told them that they generally received the information they needed to know what the needs of the child were. However, there were some instances when not all the available information had been provided.

Salford view the Looked After Children (LAC) documents as constituting the Foster Placement Agreement, except in the case of children who receive short break care when a separate Agreement is drawn up. The LAC documents do not meet all the requirements of Schedule 6 of The Fostering Service Regulations. In discussions following the completion of the draft report, the Manager commented that the LAC documents were used nationally as Foster Placement Agreements although the Department of Health intends that they will be replaced by the Integrated Children's System by December 2005 The Placement Information Record, which would form part of the system, would provide the information required by the Fostering Services Regulations. Given this situation, no requirement is made in respect of the Agreement

However, the inspectors noted that a number of the LAC documents were not fully completed, in particular sections of the Placement Plan Part 2 (PP2) were not complete. Salford's procedure allows for PP2 to be completed within 14 days of the placement although the foster carers are expected to sign PP1 at the time of placement. Consequently carers are signing an agreement whose details they may not have seen at the time of signing. Both documents should be completed at the time of placement.

**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?**

**3**

The manager provided the inspectors with a summary of allegations of abuse relating to children placed with foster carers, which had been a recommendation of the last inspection. She told the inspector that they maintain close liaison with the Child Protection Unit, which is based in the same building.

A letter to the Inspectors from the Team Managers in the Child Protection and Reviewing Unit, commented that the Family Placement Team were proactive in their response to any child protection allegations and in seeking advice from the Unit. The Team Managers wrote that they were currently looking at figures from strategy meetings to see if the level of intervention was set at an appropriate level. The Manager of the Family Placement Team commented that they requested a strategy meeting chaired by a member of the Child Protection Unit whenever allegations were made, to ensure that an element of independence is introduced into the considerations.

From reading files and observation of a fostering panel, the inspectors were able to see how the Team responded to allegations made against foster carers. The reports read indicated that a thorough approach was adopted, if necessary using outside specialists.

The Foster Care Agreement makes it clear that physical punishment is not acceptable. The responses from questionnaires sent to foster carers indicated that they were well aware of the policy.

As, required at the last inspection, a procedure had been drawn up for foster carers on how to respond when children go missing. This was to be issued first to foster carers in training and then included in the Foster Care Handbook.

A couple of young people commented in their questionnaires that they did not like having their friends families CRB checked before they could stay over-night. The Directorates procedure makes it clear that seeking a CRB check should not be a normal procedure and that carers should act as a reasonable parent. The recent Local Authority Circular [LAC(2004)4] has made it clear that there is no legal requirement for such checks to be made so this issue may be resolved to the young people's satisfaction.

(The question below about bullying is not asked in the current questionnaire sent out to children)

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

X

%

**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?**

3

From the questionnaires received from foster carers and from comments made to the inspectors when they visited foster carers, it was evident that maintaining contact with families was seen to be the normal practice, even though different degrees of contact would apply to different children. "Helping to stay in touch with family and friends" is one of the foster carer's tasks identified in the soon to be issued children's guide. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the manager stated that a policy on contact was being developed and it is one of the areas covered in the induction training for carers. Foster carers can claim for expenses for taking children to contact.

**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

In the questionnaires returned by children living in foster care (37 in total), most indicated that their views were sought. Some of the examples they gave showed that these were not always major questions they were asked about, but they represented the child's view of being consulted.

Children's files contained copies of letters sent to them about the arrangements for their review meetings and there were also copies of the consultation documents used as part of the review process.

The City of Salford has a Listening to Children's Officer who promotes the involvement of children in discussions about the department.

**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

There is a Protocol drawn up between Salford Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Salford Community and Social Services on the Health Needs of Looked After Children. This was last updated in January 2004. This protocol identified that the health outcomes for looked after children in Salford, of whom those in foster care are a proportion, are well below government targets. The PCT has appointed a paediatrician and nurse with city wide responsibility for looked after children. The lead paediatrician is a member of the fostering panel and foster carers are able to seek advice from the lead nurse, known as the Health Needs Coordinator for Looked After Children. The protocol lists the objectives to be achieved and sets out the information to be shared between the two parties with a view to improving the health outcomes. It is reviewed annually.



It was a noticeable feature of a large number of the questionnaires returned by children that they answered "Eating fruit and vegetables" as one way in which foster carers helped them to stay healthy.

**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?**

3

The Authority has established awards for children who have achieved educationally in the City of Salford and has a joint protocol between Education and Leisure and Community and Social Services on the education of children and young people in public care. The Foster Care Agreement requires the foster carer to promote the education and school attendance of any child placed. A Care and Education Support Team was available to support looked after children who are struggling educationally. One of the Principal Managers in the Directorate has lead responsibility for educational matters.

An increasing number of children were being supplied with computers to support their education and this was confirmed by comments made by carers and children when the inspectors visited them. Broadband access is being paid for.

Getting help with homework was frequently mentioned by children in their questionnaires as a way in which their carers helped them with their school work.

The City of Salford does appear to be addressing the issue of the educational achievement of looked after children both in practical support and in its policies.

**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

As part of the rolling programme of training for foster carers is a session called "moving on" which deals with the issue of preparing young people for independence. The Community and Social Services Directorate has established a team, Next Steps, whose task is to support young people during their final years being looked after and into their early years of independence. One young person spoke of the support they were receiving from this team.

## 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?

3

The recruitment of staff for the Family Placement Team is coordinated through the Personnel Section based at Crompton House in Swinton. Arrangements were made for the inspector to view the files of the staff employed. At the last inspection requirements were made in respect of references for internal appointees, up to date CRB checks and evidence of qualifications. All of these matters had been acted on. From a randomly selected sample of files it was evident that up to date CRB checks had been obtained and a reading of the records relating to the most recently recruited staff indicated that the recruitment process was sound.

All the staff undertaking foster carer assessments are qualified social workers.

The figure given below includes those members of staff who work in the Adoption and Permanence Team, whose adoption tasks were not looked at as part of this inspection.

Total number of staff of the agency:

34

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

X

### 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?

3

The workers in the Family Placement Team are organised into distinct teams with clear areas of responsibility. Each team has their own team leader and each of these team leaders is responsible to the Principal Manager. These arrangements appeared to be clearly understood by the staff. There was also a clearly understood distinction between Family Placement Workers and Family Support Workers. The latter's tasks were based around practical support for the carers but could include emotional support. Nevertheless the team members spoke of working as team members for the overall responsibilities of the Family Placement Team and the Team Managers shared responsibilities for duty cover etc.

Staff confirmed that they received regular one to one supervision.

Staff commented that the phone system was still inadequate for their needs and although the issue was to be addressed, recent discussions about alternative offices for the team may

mean that The City of Salford may not wish to spend money on a new system.

Initial enquiries from the public are dealt with by a member of the administrative team who aims to send out information within a short time span. The Senior Administrative Officer told the inspectors that they had been complimented by those who chose to apply to Salford to become foster carers because of the helpful response.

All staff have job descriptions and contracts of employment and the staff have access to the grievance procedures, health and safety procedures and the equal opportunities policy.

**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?**

**3**

Since the last inspection in February 2003, when there were a number of vacancies in the team, there has been greater success in recruiting staff to the extent that there is only one vacancy in the post of Training Coordinator. The full staff team has allowed for work to be allocated and for the backlog of work, such as reviews to be addressed, although the team clearly felt under pressure from the demands of finding placements for children and supporting carers.

There was a clear assessment process which among other documents is set out in the Statement of Purpose. The Family Placement Team use BAAF's form "f" for the purposes of assessment, supplemented by evidence of achieving certain identified competencies.

**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**

The City of Salford has established employment policies and procedures, including a Staff Development Policy and an Anti-Discriminatory Practice Policy. There is a "whistleblowing" policy for staff but this had not been disseminated to foster carers. In the response to a recommendation about this made in the report of the previous inspection, the manager wrote that consideration was being given to amending the corporate policy for sending to foster carers.

Foster carers were generally complimentary about the support from the staff at the Family Placement Service. Carers had access to the Emergency Duty Team out of office hours.

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
<b>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The Manager said that it was recognised that the budget allocated for short course training which would pay for specialist training was not sufficient to allow staff to attend, for example BAAf organised study days or conferences. There is an induction process for staff and one of the most recently recruited staff confirmed that this process was supportive. Social work staff had been undertaking Post Qualifying (PQ) training.</p> <p>The Community and Social Services Directorate had recently introduced an Appraisal and Development Scheme for staff in which all staff are appraised every year. Because of its recent introduction not all staff will have started the process.</p>		

<b>Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)</b>		
<b>All staff are properly accountable and supported.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Staff confirmed that they receive regular supervision from their manager and the managers in turn receive supervision from the Principal Manager. There are regular staff and team meetings.</p>		

<b>Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)</b>		
<b>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Foster Carers had a clear understanding of the support available to them from the Team. The different roles of staff within the Directorate is set out in the Statement of Purpose. Members of the Family Placement Team described the sort of discussions and liaison that took place between themselves and the children's social workers. Foster Carers also spoke of these links and appreciated the different roles.</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?****3**

The foster carers files read by the inspectors had record of regular supervisory visits to foster carers and all foster carers spoken to commented favourably on this support and knew who their support worker was. Carers told the inspectors that making of payments was handled efficiently and that they received practical support, in for instance taking a child to contact with family.

The Foster Carers Agreement is clear in its expectations of Foster Carers. A separate Agreement is available for Immediate Placements with Friends and Families, which is more specific to those circumstances.

**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**

In questionnaires returned to the inspectors by foster carers, the greater majority of carers were able to list training courses that they had attended. Training is provided as part of the assessment and approval process for foster carers. There is a rolling programme of training courses provided by the team. Subjects covered include "Moving on", "Caring for Sexually Abused Children" and "Contact and Working with Birth Parents". Attendance on these courses had increased since the link had been made between courses attended and level of allowances paid.

According to the pre-inspection questionnaire, 40 foster carers also attended First Aid Training and 26 drug and alcohol awareness training. In conjunction with STARLAC (Salford Therapeutic Advisory Referral Service for Looked After Children) a specialist course was held on managing behaviour. Foster carers who were attending this course commented favourably on it.

The post of Training Coordinator remained unfilled in spite of its being advertised. The manager commented that this was a noticeable gap in the team. Other members of the team were having to carry out the training provided.

The situation in respect of space in which to undertake training remains the same in that there is no one settled place use. Staff commented on the additional time it takes to take all the training equipment to each training event rather than being able to leave it in a place whose primary function is training. The manager told the inspector that premises were being looked for though no definite venue has yet been identified. The recommendation from the last inspection is repeated in this.

## 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 inspectors looked at the files which are maintained in the Area Teams that relate to children placed with foster carers. Each child had their own file and the recordings in that file related to that child.

The files were generally well organised. However, it was noted on more than one file that the LAC (Looked After Children) documentation was not always completed. In particular Placement Plans Part 2 could be found that had the child's name on the front page but little or nothing in the main body of the form. In some instances there were no LAC Care Plans to be found on the file or the Care Plan had a different long term objective to the one currently being worked towards. (See Standard 8 and related requirement)

From information entered in the review documents and from record of statutory visits to children, it would appear that children were not being visited at the minimum frequency required by the regulations. It would also appear, from reading of the same records, that children were not always being seen alone, even when of an age when this would be appropriate.

Foster carers spoken to had a good understanding of why the child they were looking after was being looked after. They commented that on some occasions information relevant to the child took time to arrive from the placing social worker.

### 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

The service keeps separate records for staff, foster carers and children and these are securely kept. These records include checks and references taken up for the purposes of the Service. Since the last inspection, the manager has set up a system which allows her to monitor complaints relating to the fostering service and their outcome. The record distinguishes between complaints directly relating to the service and those that have some connection to children placed with foster carers but which relates to another part of the service provided by Community and Social Services. Another separate record is made of allegations/child protection concerns relating to foster carers. This record had a summary of the outcome of the allegation/concern.

The Senior Administrative Officer and Panel Administrator showed the inspector the computer held records and demonstrated how the information is stored and retrieved. These systems contain the registers required by the regulations. Family Placement staff have recently been provided with desk top computers and all commented that this had been an aid to communication within the team by allowing the use of e-mails to leave messages for people who were out of the office. The inspectors formed the opinion that the Family Placement Team is effectively and competently administered.

In reading the records of contact with foster carers, it was not always evident who had written the record. The manager commented that this was an issue that had recently been addressed in a team meeting. It was also not always clear whether a visit had been unannounced.

Apart from the first, the figures given below are for the year ending March 2003

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency on 6/1/04:</b>			278
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			162
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			120
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			9
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			21
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	70.98	<b>Maximum £</b>	128.31

## 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 premises would be appropriate for the purposes of the Service if there were not other services run from the same building. The building provides accommodation for the Child Protection Unit and Children's Residential Services among others and the amount of traffic this generates is too great for the building's position in a residential road. The building can seem crowded at times. The manager told the inspectors that alternative premises are being sought.

As noted in Standard 16, the telephone system does need expanding to meet demand.

The building is also unable to provide sufficient training space for the needs of the service. (see Standard 23)



## 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?

3

The Service is funded out of the budget allocated by the Salford City Council for the running of the Community and Social Services Directorate.

### 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?

3

The Service operates to the Local Authorities policies and procedures in respect of financial management and control. A computer based financial system is used for recording and monitoring expenditure. Payments are made by the Finance Department on the basis of information sent from the Service.

**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

All foster carers spoken to by the inspectors confirmed that payments to them were made regularly and on time. There were occasional comments made in questionnaires on the time taken to reimburse carers for monies spent by carers buying equipment etc which had been authorised. The administrator explained how the system operated and said that although there was a deadline by which payments had to be entered into the system in order for additional monies to be added to the fortnightly payment, all payments could normally be included in the next due payment.

A new payment for skills scheme had been started since the last inspection. The level of payment related to the assessed skill level of the carers and to the amount of training attended. The payments are explained in a booklet sent to foster carers which also explains clearly the tax position of foster carers in relation to the payments received. Foster carers were happy with the level of payments being made.

## 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?

3

Salford Family Placement Team operate two fostering panels, one to consider adoption and long term placements, the second to consider all other fostering assessments and matching. The inspector observed both panels and interviewed the panel chairs, both of whom are independent. All panel members have a CRB check. Each panel included a Consultant Paediatrician as a member and a representative from the Education and Leisure Directorate in Salford. Legal advice can be obtained from the Council's legal team

A review panel was established in December 2003 which is made up of the Principal Manager and the chair and vice chair of the fostering panel. This panel considers the reviews of foster carers. This was set up to provide guaranteed space for these reviews which might otherwise be taken off the agenda when the full panels were busy. The Principal Manager and the chair said that so far the system was working and that as a result reviews were being done when they should be.

The panels were seen to carry out a scrutinizing role, raising issues prompted by the assessments presented and concerning themselves with the welfare of the children concerned. Links were made in the discussions between the decision making processes of the Children and Families Service and the discussions of the panel. The minutes of the panels were detailed and contained a copy of the signed decision of the Director who is the agency decision maker. These minutes are placed on the foster carers files.

The two panel chairs had clearly identified ways of raising any matters of concern within Salford's Community and Social Services. They commented that the department do address issues raised.

Those attending the adoption and permanence panel are asked to complete a feedback form, giving their views on how the panel operated. This is to be commended.

## 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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There is a well established short-break foster-care service in Salford. The Directorate has also set up a Childhood Disability Team in partnership with Barnardos. The Service has different policies and procedures for this service and in particular use their own Foster Placement Agreement for placements.

In speaking to foster carers who provide this service it was evident that the child's family remain central to the care provided and remain as the decision maker in relation to their child.

## 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?	3
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The assessment of friends and family carers are usually undertaken by the social workers in the area teams. The Principal Manager said that the numbers of staff in the Family Finding Team do not allow them to take on this task. The team is starting a system whereby members of the team provide initial guidance and advice to the area workers on what issues need to be addressed in a foster carers assessment. Progress of the friend and family assessments was monitored by the panels.

It was generally recognised that the assessment and approval of family and friend carers was problematic. The Inspector was aware from observation of a panel that the panel find themselves in a position where there is little choice about the approval because the child has become well established with members of their family. They also find that the decision of courts can bind them to an approval, which, on the basis of what is known about the carers, the panel would not wish to make.

The Principal Manager said that the decision to identify a Family Placement worker to advise the area team at an early stage was an attempt to reduce the number of unsatisfactory situations. This was an interim arrangement until the team was of sufficient size to undertake the assessments. It was also recognised that this would be a different task to a "stranger" assessment because the assessing social worker may have also to address issues arising out of the family dynamics that are not present in "stranger" assessments.

The inspectors formed the view that the team and the panels were well aware of the issues arising from friends and families as carers and seeking to address them.

**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 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 Anne Williams of Salford Family Placement Service 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 Anne Williams of Salford Family Placement Service 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.