

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **SWIIS Foster Care Limited**

3rd Floor Royal Buildings  
2 Mosley Street  
Piccadilly  
Manchester  
M2 3AN

2nd 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.

<b>FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION</b>
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**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO
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**Name of Authority**

Not Applicable.

**Address**

Not Applicable.

**Local Authority Manager**

Not Applicable.

**Tel No:**

Not Applicable.

**Address**

Not Applicable.

**Fax No:**

Not Applicable.

**Email Address**

Not Applicable.

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**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES
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**Name of Agency**

Swiis Foster Care Limited

**Tel No**

020 7307 8383

**Address**

3rd Floor Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Piccadilly,  
Manchester, M2 3AN

**Fax No**

020 7307 8384

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

Swiis Foster Care Ltd

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

Cynara Frances Ogden Smith

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO
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**Date of last inspection**

27/2/03
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<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		2nd February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Jacqui Malcolm	074739
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Lolly Warren	074725
<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.		Not Applicable.	
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		Not Applicable.	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mrs Cynara Frances Ogden-Smith.	

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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 Swiis Foster Care Limited. 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.**

Swiis Fostering Service is a national independent fostering agency that provides a fostering service to Local Authority Social Services Departments in Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle. It provides short-term and long-term placements for children and young people, including children with disabilities who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority. In addition, there is a resource service that had been further developed to provide additional support packages to children and young people. This included educational and health programmes intended to support young people in school and in their placements. There was also support available to supervise contact between children and their significant others.

Swiis Fostering Service was responsible for assessing, approving, training, supporting and reviewing foster carers. It also provides and operates a fostering panel that includes the services of an independent chairperson.

The service is based in Manchester city centre and extends itself to the Manchester and North West area. The team consists of 1 Head of Care, 1 Deputy Head of Foster Care, 4 Supervising Link Social Workers, 1 Family Support Worker, 1 Office Administration Manager, 1 Administration Assistant, 1 Health Advisor and 4 Education Case Workers.

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, there is a requirement for independent fostering agencies to be registered. Swiis has submitted a registration application that was near to completion.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

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

This is the second inspection of Swiis Fostering Service. During the inspection, the inspectors met with the Manager, Deputy Manager, Administration Staff, Link Workers, Family Support Worker, Education Support Workers, the Head of Education Services and the Health Advisor. It was evident from the discussions with the workers that they were clear about their roles, levels of accountability and showed a commitment to the young children/young people who were looked after in foster care.

Visits to foster care families were undertaken and foster carers spoke positively about the service they received and said they felt very supported by the service. Children/young people who were seen by the inspectors and responded to the questionnaires presented no concerns and appeared happy.

#### **Statement of Purpose**

The statement of purpose had been updated since the last inspection and addressed all of the requirements as set out in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. In addition, the children's guide had been revamped and contained information necessary to inform children and young people about the service provision.

#### **Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service**

##### **2 of the 2 standards were met.**

The manager has had several years experience of working with children and families and held the Diploma in Social Work and BA (hons) in Applied Social Studies. The service appeared to be appropriately managed at the time of the inspection.

#### **Management of the Fostering Service**

##### **2 of the 2 standards were met.**

There were a number of systems in place to monitor and control the activities of the service provision. These included the function of the fostering panel, foster carers support groups, children/young people's groups, the children of foster carers' group and review system.

#### **Securing and Promoting Welfare**

##### **6 of the 9 standards were met.**

The service promoted the recruitment of foster carers from a variety of backgrounds and they compiled detailed assessments to ascertain the suitability of foster carers and ensure children/young people were appropriately matched. Where children/young people had been trans-racially placed, there was evidence that additional support systems were in place to ensure the needs of the children and contact arrangements were met. Child protection training was available to staff and carers. Observations of the training schedule and discussions with new staff indicated that Child Protection training was ongoing. There was a central system in place to record Child Protection allegations and suspicions of abuse and



the recording of this information was commendable. The amendments required in the safeguarding policy were not seen upon inspection. The anti-bullying policy was in place and the unauthorised absence policy had been updated to meet the requirements. The service appeared to promote and safeguard the welfare of children/young people in foster care.

**Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Carers**  
**7 of the 9 standards were met.**

The system in place for recruiting staff and carers required review with respect to some personnel files and the way in which CRB clearance certificates were being stored. There were induction procedures in place and staff spoke highly of the support and said they were regularly supervised. Equally, foster carers confirmed they felt supported and they confirmed the training and supervision they had undertaken.

**Records**  
**0 of the 2 standards were met.**

The service maintained records with respect to foster caring families and personnel. It was noted that some 'Looked After Children' (LAC) information was missing as well as some other significant information detailed in the main body of the report. There were some records that had not been signed and this is reiterated from the requirements of the last inspection.

**Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Agency**  
**This standard was met.**

The premises were found to be adequate for the purpose of the service.

**Financial Requirements**  
**3 of the 3 standards were met.**

Foster carers confirmed there were no problems with them being paid on time and at regular intervals. The financial systems in place appeared to be satisfactory.

**Fostering Panels**  
**This standard was not met.**

The inspectors had an opportunity to observe a fostering panel meeting. The panel was overall, well organised, representative and was chaired by an independent person. There was an issue that was brought to the manager's attention with respect to panel etiquette when presenting reports that must be addressed.

**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:**

This does not apply to Swiis as they are not a local authority fostering service.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection
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Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO
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**If No please list below**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b> 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	20 Schedule 1	FS15	There must be positive proof of identity sought for each worker recruited to the Fostering Service.	30.6.04
2	20 Schedule 1	FS15	All personnel files must contain two references.	30.6.04
3	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The reference form must request the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability to work with children.	30.6.04
4	22	FS24	All records must be signed by social workers following an entry in the files.	30.6.04
5	30	FS24	The agency must chase up the agreed documents from the placing authority that are missing from some of the children's/young people's files.	30.6.04

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

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Swiis Fostering Service had made an application for registration, which at the time of the inspection was still in progress, and consequently there were no conditions of registration.		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Jacqui Malcolm	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Lolly Warren	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Mike Short	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	12	FS9	There must be a safe care policy with respect to each foster carer.	Oct 04
2	18(5)	FS11	The recording of complaints must be reviewed to ensure they are recorded in a clear and accurate manner.	Oct 04
3	18(5)	FS11	The manager must ensure that the details of complaints are kept together in the record of complaints to enable the process to be clearly observed. In addition, the record of complaints must be appropriately maintained.	Oct 04
4	15(2)(b)	FS12	The manager must ensure that health assessments are pursued from the child/young person's placing social worker.	Oct 04
5	20 Schedule 1	FS15	There must be positive proof of identity sought for each worker recruited to the Fostering Service.	Oct 04
6	20 Schedule 1	FS15	All personnel files must contain two references. In addition, in relation to one file discussed with the manager, one of the referees must be a previous employer.	Oct 04
7	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The reference form must request the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability to work with children. In addition, this section must include information about whether staff had been subject to any disciplinary action.	Oct 04

8	21	FS15	<p>The manager must ensure that personnel documents contain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration PIN number with respect to the health advisor</li> <li>• Up to date CRB checks must be undertaken with respect to two personnel files.</li> <li>• CRB clearance certificates must not be maintained on the files.</li> <li>• A standard format must be in place to ensure clear recording of interview notes.</li> </ul>	Oct 04
9	28(5)(b) Schedule 1	FS21	The updated foster carer written agreement must be replaced on the files identified to ensure it meets the regulations.	Oct 04
10	22	FS24	All records must be signed by social workers following an entry in the files.	Oct 04
11	30	FS24	The agency must chase up the agreed documents from the placing authority that are missing from some of the children's/young people's files.	Oct 04
12	34(3) Schedule 6	FS24	The manager must review the way in which they obtain the information required by the placing authority to meet Schedule 6 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.	Oct 04
13	30	FS25	The manager must ensure the records are reviewed as indicated in Standard 25 of the report.	Oct 04
14	30	FS25	The use of correction fluid in all documentation must cease.	With immediate effect.
15	24	FS30	The service must review the panel process where panel members present reports.	Oct 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	FS3	The manager should have a qualification at Level 4 NVQ in Management by 2005.

\* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	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	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	NO

Date of Inspection	2/2/04
Time of Inspection	9.50AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

52.35
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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
<p>Since the last inspection, the statement of purpose has been fully revamped to a good standard and included all the requirements as specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. The statement of purpose included an introduction from the Responsible Individual, clear aims and objectives and information about the service provided. The manager confirmed that the statement of purpose accurately reflected the services offered. The Link workers interviewed told the inspectors that they were aware about the review of the statement of purpose and had been consulted about its contents, particularly the information in relation to their personal profiles.</p> <p>The children and young people's guide had also been updated. The inspectors were told that children who were fostered had been consulted about the guide and the drawings had been completed by some of the children. The guide was clearly written and developed to help inform children and young people about what to expect in foster care and also included information about external agencies that may be contacted.</p> <p>At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that the service detailed the nature and outcomes of complaints made. This requirement had been met and included the number of complaints made, the nature of complaints and the outcome of the complaints made. There was also a section included on compliments that the service had received.</p>		

## 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?

4

The manager holds the BA (hons) in Applied Social Studies and had extensive experience in a number of different settings, including family placement work with children and families in the public and private sector. The manager had not undertaken any management training and indicated that she intended to explore a course at Salford University. It is however, required that the manager obtains a management qualification to NVQ Level 4 or an equivalent qualification by 2005.

During the inspection, the manager and deputy manager were respectively interviewed about the management of the service that included recent developments that had taken place. Both clearly demonstrated their roles, responsibilities and levels of accountability in relation to their work and of the wider management structure. Staff interviewed were also aware of the lines of accountability. As noted at the last inspection, there continued to be an open and supportive management style and staff confirmed this observation during interviews with them.

All of the responses from the placing social workers stated that the fostering service worked 'very well' with the placing authority. Foster carers spoken to informed the inspectors that they were satisfied with the management of the service and described it as supportive and approachable.

### 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

As previously stated, the manager has extensive experience of working with children and families and was a qualified social worker. The manager demonstrated her knowledge about protection issues, including safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This had particular relevance due the fact that the service had assisted in two child protection investigations. It was noted that the service dealt with the matter appropriately and positively reflected on the lessons learned from the events. The Commission had also been promptly notified about child protection issues.

Checks including two references that had been obtained from the Commission in respect of the manager that also included a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The personal information in respect of the manager was in order and contained the information required.





## 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

There were a number of systems in place to monitor and control the activities of the service and the manager continued to have responsibility for the quality control functions of assessments, files and recruitment and selection processes. There were systems in place for the manager to monitor under Schedule 7 of the regulations and the Commission had been duly notified of significant issues under Schedule 8 of the regulations.

It was noted through observations made at the fostering panel and reviewing system that the quality assurance function ensured the relevant information was contained in the assessments and documents presented in these arenas.

Foster carer support groups were being held and the manager told the inspectors that meetings took place at different venues and there was an expectation that carers attended particularly if there was a training event. There was also a children's group set up for the children of carers that met every 3 months. The inspectors were informed about the twice-yearly event for children who are fostered and there were plans in place to extend the activities to make it more age appropriate this year. Children also received questionnaires to complete in preparation for foster carers reviews.

The team met on a regular basis and team members reported that they received regular supervision. Team members interviewed said they discussed workload issues, training and personal development that enabled their respective managers to monitor their workloads and provide advice and support.

There were clear administrative systems in place. This included the administration of the panel, ensuring the appropriate recruitments checks were made, typing of Form F assessments ensuring their return to workers to enable any checks and amendments to be made. There were also systems to monitor the assessment process of carers, record the details of existing carers and children placed with them and payment systems were in place to ensure prompt payments to foster carers.

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

2

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

1

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

<b>Serious complaint about a foster parent.</b>		X
<b>Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.</b>		2
<b>Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:</b>		0
<b>Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:</b>		0

<b>Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)</b> <b>The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>As noted at the last inspection, there was a job description in place with respect to the manager and there was a job description available with respect to the deputy manager. The manager and the deputy were aware of their roles, responsibilities and levels of accountability and the team (link workers, resource worker, administrative staff, teaching staff and health workers) similarly demonstrated an awareness of their respective roles and levels of accountability.</p> <p>The deputy manager continued to deputise in the manager's absence and along with other responsibilities also supervised staff. The deputy manager has a number of years experience in social work with children and families in different settings, including child protection work.</p>		

## 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

Prior to the approval of foster carers, a full and detailed assessment was completed by the link worker. A second officer's assessment was then undertaken to ensure that all aspects of the assessment had been addressed. A health and safety assessment was also undertaken to ensure the safety of the home and ensure a nurturing and healthy environment for children and young people to live in. In addition, the health and safety policy contained in the foster care handbook stated that training would be made available to carers during the assessment process in health and safety issues.

The child protection policy made mention of the safe care policy. It was noted that carers were expected to produce their own safe caring policy based on their household and discussions with carers revealed that they had done this and examples of safe caring policies were seen. It was noted, however that in one file, a safe care policy was not seen and the manager was advised about this matter during feed back.

Foster carers confirmed that they received visits from link workers on an unannounced basis and carers did not show any adverse reactions to these visits. Comments made by some foster carers indicated that they welcomed the unannounced visits. It was noted that link workers made a record of unannounced visits in carer's files. Similarly carers were aware of the Commission and understood that they may be visited as part of the 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

It was noted that on a number of levels, Swiis continued to provide a service that reflected the area it served and there was evidence that demonstrated that the service took the issue of diversity seriously. Discussions with the manager indicated that systems were in place to screen the suitability of potential carers, for example in the initial training group for potential foster carers identified people who may not be deemed suitable. The manager also said that the assessment process may raise issues that may be problematic and therefore, potential carers would be informed that when it reached panel, the application might be refused.

The equal opportunity policy addressed the issues of diversity and the team and carers had been involved in 'Valuing Diversity' training.

The manager reported that the last advert for foster carers focussed on the recruitment of black and Asian carers. The inspectors spoke to one black carer and carers who were looking after children who were transracially placed and they spoke positively about the



training they had received. It was also highlighted that the service recognised that there were a lack of males in the staff team, however, it was acknowledged that the service had to recruit the most appropriate people to undertake the job, rather than recruit staff on a token basis.

#### **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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The aims of the service was outlined in the statement of purpose and one of the aims was to "...match each child carefully with the best family" and was a service that "...actively values diversity and recruits staff and carers from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds". Link workers told the inspectors that they had to be aware of the strengths of the carer during the matching process and they said they had previously rejected referrals if an appropriate match could not be made. The inspectors were advised that in making a decision about a placement that was appropriately matched, workers said they obtained as much information as possible about the child, considered any existing children/young people who already resided with the carers household and they would consider the carers skills, competence and experience. With respect to transracial placements, workers said they considered the community and cultural networks around the carer's environment. Carers were required to demonstrate a willingness to take on board the child's essential needs and link workers were aware of carers who were not able to offer this service. Link workers confirmed they had taken part in Diversity Training and a discussion ensued about the training and that it did not include all aspects of oppression, which was taken on board by the workers and during discussions with the manager. It is envisaged that an external trainer will provide this training in the future.</p> <p>Discussions with the panel chair indicated that the panel process continued to screen potential matches that were brought to panel, including transracial placements.</p> <p>The inspector visited foster carers who were looking after children who were trans-racially placed. The foster carers demonstrated a clear understanding about the issues that impacted on the placement and had considered the needs of the young people with the support of the fostering service and community facilities that the children had links with. The foster carers also ensured that the children maintained regular contact with their birth family and actively facilitated this process.</p>		

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The service had a child protection policy and procedure in place and there was an 'allegations against foster carers' policy, 'bullying' policy and 'whistle blowing' policy noted and copies of these were contained in the foster carers file.

The manager reported that child protection training was included in initial and post approval training and staff including new staff attended this training. Staff in the team told the inspectors that dates had been planned for those who had not received Child Protection training. Plans were in place upon the recruitment of the Training Development Officer post upon their appointments. The central record maintained by the service with respect to child protection matters was clearly presented and the processes were clear. Staff are commended for the work carried out on this area.

There were safe care policies in place with respect to each foster carer's household. Discussions with foster carers also demonstrated how they promoted safe care practices in their homes. It was noted in one file that the safe care policy for one household was missing and the manager was advised at feedback regarding this omission (See Statutory Requirement 1).

There was information in the 'safeguarding policy' that made reference to there being information about the procedure for foster carers in the event of any concern or allegation of abuse or neglect as required under the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. This information was found in the service's procedure, 'allegations against foster carers'.

Information was available for young people to report their concerns to a number of contacts, for example, 'Child Line', 'NSPCC', 'Children's Rights Service' and the 'National Care Standards Commission'.

The service now has in place a system to report to the Commission all significant incidents in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 with particular reference to child exploitation issues.

The 'Unauthorised Absence' policy had been updated to state the specific circumstances used to prevent a young person from going missing. The policy with respect to physical restraint had been updated to meet the requirements about what was expected of foster carers if there was an incident that necessitated police contact. Foster carers spoken to had a clear awareness about what was expected of them with respect to corporal punishment and restraint and this was contained in the foster carers handbook. Link workers emphasised the point that restraint may be used as a last resort and that training was provided that was linked to approved techniques.

The 'Anti-Bullying' policy was noted in the aforementioned handbook.

<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	0	%
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#### **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 policy regarding contact was in place. The manager reported that the service aimed to provide placements where siblings can stay together and encouraged carers to work in partnership with families and promote positive relationships. The service did not appoint carers who indicated their wish to work with children/young people, but not their families.

Link workers told the inspectors that contact arrangements were the responsibility of placing social workers. The workers said that the importance of contact was discussed with foster carers and the reasons why children/young people should attend contact was made clear. The inspectors were told that carers were expected to record the presentation of children/young people on their return from contact visits. Some contact visits took place at the carers home, however under circumstances where this contact was difficult, workers said they would be looking to discuss reasons why the carer did not want contact to take place in their own homes.

Foster carers spoken to showed their commitment to ensure children/young people were in receipt of contact with their significant others. The family support worker told the inspectors that she had taken children/young people to contact visits, but did not facilitate 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?**

2

The children's guide had been updated since the last inspection and it made clear who children and young people could consult with. From the returned questionnaires, it was noted that all of the young people confirmed they had been consulted by their foster carers for their opinions and ideas. Examples included food; leisure activities, clothing and one child reported that they were consulted about "everything!" All of the 6 questionnaires from children/young people confirmed that they were visited by their social worker and from the same number of responses; children and young people reported that their views were not ascertained from the fostering service. There was a system that the service had in place that enabled young people to record their views during carers reviews and these were kept in a separate filing system at the office. The inspector was informed that information was recorded on this format and it would be reviewed to make it age appropriate towards older young people. The inspectors were told that carer's preparation training included the children of foster carers. Previously known as the 'Children Who Foster Group', the young people themselves renamed the group 'The Caring Crew' and regularly met to discuss their views and any issues affecting them.

At the time of the inspection, there were no consultation documents present with respect to the current young people due to the fact that they were new to the carers or were too young to give a view. In all of the cases, the carers had not received their first reviews. The

inspector however observed other examples where reviews had been undertaken and contained the views of children and young people.

Link workers commented that during their visits to carers they would also speak to children and young people, although acknowledged that the level of consultation would not extend itself to the same interventions of that of the child/young person's social worker.

Foster carers informed the inspectors that they felt consulted by the service and listened to. Of the 10 returned questionnaires from foster carers, 4 reported that their opinions had not been sought about the fostering service and 6 said their opinions had been sought.

Of the 6 returned questionnaires from the children/young people, 5 of the 6 children/young people confirmed they knew how to complain and 3 of the 6 children/young people were aware that they could contact the Commission.

The record of complaints was examined and overall, the complaints file was well maintained, contained detailed information and was easy to access information. There was one complaint made on 25.6.03 that did not appear to be acknowledged until the 4<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> August 2003. It was difficult to read because one date on the form had been replaced by another with correction fluid. This practice must cease and should not be used on a record of complaint, or any other record. At feedback, it was strongly recommended that the manager review the dates concerning this particular complaint.

With respect to another complaint, it was difficult to establish whether or not it had been concluded and there was no letter on the file to demonstrate this was the case. The tracking sheet however indicated that the complaint had in fact been concluded on 25.9.03. The manager was advised during feedback to ensure the details of complaint and letters are also contained in the complaints file. This also applied to compliments received by the service.

The section on complaints on the file was empty in one carers file although a complaint had been made but was listed under 'correspondence'. The manager must review these issues.

#### **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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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During the inspection, the inspectors spoke to the newly appointed health advisor who at the time of the inspection had worked for the service for five weeks. The health advisor had previous health visiting experience and local knowledge. She was looking at developing a health component to the children's records, including a summary of progress with respect to each young person regarding immunisations, hospital appointments, health assessment records, consultants, lists of useful contacts, etc.

The health advisor was in the process of visiting all foster carers, school nurses and health visitors and she had already been involved in issues affecting the healthcare needs of children of which she provided examples. The healthcare advisor said that she was in touch with other health advisors located in other service areas and there had been some discussion about producing a filofax that would be developed for the children and would

include health promotion advice, help line numbers, family planning information, etc.

The inspectors were also informed that the health advisor would meet with other health professionals and that she could also access external clinical support. The health advisor said she intended to become involved in training foster carers in child development and first aid and would attend training on disability issues. The health advisor said she also intended to review the medication policy.

Foster carers spoken to told the inspectors that they were aware of the role of the health advisor and some confirmed they had already met with her and found her services to be very supportive.

It was noted that in four of the files examined, there were no health assessments in place.

### **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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>Since January 2004, the service no longer commissioned the services of the National Teaching and Advisory Service (NT&amp;AS) to provide educational packages. The service had appointed its own in-house education support workers that consisted of four qualified and experienced teachers to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and with carers, children and young people and Schools to promote the educational attainment of children and young people. There was a computerised system in place to record the educational attainment and attendance of children/young people in foster placement.</p> <p>The inspectors interviewed the education support workers about their role and this was explained in detail. The education support workers said they had allocated cases geographically and they liaised with the designated LAC worker attached to each school and with supervising link social workers. education support workers said they visited schools to inform them about their role and work with children/young people in this environment. They also provided support to carers and children/young people during and after school hours, including arranging activities for children/young people in the school holidays. The inspectors were told that they worked within a risk assessment framework. At the time of the inspection, the education support workers were putting together education plans that would be linked to the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in addition they collated information on the files to make up the education plans and workers were in contact with placing social workers to chase up missing information.</p> <p>The education support workers commented that when the service moved premises, that additional space and resources would be made available and there would be additional space to work.</p> <p>The inspectors were impressed by the positive attitude of the education support workers towards their role and of their commitment to ensure that the educational needs of young people were being promoted. Similarly, foster carers who had some involvement with the education support workers made positive comments and one described the support as "impressive".</p> <p>The head of the education service was interviewed. She was responsible for supporting and</p>		

supervising the education support workers and developing the service, undertaking the educational components in foster carers assessments and other aspects of educational needs. The head of education was supervised by the service's managing director and had received support from staff in the service. It was suggested to the head of education service that she made links with an educational mentor in the absence of support from a supervisor in the service with a background in education.

**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

Since the last inspection, the service had developed and implemented a document named 'Preparing Children and Young People for Independence and Adult Life' that provided foster carers and staff with information about the transitional process for young people between the ages of 16 to 18 years old.

The manager reported in the questionnaire that the service had appointed a health advisor who would work with young people in the area of health education for young people. The inspectors were informed that the service was actively recruiting carers for older young people and plans were in place with the local authority leaving care department to develop appropriate Pathway Plans.

Staff told the inspectors about their expectations during discussions with placing social workers regarding the transition process. Workers also said they expected that carers engaged with young people in self-care skills, budgeting, health, education and in plans to prepare young people to move to alternative accommodation.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

2

Staff personnel files were examined during the inspection and the following observations were made:

In file one:

- There was no PIN number available or check that registration had been carried out with respect to one file. In the same file, there was a copy of a CRB form that did not show the date that the check was made. There was a written record to indicate that a check was done on 5.10.02, however, the agency should have carried out their own check.
- The interview notes were disorderly and there was a need for the service to implement a standard format for the recording of interview notes.
- Photographic identification was required.

In file two:

- One of the references contained insufficient detail.
- The Photographic identification was not clear and a clear photograph must be obtained.
- The interview notes were not sufficiently detailed to make a decision about the applicant's fitness.

In file three:

- The photographic identification was not clear.
- There were no references noted on the file.
- A police check had been undertaken on 13.12.02. If this worker was appointed after this date the service should have carried out their own CRB check.

In file four:

- There was only one reference on this file that was not from the last employer.
- A clear photographic identification is required.
- The interview notes were not clearly recorded.

It was noted that Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) certificates with respect to foster carers were maintained on the files. In line with data protection legislation, these documents must be removed, however, a record must be made of the number and date of the check. In

addition, where an issue has arisen, this must be discussed with the perspective foster carer and a record made on their file.

At the last inspection, a requirement had been made that the reference form requested the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability to work with children. This requirement is reiterated and must also include information about whether staff had been subject to any disciplinary action.

As previously indicated, the team consisted of 1 manager and 1 deputy manager who were both qualified social workers, coupled with additional academic qualifications. All of the link workers were qualified and experienced social workers that had worked in family placement. They were responsible for the supervising, supporting, annual reviews and training of carers. The family support worker, who was qualified to the NNEB qualification continued to provide practical support to carers and she told the inspectors that she was developing a resource facility. Discussions with these individuals demonstrated their understanding of the legislative framework they were working in and they appeared to be committed to providing a progressive and child focussed service. The manager expressed her commitment to ensure that experienced staff were recruited to ensure the provision of safe and secure placements. Similarly, the education case workers and health advisor were all suitably qualified and demonstrated an understanding in the issues involved in working with children and families.

There was an appraisal system in place. The manager told the inspectors that draft appraisal guidance had been formulated.

<b>Total number of staff of the agency:</b>	14	<b>Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	1
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#### **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

There were appropriate management systems in place and the levels of accountability were clearly defined. The manager of the service was responsible for the recruitment and selection of social workers and administrative staff. The manager discussed with the inspectors the initiatives that were in place to promote best practice and she continued to network with other contacts. There were arrangements in place for formal supervision of all staff in the team, including the manager and there were clear systems in place to report information where the manager was not the prime supervisor. There were also arrangements in place for external support that the health advisor may access.

There was one office administration manager and one administration assistant who provided support to the team who presented as professional and efficient. The administrative staff informed the inspectors that the team supported them.

All the staff spoken to made positive comments about the support they received to enable them to undertake their work and the managers were described as approachable and supportive. Staff confirmed they could approach managers on an informal basis and commented that the team was also supportive.



**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, one link worker had left the service. Two new workers joined the service in September 2003. Both were experienced and qualified social workers with considerable years experience in family placement work. As previously indicated, all of the supervising link social workers held a social work qualification. The service had developed its own in-house education service that replaced the National Teaching and Advisory Service (NT&AS) provision that the service contracted with. This incorporated education workers whose role was to identify appropriate schools, prepare and initiate inclusion plans and provide ongoing support and monitoring in education during each placement in the service. The service had also appointed a health advisor in January 2004. The health advisor had a health visitor background and their role was to provide advice and access appropriate health or therapy resources to meet children's assessed needs and provide training and health promotion to the service. One foster carer reported that the health advisor input was "invaluable" during one young person's medical.

The responses from foster carers questionnaires about the service were generally positive and foster carers commented that the service generally did an "excellent job" and "good job" and were accessible and supportive to them. On the question of foster carers views about whether they thought the service was appropriately staffed, out of the 10 responses 8 carers reported "yes", 1 reported "no" and 1 did not comment.

The service had a policy in place with respect to the recruitment and training of new carers. In line with the Fostering Network protocol, the service continued to adhere to the policy that stipulated that they did not actively recruit existing carers from other agencies. The manager reported in the questionnaire that they were keen to recruit from all sections of the community and that this was contained in the organisations advertising campaigns that could be located in local papers, regional advertisements depending on the demand for placements and word of mouth. The manager reported that the service was looking towards developing their disability respite service and recruiting foster carers for 11+ children as this was identified as an area of need.

There was a clear system for recruiting and vetting foster carers and the assessment process included the completion of the BAAF Form F. The manager was responsible for monitoring of the quality of the assessments in addition to the function of the fostering panel. The service also had access to an interpretation and translation facilities.

The manager told the inspectors that should there be staff shortages, sessional workers were used to cover this shortfall. Staff told the inspectors that they had a manageable caseload and undertook approximately two assessments over a six month period.

**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 service had clear employment policies and procedures in place in relation to staff and carers. These included an Equal Opportunities Policy, Malpractice and Whistle Blowing Policy, Child Protection Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

The service had an out of hours arrangement in place that was staffed by the managers and workers on a rotational basis. Foster carers commented that this service was accessible to them.

There was a public liability and professional indemnity insurance in place that covered staff and carers.

As previously indicated, staff informed the inspectors that the management of the service was supportive and approachable and carers expressed satisfaction in the levels of support they received from the service.

**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 annual training programme for January to December 2004 was examined and related to carers and staff. Carers had attended training in Communication with Children, First Aid, Managing Difficult Behaviour, Managing Aggression in Foster Care Settings, Separation and Loss and Valuing Diversity. The service had not yet recruited a full-time training officer and the manager told the inspectors that the service would be jointly developed in conjunction with the Human Resources Department.

The teaching staff told the inspectors that they had been provided with dates for child protection training. Supervising link social workers told the inspectors that they had recently had training in 'Valuing Diversity' that had been further developed by the trainer. Staff also identified their training needs as appropriate. One worker had attained their PQ1 social work award.

Link workers said the induction process was very good and policy information was supplied to them. Staff said they were afforded a period of time to read documents and settle down and some commented that on their first day at the service, they were greeted with an induction pack, card and flowers.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

At the time of the inspection, there were clear systems in place for formal supervision of all staff, which included practice; training and support issues and staff spoke positively about the supervision they received. The deputy manager described the format used to record supervision notes. Staff reported that managers could also be approached on an informal basis. A team meeting took place at the time of the inspection and occurred on a regular basis and involved all staff members. The manager also met with her peers in the organisations management team.

Since the last inspection, the service had developed and now included the appointment of two link workers and in-house teaching service that incorporated the appointment of four qualified and experienced teachers and a qualified health advisor that reflected a multi-disciplinary team. Staff told the inspectors that the support and advice from these agencies strengthened the service. This development in the service potentially compromised the current accommodation and plans were underway to move the service to larger premises that would be more accessible to foster carers and meet the developing needs of the service. In addition, the multi-disciplinary nature of the service afforded the manager to effectively monitor the quality of the service.

**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?****2**

The Foster Care Agreement was made available for inspection and included information that complied with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The purpose of the foster care agreement set out the level of support that the service could expect from the service. The foster carer written agreement examined in the files were out of date, in the respect that they referred to the old legislation and did not elude to foster carers co-operation with the Commission. These files must be updated to reflect the current legislation.

The foster carers spoken to and responses from their questionnaires were clear about the role of the link worker and that of the placing social worker and made positive comments about the level of support received from the service. Children looked after commented in the questionnaires that their social workers visited them in the placement “sometimes” and “often”. Staff at the service confirmed that they communicated with placing social workers about the children’s care and welfare.

**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 responses received from the foster carers indicated that they found the service supportive and approachable and commented that they were regularly supervised. The Foster Care Agreement contained information that carers needed to know about the supervision and support they would receive from the service, however, as previously indicated, the Foster Care Agreements noted on the files sampled were out of date (See Statutory Requirement 10).

There was a Foster Carer’s Handbook that contained policies and procedures and key information, including the Foster Carer Written Agreement and the complaints procedure.

Records about allegations of abuse were maintained and monitored by the manager.

**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**

The inspectors were told that training was compulsory.

The foster carers spoken to during the inspection confirmed they had received pre-approval and post-approval training and there was evidence of this training contained in the sample of foster carers files observed. Carers spoken to told the inspectors that they felt the carers support group and training was very good, particularly the post approval training. The inspectors were also told that the agency was looking at existing carers to facilitate some training and they felt that SWIIS had a genuine commitment to training. Similarly, carers who responded to the questionnaires listed the training they had received and there was evidence those carers who attended courses valued ongoing training in order to develop

their knowledge base and skills as foster carers.

It was noted that training included Child Sexual Abuse and Safe Caring, Communication with Children, First Aid, Managing Difficult Behaviour, Managing Aggression in Foster Care Settings, Separation and Loss and Valuing Diversity.

## 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
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Foster carers spoken to showed that they were aware about the reasons why children/young people were placed with them and the legal basis for the placements made. Some carer's however indicated in the questionnaires that they were not always adequately informed with background information and they reported that placing social workers did not always provide the relevant information and documents to inform the carers about the child. It was noted that during these instances, carers indicated that the service had been supportive in ensuring they had the information they required. The manager reported in the questionnaire that carers received supervision on a monthly basis and attended a monthly support group and training. Support was also made available from education and health professionals and there was access to specialist services, for example, therapists and counsellors.

Observations at foster carers homes indicated that they had been issued with secure boxes to store children's records and with appropriate documents to record significant information. Foster carers spoken to informed the inspectors about pictures and memorabilia that they kept during the placements.

A sample of children's files was examined. There were some essential documents missing from some of the files, for example, LAC documentation, consent for medical treatment, copy of care order where applicable and copies of health assessment reports (see Statutory Requirement 12), information relating to the child's history, and risk assessments. These issues were identified to the manager at feedback and the requirement is reiterated.

At the last inspection, the supervising social work link worker did not always sign record sheets. This requirement has been reiterated.

The documents that constituted a foster placement agreement, for example LAC documentation did not meet the requirements because some of the LAC documents were not fully completed and there was no mention of the financial arrangements in this agreement. It was noted that foster carers had signed LAC Placement Part 1 without receiving Part 2, which should set out the arrangements for education, health, contact, etc. Some of the LAC Placement Plan 2 had not been fully completed. The service will need to consider whether the placement agreement is compiled as a separate document or the service must review the way in which they request LAC documentation from the placing authorities to ensure it complies with Schedule 6 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.

**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?****2**

The service maintained separate records in relation to staff, carers and children in foster placement. It is significant to note that the service shared the premises with the organisations recruitment agency, therefore these records were securely maintained in locked cabinets and was only accessible to staff who worked for the fostering service. The office was also alarmed.

There were records maintained on the carers files sampled about the assessment process and the relevant checks made on significant others in the household. There were some observations made in two of the files that were addressed with the manager at feedback that must be addressed:

**In file one**

- The front sheet on the file was not updated.
- The health and safety checklist did not indicate whether the repairs required posed a risk to the children or required repair.
- The review panel approved the foster carers continuation, however, the report did not address a particular issue that had occurred during the placement.

**In file two**

- The Foster Care Agreement stated that the Supervising link social worker would arrange the completion of the LAC Placement Plan 2. It was noted during a visit to the carer's home that this document remained outstanding.
- The section in the file related to complaints had no record of the complaint made. This was later found in the 'correspondence' section of the file.
- An incident detailed in the file did not detail the action taken regarding an incident of concern.
- There was no Safe Care Policy or health assessment noted on the file as part of the assessment.

It was noted that correction fluid was being used in some of the documents and the staff were advised that this practice must cease.

The I.T system, namely the 'Soft box' database and information system continued to be developed and a brief demonstration was given that showed how it maintained key information relating to the functions of the service delivery.

There was a register maintained of foster carers. This record needed to show the date of birth of the carer to ensure it complied fully with the Fostering Regulations 2002.

The children's register needed some revision to show the child's address prior to the placement and the date the child ceased to be placed with the foster carer. The register did not indicate the address where the child was placed on leaving the placement.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			<b>52</b>
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			<b>83</b>
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			<b>57</b>
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			<b>13</b>
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>Maximum £</b>	<b>543</b>



## 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
<p>The premises were located in an office block in the centre of Manchester and were suitable for the purpose of the service. At the time of the inspection, the organisation was considering moving to premises away from the Manchester city centre base due to the expansion of the service and the need for additional space for the team and enable foster carers, children and families to visit should this be required.</p> <p>The premises were secure and there was a system in place to monitor visitors who visited the building.</p>		

## 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

Swiis is a national organisation operated by Swiis International Group of Companies Ltd. It has a financial infrastructure that is based at the London head office. The manager had information on a monthly basis and there were financial accounts made available for inspection with respect to the financial viability of the service.

### 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

As previously indicated, the report and accounts for the service were available for inspection. The management of control of the finances and systems continued to be governed by head office in London, who also managed payments and other financial issues.

**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**

The office administration manager explained the payment system to the inspectors and there was a computer system in place that assisted this process. Payments to foster carers included a retainer system to enable carers to take a paid break before the next placement commenced. Foster carers were also entitled to take 12 weeks paid break per year.

Foster carers expressed no concerns about payments made to them and they told the inspectors that payments were made on time.

## 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 procedure in relation to fostering panels was in place and included information about the decision-making process when not all of the panel members agreed on decisions. The procedure also contained information about fostering panel functions or example, the approval/re-approval, refusal, decision-making and review of carers. All panel members were Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked, were appointed for a term of office not exceeding three years and had to sign an agreement to the requirements and expectations of their role.

The independent chairperson was interviewed during the inspection. The chair discussed his role and responsibilities and he talked about the panel's commitment to ensure good practice. The chair was specific about his role and the decision-making process, including an awareness of the procedure to be taken if panel members disagreed on a decision. The chair confirmed that training and support was undertaken and the chair expressed the importance of social workers and panel chairs training together.

During an observation of the panel, it was noted that the panel was quorum. One of the panel members presented a review report and was also present when the panel considered its recommendation. It was explained to the manager that in these instances, the individual must excuse themselves from the panel. It was also noted that the unannounced visits were not recorded on the reports.

Following the panel meeting, an independent review and evaluation meeting took place to consider the assessment and supervision of carers whose approval had been terminated following a serious child protection investigation. The meeting was chaired by an independent reviewing officer who had prepared a comprehensive report. A detailed discussion ensued, including interviews with key individuals from the agency. It was apparent from the review that the agency adopted a positive stance to the recommendations made and demonstrated a commitment to learn from the experience although there were no criticisms of the procedures that were followed by the service.

## 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?	
This is not a service offered by Swiis Fostering Service.		

## 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?	9
This standard does not apply to Swiis Fostering Service.		

**PART C****LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)**

Not 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 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Provider's 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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

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

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: &lt;enter details here&gt;

NO

**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 Gurdev Dadral of Swiis Foster Care 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 Gurdev Dadral of Swiis Foster Care 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:**

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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.