

inspection report

Fostering Services

Heath Farm Family Services

Heath Farm

Charing Heath

Ashford

Kent

TN27 0AX

21,24, 25, 26 January 2005

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?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Heath Farm Family Services

Tel No

01233 712030

Address

Heath Farm, Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent, TN27 0AX

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

H560002018

Name of Registered Provider

Heath Farm Family Services

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mrs Janet Margaret Smart

Date of first registration

12 May 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

12 May 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

24.02.04

Date of Inspection Visit		21 January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Helen Lee	081741
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany Inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) 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 CSCI in respect of Heath Farm Family Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI 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.
<p>Heath Farm is an Independent Fostering Agency as defined by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. At the time of this inspection the agency were supporting fifty four placements in approved foster homes. The agency is based in the area of Ashford. There is a team of nine permanent full time staff including the responsible individual, the registered manager, three supervising social workers with one assistant and administrative and finance personnel. The agency also calls on sessional workers on a needs led basis including independent Form F Assessors. Foster carers receive regular support and supervisory visits. The agency has systems in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are placed with foster carers approved by them. The agency also has a school. The agency is part of the Pan London Contract and has secured the Investors in People award.</p>

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.)

The Inspection took place over four days in January 2005. The Inspector was pleased to be presented with evidence from the agency of work undertaken since the previous inspection along with appropriate work pertinent to the preparation for an inspection. On each day of the Inspection there was a welcoming atmosphere from both staff and carers who conveyed a child-centred approach to their work and a commitment to continue improvements in the practice of the agency. In summary the agency has improved to now evidence meeting twenty-three standards and exceed one. Six standards were rated as a minor shortfall.

The Inspector visited foster carers and young people at their homes as part of this inspection process. Staff interviews were also conducted along with postal surveys to foster carers, young people and placing Social workers. The Inspector also spent a day observing the panel and interviewing the panel chair as well as observing a team meeting. The Inspector thanks those who participated for their time and invaluable input.

Placing Social Workers (13 responses) positively commented on working with the agency and the carers. Individual positive comments included: "understanding of needs of child, inclusion in family life, acknowledge importance of birth family and communication with school", "v. supportive, good boundaries". Individual concerns included: "sometimes concerned at the level of negative comments about the young person", and "smoking in the house".

Eight foster carers completed surveys. Best things included the school and the support. Carers spread over a large area, time between supervisions, and perceived Red tape and continued rule changes were concerns highlighted by individual respondents.

The Inspector received a statistically fairly high response regarding completed surveys from the children (11) and has thus incorporated the findings and comments relevant within the body of this report.

Individual comments from young people included

- best aspect: *'I stand a chance of getting GCSEs and we go on holiday abroad 'You meet different children' 'I get people that care about me and I like being cared for'*
- worst aspects: *'leaving my old friends and family' 'missing grandma' 'do stuff wrong and get told off' 'Don't like the school'*
- Anything else: *'contact was changed because of what I said'.*

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:

NO

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:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	17	FS6	All carers to have been provided with training in Health and safety and Health and hygiene, first aid, health promotion and communicable diseases.	01.11.04
2	34	FS8	All carers proposed to placing authorities have consistent approvals with the proposed placement.	01.03.04
3	17	FS9	All carers to have been provided with training in caring for children who have been abused, recognising signs of child abuse, bullying, and managing behaviour. This to include the prevention and safe use of physical intervention.	30.05.04
4	17	FS14	All appropriate carers to have been provided with training in preparation for adulthood.	01.11.04
5	34	FS24	Foster Placement Agreements for all young people to meet Schedule 6 and to implement LAC Circular 2004/4.	01.08.04

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Helen Lee**Signature** Helen Lee**Second Inspector****Signature****Regulation Manager** Suzannah Burden**Signature****Date** 18.2.05

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 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	17	FS6	All carers to have been provided with training in Health and safety and Health and hygiene, first aid, health promotion and communicable diseases.	30/04/05
2	34	FS8	Robust systems to be effective to ensure that all carers proposed to placing authorities have consistent approvals with the proposed placement including for that of respite.	30/03/05
3	17	FS8	All carers to have been provided with training in dealing with discrimination and specific training as required for transracial and transcommunity placements.	30/09/05
4	17	FS9	All carers to have been provided with training in caring for children who have been abused, recognising signs of child abuse, bullying, and managing behaviour. This to include the prevention and safe use of physical intervention.	30/07/05
5	17	FS14	All appropriate carers to have been provided with training in preparation for adulthood.	30/09/05
6	34	FS24	Foster Placement Agreements for all young people to meet Schedule 6 and to implement LAC Circular 2004/4.	30/07/05

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 SoP required further review in order to evidence the objectives that the agency's aims could be measured as a success against.
2	FS1	The children's guide format to be further developed.
3	FS3	The agency to demonstrate the means by which children and young people are consulted and how the service could be improved.
4	FS4	The Regulation 42 reports to be more analytical and evidence an improvement in practice of the agency.
5	FS8	Foster placement agreements to contain specific reference to matching and decision-making as well as LAC Circular 2004/4.
6	FS8	The agency to ensure that responsible authority's have checked where necessary with the area authority for the carer and notified accordingly.
7	FS9	The agency to implement any appropriate panel recommendations regarding support to carers during and after an allegation.
8	FS10	Training specific for contact promotion and supervision needs to be identified for the worker.
9	FS10	Specific training for contact promotion and supervision should be included for carers.
10	FS12	The agency to develop and implement health recording as per FS12.04.
11	FS13	Foster placement agreements to meet the expectations of FS13.08 i.e. identifies for the child whom is responsible for all financial costs and decisions regarding education.
12	FS13	The agency to further develop its educational monitoring.
13	FS14	The agency to develop and implement an effective system to monitor and chase Pathway planning.
14	FS15	The role and job description of the assistant supervising social worker to be reviewed to ensure compliance with FS15.05 and FS22.02.
15	FS15	The functioning and personnel on the on-call rota need to adhere to FS15.05.
16	FS16	Supervision records to record and monitor actions and follow up work.

17	FS17	A robust and fully compliant system to be developed and implemented to ensure that all assessments meet the expectations of the NMS and that any change of approval reports are also comprehensive in relation to a robust procedure.
18	FS20	Appraisals to be reviewed at midway and the new format to be implemented by the agency.
19	FS21	Role of supervising social workers within the agency's school to be defined by policy and procedure which is adhered to in practice.
20	FS23	The agency to evidence that training for every foster carer meets the need of each and every child/young person placed.
21	FS22	The agency to develop its services and information for birth children.
22	FS27	The agency to develop and implement an itemised written budget for the fostering service which is linked or part of a development plan.
23	FS25	The regulatory requirements on the retention of records (child's records to be sent to the responsible authority and a copy of the record to be kept by the agency) and the information required for placement records (missing sex and reason why placement ceased) to be followed by the Agency.
24	FS30	Panel : Approvals need to be clearly defined, policies et al need to be reviewed, information presented to panel needs to be complete on all occasions, recommendations need to cover training as well as strengths, membership of the panel to meet the NMS, agency feedback and communication as well as the QA function of the panel to be established and implemented, and the role of the panel advisor to be clarified.

* 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	6
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
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	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	21/01/05
Time of Inspection	9.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	30.5

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI 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 statement includes details in respect of the fostering services, for example, qualifications and experience of staff and the number of foster carers approved by the agency and a summary of the procedures for supporting and reviewing carers. The agency confirmed the Statement of Purpose (SoP) would be made available on request to parents. The Manager stated that the SoP was developed in line with the NMS and regulations. The Inspector viewed the SoP which demonstrated that the document had been reviewed as per CH1.3. Following discussions with the Manager it was agreed that the SoP required further review in order to evidence the objectives that the agency's aims could be measured as a success against. Staff spoken to were aware of the SoP and commented that the practice met the expectations of the SoP. Heath Farm compiles a file which contains DoH booklets, a newsletter and one of two possible children's guide (depending on age). The agency is recommended to explore developing its children's guide format. The Manager informed the Inspector that this had been given to all children. Ten of the eleven children and young people who completed the surveys confirmed that they had received a guide. Time has been spent looking at policies, procedures, and written guidance to staff and carers and these reflected the statement of purpose.

Met Requirements: The SoP requires reviewing given that some statements were not evidenced within the SoP. The agency to further develop its children's guides, to ensure that it is suitable for the age range and understanding of children as per SoP.

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 manager, has the Diploma in Social Work and after a change of course started her NVQ4 in management on 7.10.04. Feedback from staff and foster carers has been complimentary about the manager's style of leadership. The agency have six requirements made at the last Inspection outstanding. The staff were able to demonstrate examples whereby the Manager had exercised effective leadership of the staff and operation. During the interview with the Manager she provided appropriate responses to perceived scenarios.

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

The required references and checks on the Registered Persons have been obtained as part of the registration process with the National Care Standards Commission; satisfactory outcomes were achieved. The agency has systems to ensure relevant checks are renewed every three years. Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes. Almost three quarters of children stated that they had not been asked by the fostering service how the service could be improved. Six of the eight carers stated that they had been asked by the fostering service their opinions on the way the service runs.

Met Requirement: Information on any person employed by the agency to comply with Schedule one. Original timescale 01.07.03.

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

During the inspection of files and records the Inspector did see some evidence of monitoring being undertaken by the Responsible Individual. The Inspector was also shown evidence of the registered managers broad monitoring systems. Reports have been produced that summarise the findings of the monitoring exercise as well as the production of effective action plans. Whilst the contents of the reports are informative, it is recommended that they be more analytical so that trends are identified and there is a resulting improvement in practice.

Met Requirements: To establish clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service as specified in Schedule 7. Original timescale 01.08.03. To supply the NCSC appropriate intervals with any report in respect of any review conducted. Original timescale 01.08.03.

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

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.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

5

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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**

The Manager stated that she had an appropriate job description. This was viewed by the Inspector along with a comprehensive job analysis which had been undertaken by the manager. The manager does not hold a similar position in another organization. All staff and carers were able to define the level of accountabilities within the agency regarding the Responsible Individual and the Manager. The Manager was able to take on board recommendations during the interview and review the application of these for Heath Farm. The Manager stated that in her absence the deputy manager would deputise and that this position now had a clear job description and person specification detailing skills and competence required and achieved.

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

The agency had taken appropriate steps to ensure that a staff member deemed competent to do so undertakes yearly health and safety assessments. The Inspector viewed documents evidencing the assessments undertaken. The Inspector arranged to visit two foster homes as part of the inspection process. All the homes were warm, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to reasonable standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Five placing social workers commented positively on "warm supportive secure environments". All the children, who were placed, were accommodated in single rooms. Documentation demonstrated that foster carer's preparation and training cover health and safety issues and that carer's are provided with written health and safety guidelines. Where foster carers provide transport for the children looked after, the fostering service carries out checks, for instance of insurance documents and MOT certificates.

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

Some children were able to verify that they were encouraged to develop and pursue their talents, own interests and hobbies. These included opportunities to play sports, computer and or console games, and clubs such as cadets. Riding their bike, going shopping, swimming and golf lessons were individual choices for four specific children. There is an area for hobbies and interests on the referral form appropriately. No children provided evidence of carers providing any special arrangements regarding religion, language or racial background. A Supervising Social Worker had attended a course regarding diversity and placement in order to cascade good practice to the agency. The Inspector recommended that the support group programme should encompass a designated time for the carers to discuss this area.

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**

The agency uses the system of referral/matching forms and referral meetings which supervising social workers attend. The policy and procedures of the agency should be updated to reflect current practice.

Sampled referral forms had prompts though were often not completed in any great detail or fully evidenced the matching elements considered. However, evidence of matching considerations that had been taken into account was found in other records as well via staff and carer interviews and these considerations included ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs. One foster carer reported that there was a good introduction of the child to the placement and that there was adequate information provided relating to the child. This is rated as a shortfall.

Foster carers have confirmed the decision to accept a placement rests with them and that they are generally provided with enough information to do so. Staff discussions also highlighted areas of practice which demonstrated careful matching and pre- as well as after placement introduction work. The Inspector also viewed some examples of good social practice re: matching considerations which unfortunately was unsigned.

One sampled foster carer had had children on respite without having been approved for this category, however this appeared to be an oversight of the agency's systems which the agency immediately reviewed.

Not all of the sampled files for children held any foster placement agreement. Written foster placement agreements did not consistently contain specific reference to the elements of matching taken into account when the placement was made and neither did they consistently identify support to compensate for any gaps. This is rated as a shortfall.

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 Policy includes all relevant information. It is made clear in the written information provided to foster carers by the agency that corporal punishment is not ever to be used. There are currently child protection strategies ongoing which the Inspector had been notified of. Systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. The Inspector recommended that the agency ensures that there are safe caring guidelines for each home are more specific and effective as well as made in consultation with all members of the household. It is stated in the foster care agreement that corporal punishment is not acceptable and there is a provision of written information to that effect with alternative strategies. The Inspector viewed the Behaviour Management Policy which adequately covers possible de-escalation strategies as well as physical interventions. The procedure regarding missing persons has been reviewed and now covers all the relevant areas with a

good mixture of research, legislation and useful information. Two placing Social Workers commented that “sometimes I feel that carers find it difficult to implement sanctions due to escalation in behaviour” and “I just want to make sure that threats of placement are not used”. When tracked through the latter was about to be monitored by the agency and indeed was discussed at the observed team meeting. The Inspector viewed the absconsion log which evidenced monitoring of absconsion’s. All the foster carers visited were clear about the action they would take if a young person who they are looking after went missing.

Some carers raised the agency’s support available to them during an allegation and the formality of de-briefing. Staff stated that they had offered time and support however this was not fully evident from the carers file or staff’s supervision records. This was raised at the panel and the panel had added this issue to their agenda. The Inspector recommends the agency to put in place any suggestions of the panel as appropriate.

Children cited the following sanctions used: grounding, sending to bedroom, no treats or sports lessons, and no television or computer games. Eight of the eleven children stated that they knew how to make a complaint to the agency. Under half of the children stated that they would know how to make a complaint to the CSCI.

Met requirement: The Child Protection policy to comply with regulation 12 and meet the expectations of FS9.

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

0

%

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

The induction and preparation process emphasises the importance of foster carers helping children maintain appropriate contacts and introduces the skills required to encourage and facilitate such contacts. The records of supervision between the agency and individual foster carers minute discussion on this topic. The quality of support in this area is further monitored by the use of post placement surveys and foster carers annual reviews seeking feedback on this subject. Contact arrangements were described in the care files inspected. The agency has an assistant supervising social worker whom facilitates, organises and supervises contact. Training specific to this task needs to be identified for the worker. Specific training for this task should also be included for carers. The majority of the children are placed from outside the local area. Feedback, records, correspondence and written procedures all indicate contact arrangements are managed in line with any arrangements / agreements that have been made. Records inspected demonstrated that the worker is recording the outcomes of contact arrangements and that this is fed back to relevant parties. Discussions with staff and the Manager demonstrated good social work practice examples regarding the promotion of contact. The Inspector was unable to track any contact arrangements for some children due to the lack of FPA’s. The agency had worked in order to have risk assessments undertaken by the child’s social worker regarding contact arrangements.

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?****4**

The agency has implemented a children's box which has enabled children to raise suggestions and ideas anonymously which the Inspector commends. The agency has also recently started a weekly newsletter which the young people have begun to contribute to. It is these two initiatives having been started and implemented which merit an exceeded rating on this occasion. Foster carers gave examples of where children have made their views known and how these have been responded to positively for example choice in diet, activities, decoration of accommodation and clothes. Looked After Children providing written and verbal feedback have on the whole indicated they have a say in what matters to them and confirmed that the foster carers had consulted them. Records evidence that there is training that covers listening and responding to children's views and the subject is linked with topics such as understanding and managing behaviour and self-image and identity, which are included in the core training programme. Children providing feedback have indicated that they have been given information about what to do to make a complaint or if they are unhappy about something.

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**

Records within the children's files demonstrated where necessary advocacy and guidance being sought from the child's GP or other services. From looking at records the Inspector found evidence of health issues being identified and addressed as well as monitored. Most children surveyed provided a wide range of healthy activities and strategies that their carers helped them with such as healthy eating, personal hygiene, and sports. Some children didn't list any help that they felt they got. The Inspector viewed records which demonstrated carers and supervising Social Workers contributing to health discussions for the young people. The agency now has developed links with LAC co-ordinators in the appropriate areas. The Inspector also recommended that the agency's medical procedures needed further development in line with the RPS guidance which has been done as part of a stand alone health policy. The Manager stated that she would develop a format for health recording as per FS12.04. Training for all carers in health and hygiene and first aid is outstanding.

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 Manager informed the Inspector that Heath Farm has its own special needs school and that the policy is that all children must attend a school. The Manager verbally confirmed that all the young people attended school and gave practice examples of support being given by the agency. Just over half of the children stated that they received help with their homework from their carers. One school report viewed evidenced good attendance and reflected on the child's achievements as well as the carers contribution. Staff and Carers spoken to were clear of their aims to the educational needs of each individual young person placed with the agency. The Inspector recommended that unannounced inspections undertaken by the agency reviewed the play and educational materials within the home. The agency have now developed links with the educational LAC co-ordinator for the appropriate areas. The Manager stated that she would develop an effective system to collate educational attainment which had been partially completed as part of the Regulation 42 reports.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The Inspector commends that numerous carers working for the agency who have accommodated and provided if necessary any support for young people into adulthood. Carers spoken with verbally gave good social work practice examples. The Manager acknowledged the need to ensure that all carers have received training regarding preparation of adulthood as only thirty percent of carers had undertaken this course. The policy has been further developed and was viewed by the Inspector being clear regarding expectations as well as the legislation. The Inspector re-recommended that a system is in place to monitor and chase Local Authorities regarding the provision of Pathway Plans and their duties.

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 agency has written policy and procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Staff personal files were sampled. The Responsible Individual has appropriately undertaken numerous employment law and practice courses. Overall the recruitment of permanent staff has been in line with regulatory requirements. The role of deputy has now had a reviewed job description and training as appropriate. The three supervising social workers are all qualified social workers. The role and job description of the assistant supervising social workers needs to be reviewed in light of FS15.05 and FS22.03. The functioning and personnel on the on-call rota need also to adhere to FS15.05.

A human resource plan would be of benefit to the agency which would set out a skills and experience audit of staff, future recruitment needs, training programmes, promotion and development opportunities to cover the needs of the Statement of Purpose, in line with the agency's completed training matrix. As stated under a previous standard, senior management staff have the necessary qualifications or are in the process of attaining them. Formal supervision is provided for all staff.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

3

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 staffing of the agency was in line with the Statement of Purpose. Staff were able to describe their own and each others role(s) and to whom they were accountable. Staff confirmed that they undertake some on-going training. The manager provides professional supervision to the support workers; minutes of supervision sessions were sampled and found to cover a range of relevant topics including issues relating to individual carers and placements, training needs and professional development. However the use of actions and follow up was not effective. Supervision records for carers were viewed and contained some appropriate social work discussion. Staff were clear re: workload priorities and were open with regard to the frequency of supervision sometimes lapsing. Staff interviewed were interested to attend training courses or induction programmes as appropriate. A new structure of admin support has been viewed as beneficial by all and provides an appropriate

level of admin support. The office manager is developing office procedures including induction matters to assessments, approvals and reviews (panel). Staff confirmed written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service had been issued and reviewed as and when required. An employee's handbook, in compliance with new regulations, has been published addressing for instance health and safety, equal opportunities and disciplinary procedures.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Identified gaps of practice and knowledge highlighted at Panel and by sampling Form F Assessments (regarding Foster Carer assessment and competencies) were relayed to the Manager during the Inspection. Further information on an applicants qualities and competencies were needed and there were evident minor shortfalls in relation to FS17.06 and FS17.07. However this was balanced by some sampled Form F assessments which were of a good standard and provided a good social work assessment. Following discussions about assessments and change of approval reports provided for panel the manager acknowledged that a procedure and robust system would be of further benefit.

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

Staff were complimentary of employment practice and conditions. Staff described feeling valued by their colleagues and seniors. Staff said that they enjoyed coming to work. Staff and carers confirmed the arrangements for out of hours management and support which they are able to claim back via toil. The Manager stated that the agency is up to date with appraisals which was confirmed by the sampling of staff files. The whistle-blowing policy had been reviewed by the agency. Carers expressed a good level of satisfaction with the level of support offered to them. Public liability and professional indemnity insurance obtained by the agency meets regulatory requirements.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The Inspector viewed staff files, which evidenced one induction programme which although comprehensive was quite compacted. Team meeting minutes evidenced discussion regarding training. Training provision is informed by the supervision and appraisal / review process. Systems to evaluate the effectiveness of training are implemented through 'feedback forms', whereby the information is collected, analysed and action taken accordingly. Fostering service staff and foster carers have attended joint training on a frequent basis. All staff are informed of changes in legislation through supervision, and team meetings.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Job descriptions have been issued. Policies and procedures of the agency are accessible including a support team procedures manual. Supervision / appraisal records covered relevant themes and topics. Staff confirmed there is opportunity to meet, share ideas, developments and discuss issues with colleagues informally on a regular basis and more formally through staff meetings. As previously recommended the effectiveness of appraisals should be reviewed and midway reviews which are recorded should look at achievements and progress so far towards set appraisal targets. This would be of benefit to both staff and management. Team meetings are held weekly and the Inspector observed such a meeting during the course of the inspection. All participated in the discussion and varying views were expressed. Previous team meeting minutes were viewed and demonstrated good communication regarding foster carers.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The Inspector commends the range of strategies of support available to carers: dedicated respite carers, support groups with transport available, workshops and individual sessions with a therapist, new core training programme and NVQ course, surveys undertaken by the agency regarding support issues and improvements. Appropriate support is also available as out of hours and review reports. An area requiring formal development and structure is the support available to Foster Carers during and after an allegation. The Inspector commends the agency use of independent social workers pulling together the information for annual reviews and that all reviews then are presented to panel. Annual review reports (of foster carers) have been prepared and made available to the Fostering Panel. The content was viewed as of good quality and analysis if lacking in presentation and accessibility (panel observation).

Both the agency worker(s) and the foster carers spoken with were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. However via inspection of the records and documents including team meeting minutes the role and use of the supervising social workers within the nearby school especially with regard to emergencies or events needs review via written procedures to ensure clearly defined and limited functions.

Records indicate that communication between the fostering service social workers and placing social workers has not been without effect.

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**

Foster carers have confirmed they received the handbook containing policies, procedures, and guidance and this was evidenced in the foster carers working file by the Inspector. Foster carers receive supervision visits routinely. Support visits and liaison takes place as needs dictate. The role and job description of the assistant supervising social worker needs to be reviewed in light of FS15.05 and FS22.03. The agency organises a 'Carers Day' every Wednesday at the agency's premises. This is open to all carers and provides both carers and staff with the opportunity to meet informally and/or discuss any ongoing issues. Supervising Support Workers are required to maintain a record of contact. Foster carers Agreements meet Schedule 5 of the Regulations. The Inspector re-recommended that the agency produce a 'Children's guide' for birth children. The Foster carers handbook has been reviewed to meet the expectations of the National Minimum Standards.

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?****2**

The Inspector was unable to track via matching, foster placement agreements and training portfolios that specific training for every sampled foster carer met the needs of each individual child/young person placed (learning difficulties, mental health and physical assault). The Inspector therefore re-recommends that the agency implements a robust system which provides and evidences that training for every Foster Carer meets the needs of each child/young person placed.

Records of annual reviews did not identify training needs against needs in any planned way. The Inspector also recommended that discussion at panel and panel minutes reflected the training required by the NMS and that recommendations are made for such training along with any identified by the Supervising Social Workers and tracked. The Inspector recommended that the agency provide carers with key areas of training prior to any child being placed especially if the placement is considered an emergency or short-term. Some carers raised the issues of the good practice recommendation for groups/fun days/training for the birth children which the Inspector would support.

Pre-approval and induction training for each carer has been organised. An expectation is placed upon all foster carers by the agency that they attend training. Records show a reasonable level of attendance has been achieved. There is an on-going programme of training for foster carers.

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

Outstanding Requirement: Foster Placement Agreements for all young people to meet Schedule 6 and to implement LAC Circular 2004/4.

As previously mentioned the non-existence of foster placement agreements for the children and young people is viewed as a shortfall. The Inspector acknowledged the difficulties in securing information at times from placing Social Workers, however, the agency needs to comply with the regulation and ensure that they have a foster placement agreement prior to the young person moving into the carers and must therefore implement, review and monitor a robust system. The Inspector recommended a format, which would also delegate decisions in most circumstances regarding overnight stays to the carers (LAC Circular 2004/4). Carers spoken with demonstrated a clear knowledge of why the young people were in care, the duration, purpose and legal status. The agency has developed and implemented a policy regarding case recording. The case records of six children were inspected. The records were comprehensive and kept up to date but would benefit from further organisation. The use of electronic data management to aid monitoring of records is being implemented. Correspondence confirms that records and information are exchanged between the agency and placing authorities and that foster carers are provided with information about the young people they are being asked to work with. Foster carers visited demonstrated awareness of the need to keep records, the usefulness of recording relevant information and the importance of storing the records securely.

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 Inspector looked at a range of records including staff, carers and children's files and registers. Foster Carer records had been noticeably improved regarding their organisation. One sampled Foster Carers record did not contain the Foster Care Agreement however all others did. Confidential records are stored in locked room's and the Inspector was assured the premises are secure outside of office hours. Foster Carer and Children's Registers met the Regulations. Evidence of CRB checks having been obtained for the whole staff group was seen. The agency maintains an accident log. The regulatory requirements on the retention of records and the information required for placement records were clarified with the Agency.

Met Requirements: Foster Care Agreements for all carers to meet Schedule 5 & The agency to maintain an accident log as per Schedule 2.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			54
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			51
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			54
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			7
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			7
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	410	Maximum £	410

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 Agency has large identifiable premises in a rural location about eight miles from Ashford, Kent. The majority of the premises are given over to a school run by the agency that is registered with DfES. The Inspector viewed the facilities for the secure retention of records and the measures to safeguard IT systems. These were found these to be satisfactory; the Inspector was assured there is an appropriate security system and that the premises and its contents are adequately insured. Heath Farm operates out of one office, this being the base for supervising Social Workers and admin support staff.

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 budget analysis sent to the CSCI demonstrated that the agency has a significant gross profit after taxation. The accounts are independently audited hence compliance with regulations and guidelines imposed upon businesses is monitored.

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?

2

The agency publishes its charges for each of its services and has a clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses for any additional services it is asked to provide. The Inspector awaits a report from the agency's accountants to demonstrate compliance with NMS 27-29.

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**

Foster carers receive an allowance and agreed expenses. Foster carers have confirmed payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually. The policy on fostering allowances and expenses is included in the foster carers handbook.

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?

2

The Panel has been reviewed and although in infancy has much improved in membership and functionality. The Inspector observed a panel meeting, interviewed the panel chair, inspected panel minutes and interviewed carers who had attended their review during the observation. Some organisational issues need to be improved however there was evidence of informed social work decision making. Within discussions with the registered manager and the panel chair the Inspector recommended that

- Approvals needed to be clearly defined
- Policies, procedures and practice guidelines need to be reviewed
- Information presented to panel needed to be complete (training, medicals, CRBs, form f assessment)
- Recommendations need to cover training as well as strengths
- Membership of the panel needs to meet NMS
- Agency feedback/communication / QA role needs to be established and implemented, and
- The role of the panel advisor needs to be clarified

Foster panel members are subject to the recruitment checks including Criminal Records Bureau checks at the enhanced level. The foster panel has access to and seeks medical expertise in the process of considering the approval. Independent members of the panel include those with relevant experience in education and health.

Met Requirement: The Panel to be established in accordance with Regulation (24 1 –10). The agency to produce a plan of action regarding the follow-up of the reconstitution of a panel (FS30).

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?
---------------------------	---------------

0

This standard was not assessed at this inspection.

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?
This standard is not applicable to this agency.	

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 21st, 24th, 25th and 26th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

P7 In addition to Pan London we have preferred provider status with West Midlands Consortium, Brighton & Hove, Surrey, Bedfordshire and Hull.

P8 The School is D of ES approved.

P35 We would ask that the statement relating to "significant gross profit" be removed. Given that the accountant's report is now with the CSCI, should this rating not be increased.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

YES

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 18th March 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI 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 Georgina Revell of Heath Farm 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	<u>G Revell</u>
Signature	<u>G Revell</u>
Designation	<u>Responsible Individual</u>
Date	<u>14.3.2005</u>

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of Heath Farm
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.

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