



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

## Fostering Services

### **Child Care Bureau Ltd**

H1 Blackpole Trading Estate (East)

Blackpole Road

Worcester

WR3 8SG

28th July 2003

## **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**

**Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)**

(Not yet registered)

YES

**Name of Agency**

Child Care Bureau

**Tel No**

01905 767065

**Address**

14/16 Canalside Complex, Lowesmoor Wharf, Worcester,  
WR1 2RS

**Fax No**

01905 723912

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Provider**

Child Care Bureau

**Name of Manager (if applicable)**

Hazel Anne Haslem

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NA

**Date of last inspection**

NA

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		28 <sup>th</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup> , 31 <sup>st</sup> , July, 1 <sup>st</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , August, and 1 <sup>st</sup> September.2003		<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		9:00 am		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Sally Woodget	113975	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Janet Manders	133244	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>			
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>			
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.				
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>				
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>				

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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 Child Care Bureau Ltd. 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.**

Child Care Bureau Ltd is a family run business. The three directors are Mr. and Mrs Hemming and their daughter Samantha Hemming. Mrs Hemming is also the company secretary and the responsible individual for the foster care agency. Samantha Hemming also works as the "Managing Director" of the foster care agency, overseeing the business and administration operations. The company also employs Louis Hemming as the Finance administrator. The company is a profit making organisation. It has been operating since June 2000.

The stated purpose of Child Care Bureau is to offer children and young people who are in need of foster placement, approved and experienced foster carers who can offer a safe caring environment and equal opportunities.

The Agency undertakes the recruitment, assessment, support and training of foster carers and is involved in ensuring that appropriate matches between the assessed needs of children and carers are made.

Although not defined in the statement of purpose, Child Care Bureau Ltd recruits carers to undertake a variety of tasks in more than one category within an age range 0-18 years

The categories of placement that the Agency states it provides include; long term, short term, respite, assessment, emergency, special needs, sibling group, mother and baby, and pre-adoption placements.

Child Care Bureau Ltd aims to offer foster carers "fosterable" placements that will enable all involved within the placement to have an acceptable lifestyle.

Child Care Bureau Ltd is based in Worcester and supports carers in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire. At the time of the inspection the fostering service supported 9 carers with 17 young people in placement.

## 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 service has not been previously inspected. This report is the first by the National Care Standards Commission under the Minimum Standards for fostering services and therefore serves as an audit of the service against the new requirements and Minimum Standards, identifying areas which are creditable and where development is needed. Since this is the service's first inspection, this report may contain a substantial number of recommendations and requirements. If so these should fall significantly at the next inspection when the Agency will have had time to take account of the new legislation and standards and to take action to meet them.

#### Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

##### **This standard was not met.**

Major shortfalls were noted within this standard. A statement of purpose has been developed but needs to be more comprehensive. A children's guide has been completed but is inadequate, however, inspectors were informed that work on this guide is in progress. Evidence of approval, review and effective distribution of the statement of purpose is required. Once completed, both the statement of purpose and the children's guide must be kept under review and must be distributed in accordance with the Regulations. The statement of purpose should inform the policies and procedures of the Agency and the practice undertaken by those working for the fostering service, it is therefore imperative that a detailed statement of purpose is expediently completed.

#### Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)

##### **Neither of these standards were met.**

Major shortfalls were noted within this standard both during the inspection and at interview for registration. The manager was clearly involved in social work tasks and had no time to manage, whilst the management tasks were still clearly in the hands of the responsible individual. The manager was unable to reconcile herself to the management responsibilities and clearly requires more training and experience in a number of areas before she can properly fulfil this role. The responsible individual also exhibited a number of weaknesses in relation to her fitness to carry on a fostering service. Inspectors identified a need for further training for her to enhance her management skills and develop a better understanding of the legislation that underpins the provision of a child care service.

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

##### **Neither of these standards were met.**

Major shortfalls were noted in both of these standards. Prior to the inspection commencing, no effective procedures or practice, as defined by regulation, were in place to ensure that the activities of the fostering service were appropriately monitored and controlled. In addition, a



lack of clarity of roles and decision-making exists at all levels within the service and the impact of such is explored throughout the main body of this report. The inspectors have serious concerns about the failure to recognise what constitutes a notification to the NCSC.

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

##### **None of the nine standards were fully met.**

Inspectors were impressed at the commitment and determination of all the foster carers they met and by their positive contribution to provide a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment for the children placed with them. However, inspectors found major shortfalls in this area and none of these standards were met. In particular there were risky practices in relation to matching and placing children. The fostering service's child protection procedures were inaccurate and referrals were not being made appropriately to child protection services. Complaints that have arisen were not consistently addressed nor outcomes clearly recorded and communicated.

There was a lack of comprehensive information on the children placed with them, creating problems in planning for children's needs.

Details of the deficiencies found in these standards can be found in the main body of this report.

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

##### **Seven of the nine standards were inspected but none were fully met.**

A comprehensive system for the support of carers has been implemented by the Agency. Very positive feedback was received from carers in respect of the supervision and support they receive. However, problems already mentioned involving the confusion of roles, responsibilities and accountability also affect the service's performance in these standards.

At the time of the inspection there were not enough qualified staff in post, not all staff had job descriptions and those who did, their job descriptions were inadequate. Conditions of service for staff and agreements for service with foster carers were heavily weighted in favour of the company.

#### Records (Standards 24-25)

##### **Neither of these standards were met.**

Inspectors found major shortfalls in the area of record keeping. There was a clear lack of information gathering and information on children's files in particular, was inadequate. The quality of report writing was poor, lacking evaluation and analysis and including much use of innuendo, generalisations and clichés.

#### Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service (Standard 26)

##### **This standard was met.**

There were no major shortfalls in this area. Inspectors have been informed that the Company are about to move its premises.

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

##### **These standards were almost met.**

One of these standards was met with minor shortfalls being noted in respect of the lack of written documentation to underpin the positive practice of ensuring the financial viability of the agency. Positive feedback was received in respect of the prompt payment of foster carer allowances.

*Fostering Panels (Standard 30)*

**This standard was not met.**

Major shortfalls were noted in respect of this standard, particularly in the constitution, establishment and functions of the fostering panel. Confusion about accountability and problems of conflicts of interest also need to be addressed. Poor recording and minute taking of the panel meetings and lack of availability of the minutes for panel members, meant that the panel were not fulfilling their quality assurance function in a thorough or rigorous manner.

## **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?

NA

**If No please list below**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Lead Inspector**      Sally Woodget**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_**Second Inspector**      Janet Manders**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_**Regulation**      Alan Sholl**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_**Manager****Date**28<sup>th</sup> May 2004

## 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	3 (1) a	FS1.4	The Statement of Purpose must reflect all the requirements of Regulation 3 and Standard 1. In particular, it must reflect accurately the aims and objectives of the fostering service.	To be arranged
2	3 (1) b	FS1.2	The Statement of Purpose must reflect all the requirements of Regulation 3 and Standard 1. In particular, it must reflect accurately the services and facilities the Agency provides.	To be arranged
3	3 (3) a	FS1.5	A copy Children's Guide must be revised so that it includes a summary of the Statement of Purpose.	To be arranged
4	3 (4)	FS1.5	A copy of the Children's Guide must be given to each foster parent and child placed.	To be arranged
5	4	FS1.3	The Fostering service must keep under review and, where appropriate, review the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide in accordance with Regulation 4.	To be arranged
6	6 (2) a	FS2.2	The Company must allow the individual appointed to manage the fostering service and ensure that the person appointed meets the criteria in Regulation 7 and Standards 2 and 3 to manage the fostering service. The responsible individual must not act as the manager.	To be arranged

7	8 (2) c	FS2.1	The responsible individual shall undertake such training as is appropriate to ensure that she has the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency.	To be arranged
8	8 (3)	FS2.1	The manager shall undertake such training as is appropriate to ensure that she has the experience and skills necessary for managing the fostering agency.	To be arranged
9	42.(1).a Schedule 7	FS2.1	The managers job description must take into account the monitoring role as laid out in Schedule 7 Regulation 42	To be arranged
10	5,7,and 20	FS3.2	The Fostering service must ensure that all the requirements of Schedule 1 are undertaken for all staff including sessional workers, professional experts, support workers and Panel members	To be arranged
11	42 (1) a Schedule 7	FS4.1	The company must establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7	To be arranged
12	42 (1) b &(3)	FS4.1	The fostering service must establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care provided, this system shall provide for consultation with foster carers, children placed with foster carers and the placing authorities.	To be arranged
13	42 (2)	FS4	The company shall supply to the Commission the report of the review conducted for the purposes of Regulation 42 (1) b and (3).	To be arranged
14	8 (1)	FS5.1	The Fostering service shall be managed with sufficient care, competence and skill in an ethical and efficient manner to avoid confusion and conflict of roles.	To be arranged
15	21 (1) b	FS4.2	The Fostering service shall provide all (including sessional workers) employees with a job description outlining their responsibilities.	To be arranged
16	12 (2) e	FS6.5	The fostering service shall ensure that consideration is given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster carers following an allegation of abuse or neglect ( Written records of Strategy meetings, risk assessments)	To be arranged

17	11	FS6.2	The Fostering service shall ensure that the foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there. In particular when considering any exemptions to foster carers conditions of approval.	To be arranged
18	11	FS7.2	The Fostering service shall ensure that each child placed or to be placed has access to foster care services that recognize and address her/his needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.	To be arranged
19	11 & 34 Schedule 6	FS8.4	The Fostering service must ensure that Foster Placement Agreements are completed, meet the requirements of Schedule 6, and contain specific reference to elements of matching.	To be arranged
20	11,12 & 34	FS8.2	The Fostering service must take into account the child's care plan and written assessments of the child and their family and their carers when matching children to carers.	To be arranged
21	11,12 & 34	FS8.3	The fostering service shall ensure that matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and her/his family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement.	To be arranged
22	11 & 12(1)	FS9.1	The Fostering service shall prepare and implement a written policy which is intended to safeguard children placed with foster carers from abuse and neglect and set out a procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (this policy should be ACPC checked in each area the company has foster carers.)	To be arranged
23	11 & 12 (2) b	FS9.1	The Fostering service shall promptly refer to the area authority any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by them.	To be arranged
24	11 & 12 (2) c	FS9.1	The Fostering service shall notify the Commission of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by them.	To be arranged



25	43 schedule 8	FS9.1	The Fostering service shall without delay notify the persons indicated in column 2 of schedule 8 any of the events listed in column 1 of that schedule.	To be arranged
26	11 & 12	FS9.6	The Fostering service must ensure that procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and to help foster carers cope with it.	To be arranged
27	11 & 12	FS9.7	The Fostering service shall provide full information about the foster child and his/her family to enable the carer to protect the foster child, their own children, other children for whom they have responsibility and themselves.	To be arranged
28	42 (1) a	FS9.5	The Fostering service shall ensure that management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcomes of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in their care. This information shall be scrutinised regularly.	To be arranged
29	14	FS10.2	The Fostering service shall ensure that there are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed.	To be arranged
30	14	FS10.3	The Fostering service should pay more attention to the feasibility of contact where it is providing placements for children at some distance from their home area.	To be arranged
31	34 & Schedule 6	FS10.1	The Fostering service must make sure that the role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements is clear and articulated in the foster placement agreement.	To be arranged
32	14 & 34	FS10.7	The Fostering service must ensure that it provides help and support to the carers in dealing with any difficult contact issues .The company must ensure that the role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements including any arrangements for the supervision of contact are clearly articulated in the foster placement agreement.	To be arranged

33	11	FS11.1	The Fostering service must ensure that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues which are likely to effect their daily life and their future	To be arranged
34	17.3.a & b	FS12.1&3	The Fostering service must, before a placement begins, provide the carer with as full a description as possible of the health needs of the child and clear procedures governing consent for the child to receive medical treatment. If full details of health needs are not available before placement (and they should be for children being placed on a planned basis) a high priority is given to ensuring that the information is obtained and passed to the foster carer at the earliest opportunity once the placement is made.	To be arranged
35	15.1 & 2 c	FS12.2 & 7	The Fostering service shall promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents, in particular it shall ensure that each child is provided with such individual support, etc., which he may require as a result of any particular health needs or disability.	To be arranged
36	16.2.a	FS13.6	The Fostering service shall establish a procedure for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and school attendance of children placed with foster carers.	To be arranged
37	16.2.c	FS13.7	The Fostering service shall ensure that they provide foster carers with such information and assistance, including equipment as may be necessary to meet the educational needs of the children placed with them.	To be arranged
38	16.3	FS13.7	The Fostering service shall ensure that any education it provides for any child placed with foster carers who is of compulsory school age but not attending school is efficient and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs he may have.	To be arranged
39	17.1	FS14.1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	The Fostering service shall provide foster carers with training, advice, information and support in relation to; preparing children and young people to move into independent and semi independent living and; assessing mother and baby placements.	To be arranged

40	20.3.b	FS15.1	The Fostering service shall not employ (or use) a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless he/she has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work he is to perform.	To be arranged
41	19	FS16.1	The Fostering service shall ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service.	To be arranged
42	21.2.b	FS16.16	The Fostering service shall operate a disciplinary procedure which provides that the failure on the part of an employee (or a director of the company) to report an incident of abuse or suspected abuse of a child placed with foster parents to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.	To be arranged
43	29 (5) (b) Schedule 5	FS17	The Fostering service must, if deciding to approve a person as a foster parent, enter into a written agreement covering all the matters in Schedule 5 of the Regulations (Foster Care Agreement).	To be arranged
44	19	FS17.1	The Fostering service shall ensure that there is an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and trained carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.	To be arranged
45	27	FS17.6 & 7	The Fostering service must ensure that, a consistent and thorough approach to foster care assessment is undertaken.	To be arranged
46	8 1 b	FS18.1	The Fostering service shall have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children placed by them manage the fostering service with sufficient care, competence and skill in particular consider the referral to POCA when deregistering foster carers who they consider unsuitable to continue working with children. (Written records of the decision making process to kept on the carers file.)	To be arranged

47	21.2.a & 29	FS18.2	The Fostering service shall operate a disciplinary procedure which provides for the suspension of an employee, carer or director where necessary in the interests of the safety or welfare of children placed with them and must ensure that a clear policy framework exists, which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be moved from the register.	To be arranged
48	29.11	FS18.1	The foster carer may give notice in writing to the fostering service provider at any time that he no longer wishes to act as a foster carer, where upon his approval is terminated with effect from 28 days from the date on which the notice is received by the fostering service.	To be arranged
49	21	FS20.3 & 4	The Fostering service must ensure that all staff members receive supervision on a regular and planned basis.	To be arranged
50	17 & 20.3.b	FS21.2	The Fostering service shall ensure that it has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers that is documented and understood which includes support services and out of hours support provided by workers who have the qualifications, skill and experience necessary for the work.	To be arranged
51	28	FS22.2 & 4	The Fostering service must ensure that the foster care agreement meets the requirements of Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations.	To be arranged
52	18	FS22.8	The Fostering service must review its written policy and procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children placed by them and foster carers approved by them.	To be arranged
53	22 Schedule 2.3	FS24	The Fostering service must keep a record of all accidents occurring to children whilst placed with them.	To be arranged
54	17.3		The Fostering service must ensure that a clear policy on case recording is established.	To be arranged
55	17.3	FS25.9 & 3	The Fostering service must ensure that written records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, and distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information.	To be arranged

56	44	FS27.2	The company must ensure a procedure exists to deal with situations of financial crisis such as disclosing information to purchasers and liaising with them to safeguard the welfare of children receiving services through the agency.	To be arranged
57	32.5	FS26.3	The company must ensure appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems in particular it must provide a system for locking the computer to ensure confidentiality of documents.	To be arranged
58	44	FS28.3.	The company must ensure it produces a written set of principles and standards governing its financial management, which is communicated to its managers and accountants.	To be arranged
59	44	FS28.4	The company must ensure it produces a written set of principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants, professional experts, directors, and manager.	To be arranged
60	28.4	FS30	The fostering agency must ensure that no member of its fostering panel shall take part in any decision made by the fostering service provider.	To be arranged
61	24.9.b	FS30	The fostering agency must ensure that a person shall not be appointed as an independent member of the fostering panel if; he/she is employed (in any capacity) by the fostering service provider.	To be arranged
62	5, 7, 20, Schedule 1	FS30.3	The fostering service shall ensure that all panel members have checks carried out in respect of each of the matters specified in paragraphs 1-6 of schedule 1	To be arranged
63	25 & 26	FS30.1 & 2	The fostering service must ensure that the fostering panel has clear written policies and procedures which are implemented in practice, and which also include decision making when not all the members of the panel are not in agreement.	To be arranged

### 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	FS1.6	The fostering service's statement of purpose should accurately reflect it's policies, procedures and written guidance to staff
2	FS2.4	The fostering service's manager should exercise effective leadership of the staff and operation, such that the fostering service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible child care.
3	FS3.4	The fostering service should ensure that records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes, including records of all interviews of prospective staff and carers.
4	FS5.2	The fostering service's manager should have a clear job description setting out her duties and responsibilities that is consistent with the Fostering Services Standards and Regulations 2002.
5	FS5.3	The fostering service should ensure that the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability are clearly defined.
6	FS5.4	The fostering service manager should ensure that clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when she is absent, and that this person has the skills and experience commensurate with this role.
7	FS7.4	The fostering service should ensure that foster carers receive preparation and training that covers provision of care which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.
8	FS7.6	The fostering service should ensure that each child with a disability receives specific services and support to help her/him to maximise his/her potential and to lead as full a life as possible.
9	FS8.5	The fostering service should ensure that placement decisions consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster family.
10	FS8.6	The fostering service should ensure that additional training, support and information are provided for the foster family where transracial or transcommunity placements are made to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop positive understanding of his/her heritage.

11	FS8.7	The fostering service should ensure that where practicable, each child has the opportunity for a period of introduction to a proposed foster carer so he/she can express an informed view about the placement and become familiar with the carer, the carer's family, any other children in placement, and the home, the neighbourhood and any family pets, before moving in. Information for carers should explain that this approach is used when possible.
12	FS11.4	The fostering service should ensure that suitable means are provided, frequently, for any child with communication difficulties to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and treatment.
13	FS12.4	The fostering service should ensure that the carer is provided with a written health record for each child placed in their care, this should be updated during the placement and moves with the child. Depending on the age and understanding, the child should have access to and understands the health record kept by the fostering service.
14	FS15.2	The fostering service should ensure that there are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. All personnel responsible for the recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these.
15	FS15.3	The fostering service should ensure that all people working in or for the fostering service are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities (including sessional workers and panel members) and that records are kept of this process. Telephone enquiries should be made and recorded as well as obtaining written references.
16	FS15.8	The fostering service should ensure that where unqualified staff carry out social work functions they do so under direct supervision of qualified workers, who are accountable for their work.
17	FS16.2	The fostering service should ensure that there is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability.
18	FS16.3	The fostering service should ensure that staff are managed and monitored by people who have the appropriate skills and qualifications
19	FS16.4	The fostering service should ensure that the level of management delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and are appropriate for the skills, qualifications and experience of the relevant members of staff.
20	FS16.14	The fostering service should ensure that all employees, sessional workers and consultants are provided with appropriate written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service.

21	FS16.13	The fostering service should ensure that there is access to the range of advice needed to provide a full service for children and young people and to support carers. This includes appropriate childcare, medical, educational and other professional and legal advice.
22	FS17.3	The fostering service should ensure that where a shortfall in staffing levels occurs, there are contingency plans to resolve the situation.
23	FS17	The fostering service should ensure that it has a recruitment policy and strategy aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.
24	FS18.3	The fostering service should ensure that the out of hours support services available for foster carers, is carried out by professionally qualified staff.
25	FS22.9	The fostering service should ensure that information about the procedures to deal with investigations is accurate and that it is made known to foster care staff, carers, children and young people and includes the provision of independent support to the foster carers during an investigation.
26	FS24.3	The fostering service should ensure that when a child leaves an agency foster care placement, they agree with the responsible authority what relevant records need to be sent to them.
27	FS24.6	The fostering service should ensure that it gives the foster carers access to all relevant information to help the child understand and come to terms with past events. (Where necessary information is not forthcoming from the responsible authority, a copy of the written request for information is kept)
28	FS25.6	The fostering service should ensure that there is a permanent, private, secure record for each child and foster carer referred to or appointed by the organisation. This can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child and by his/her parents or foster carers.
29	FS25.7	The fostering service should ensure that there is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff for the keeping and retention of case files ensuring that foster carers, fostered children and their parents know the nature of the records maintained and how to access them.
30	FS25.12	The fostering service should ensure that children and foster carers are encouraged to access their records, make additions and comments and record personal statements, including any dissent.
31	FS30.4	The fostering service should ensure that the fostering panel has access to medical expertise as required.



32	FS30.5	The fostering service should ensure that the fostering panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process as outlined in this standard. In particular the panel members should see the previous panel minutes and record that they are a true and accurate account of the proceedings.
33	FS30.8	The fostering service should ensure that the independent members of the panel include an expert in child health.
34	FS30.9	The fostering service should ensure that one of the independent members of the panel is a person who has at any time been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with foster carers.

\* 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 15

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) YES

- 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 NO

- Examination of files YES

Individual interview with manager YES

Information from provider YES

Individual interviews with key staff YES

Group discussion with staff NA

Interview with panel chair YES

Observation of foster carer training NO

Observation of foster panel NO

Inspection of policy/practice documents YES

Inspection of records YES

Interview with individual child YES

Date of Inspection 28/7/03

Time of Inspection 9.00

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 112.5

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?

1

The Company submitted a statement of purpose but this does not meet all the requirements detailed under Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 or Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards.

The statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the status of the Company i.e; that it is a profit making organisation; nor does it fully explain the constitution of the Company.

The aims and objectives of the Company do not incorporate the Company's policies and procedures in order to reflect and outline their ethos.

The Company state that they provide a very broad range of services and facilities including specialist services such as "assessment" and "special needs" but do not identify the skills and expertise of their staff and carers to evidence this claim.

The introduction to the statement of purpose states that the professional structure of the Agency consists of experienced, qualified social workers and experienced support staff, which could be misleading. This needs to be clarified by a comprehensive organisational chart to indicate the number of staff and the skills and experience they carry (including any vacant posts and the qualifications required for these.)

The Company state that they use a variety of contractual independent experts such as, analytical psychotherapists, play therapists, teachers and advocates. If the agency wish to offer these services then the Statement of Purpose would also need to include information about their details and qualifications.

There is no evidence to indicate that the Company directors have formally approved the statement of purpose or reviewed, updated, and modified it's contents on an annual basis as required by Regulation 4.a and Standard 1.3.

The children's guide is very basic and not very child friendly. It is not produced in different formats to meet the needs of the different children who may be provided with a service by this Company. There is no evidence that foster carers or young people have been given a copy of this document as required by Regulation 3.3.4.

## 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?

1

The inspectors had serious concerns about the confusion over the roles of the responsible individual and the manager. Regulation 6 requires a manager to be appointed and prohibits a provider from acting as their own manager. Whilst a manager had been appointed and was in post, much of the management was being done by the responsible individual and the manager was clearly bogged down with social work tasks. There was evidence that professional social work decisions, such as matching, which should be the remit of the manager, were being made without consultation, by the responsible individual and other directors who do not have social work qualifications.

The three directors are all members of the same family, two of whom are directly employed by their own Company. A fourth member of the family is also employed by the Company. The social work assistant is a close family friend, as is the secretary, leaving the Manager at the time of the inspection as the only member of staff employed by the Company who is not family or a close family friend. A number of the foster carers are also friends to the directors and staff.

The lack of clarity around the personal and professional relationships within the Company is of major concern as it could lead to collusion and unsafe practices. The Department of Health has been clear about the policy of restructuring of small agencies, to ensure there would be two separate legal responsibilities of business and professional matters in order to prevent these sorts of concerns arising.(this is reflected in Regulation 6).

The Company has been proactive in obtaining information and advice from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Link and is working towards obtaining the Investors in People Award. It is recognised that the responsible individual has some previous management experience in the field of hairdressing and has undertaken some business management courses. However the inspectors were concerned about the Company's style of management practice. There was evidence of some confrontational management approaches and a lack of reflective practice within the organisation. It is advised that the responsible individual undertakes some training appropriate to ensure that she has developed the skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency as required by Regulation 8 2 c and 8.3, this should include learning about "Working Together."(HMSO, 1991)

The manager has a job description but it does not fully address all the matters that are outlined in the National Minimum Care Standards or Regulation 42, Schedule 7. The

manager is presently undertaking her NVQ Level 4 in Management to address Standard 2.2. As a result of the above the inspectors concluded that there was currently no effective management of the Company's professional functions.

**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?**

1

The Company need to ensure that all the requirements of Schedule1 are undertaken for all staff including sessional workers, contractual professional experts, support workers and panel members. The Company need to ensure that records of interviews, references and follow up telephone references have been obtained as indicated in standard 3.2.and 3.4. As stated before, the lack of clarity about professional boundaries caused by friend and family ties at different levels in the organisation, are of concern to the safeguarding and promotion of welfare of children.

## 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?

1

The Company has some procedures in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service such as keeping audit trails of correspondence, telephone enquiries and referrals, but there is no system for the manager to regularly monitor the matters required in Regulation 42 and Schedule 7.

As stated elsewhere in this report the professional boundaries are unclear and as a result this has created a lack of clarity in the role of the manager and of other staff. Well established lines of communication and accountability are not evident. Not all staff have a job description or, if they do, these do not accurately reflect the tasks undertaken by that member of staff.

A written conflicts of interest policy needs to be developed for the organisation. The policy needs to include the directors of the Company, (as a directors' interest in maximising the financial position of the Company could be in conflict with the professional considerations for which the manager would be accountable) as well as managers and staff as outlined in standard 4.5.

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

5

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.

4

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

6

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated: Outcomes not available at the time of the inspection

X

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****1**

As stated earlier in this report the manager has not been managing this fostering service. Instead the directors and in particular the responsible individual have been heavily involved in decision making at all levels. The result of the present situation has, as already indicated, led to confusion of roles and to some risky child care practices.

The manager's job description is inadequate and is not consistent with those duties of a manager as laid down by the National Minimum Standards and Regulations.

The manager stated that when she is absent, she delegates her work to the assistant social worker, who has no relevant professional qualifications. Inspectors were told that this work would have been delegated to the part time qualified social worker but unfortunately she had left the organisation suddenly, just before the inspection, without completing her notice period and there were no other contingency plans in operation. Clear arrangements should be in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.



## 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?

1

At the time of the inspection the Agency had been using 2 different methods for assessing prospective foster carers, the BAAF (British Agency for Adoption and Fostering) Form F as well as the Fostering Network competency model of assessment. Sometimes parts of these two documents were being used together to form one assessment; this has created a lack of clarity.

The Agency has used sessional workers to carry out their assessments of prospective foster carers. The agency must ensure that all sessional workers are fully conversant with the company's philosophy and style, statement of purpose, complaint's procedures, policies and procedures, assessment process and details of the services offered. Inspectors have been unable to clarify with the staff concerned that this had happened. However, the responsible individual stated that a meeting took place with the sessional workers prior to them undertaking work for the agency and that these matters were discussed.

The inspectors were concerned to note, that there was no evidence to demonstrate that the social workers had fully explored some important and potentially serious issues with the prospective foster carers such as: a disclosure of a conviction for actual bodily harm; and a history of mental health problems. Inspectors were assured that these discussions had taken place and decisions in the form of a risk assessment were taken, but had failed to be recorded anywhere.

There was no evidence of risk assessments being undertaken to ensure the safety of children who had been abused or who were abusers within the foster home or those with known sexualised behaviour. Whilst the inspectors were told that the fostering service did not take on children who have a known history of abusing others, this does not eliminate the possibility of this occurring and the Agency need to address this issue (cross reference Standard 21 and 22 issues relating to respite care and Standard 8 issues relating to matching).

The inspectors were impressed by the commitment of all the foster carers they met and by their determination to provide a warm, caring and safe environment for their foster children.

The Company had good measures to regularly check the health and safety precautions in the home, and safe transport provision.

**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?****1**

The inspectors noted that all the Agency's carers are white British. Inspectors were told that efforts had been made to recruit families from ethnic minority groups but these had not been successful. There was however no documentary evidence of this.

The assessments of those foster carers who were case tracked were not consistent in covering issues of diversity though inspectors were told that training on transracial placements did take place in the "Choosing to Foster" Course which ran alongside the assessment process. It is advised that information about the foster carers understanding of the issues of caring for a child from a different ethnic background and any contacts they may have with other ethnic communities be recorded as part of the matching details to ensure an appropriate match can be made.

The information on children placed with the agency was generally poor. Two children who had been placed by the Agency were dual heritage and also had learning disabilities. The Agency states that the issues were fully explored at the time of the placement but there is no documentary evidence to support this.

Whilst the inspectors did not inspect the training provided by this Agency it was reported that no specific training is currently provided to foster carers asked to care for children with disabilities. One carer had recently experienced a placement of an asylum seeker and had not received any specific training about how to manage the problems of language and culture, which they experienced.

**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?****1**

The inspectors found that there were a number of very useful referral information and matching criteria forms, to help social work staff to gather appropriate and crucial information in order to assist the matching process. Unfortunately these forms were not used effectively and most of the information was missing.

Children's files lacked basic and fundamental information. The manager expressed her frustration about the difficulty of gathering information from busy Local Authority social workers but there was no evidence of attempts made by the Agency demanding such information either prior to the placement or after the event.

The Agency have a tendency to approve foster carers for as wide a range of placements as is possible i.e.: 0-18 years of either gender. It is also common practice to approve foster carers for as large a number of placements as possible. Most carers are approved to take up to 4 placements if they take a sibling group. This situation is not conducive to a careful matching process. There is also evidence to suggest that placements have been made outside approval terms.

There is evidence that Directors of the Company, who do not have professional social work qualifications, are involved in the matching process. This is, as stated earlier in the report, a conflict of interests. The inspectors have serious concerns about the involvement of the responsible individual in the matching process. This has led to risky practice and must not continue.

There is evidence that the Agency has facilitated exemptions granted by the area authority on a couple of occasions to accommodate more than 3 children within a foster home. This practice has meant that these foster carers were working outside their approval range and has also indicated a lack of planning and matching regarding each child's individual needs. The Agency needs to ensure that full information is provided to the area authority requested to make such a decision and that this includes evidence of matching considerations, decision making with any other placing authority, any other child in placement and their families as stated in Standard 8.3. It is suggested that this information could be incorporated into Child Care Bureau Ltd's Exemption Request form.

One example of an exemption also provides further evidence of concern about the matching process; the foster couple had five siblings aged 0-5 years placed with them despite the concerns about the asylum seeker already fostered with them, (there was evidence to suggest that this young person was not in fact a child, but an adult). The carers and the manager had previously asked for clarification about this issue, recognising that if the young person was indeed an adult then without a CRB or other checks they could not ensure the safety of other children placed with this family. No risk assessments were undertaken however and there is no documentary evidence of any decision making in the matching process. The young man in question was then involved in an alleged incident of abuse towards one of the siblings which was never reported or investigated.

On another occasion a young man aged 17/18 years who had Aspergers Syndrome was placed for respite with foster carers. The inspectors were told that full, detailed information was given to the foster carer about this young man prior to his placement by the placing authority social worker and that the agency were assured that this was a "safe placement". The responsible individual's note in the file prior to this placement records that "this is a safe placement." There was no information about this young person's health, psychological or emotional needs on his file, despite the fact that this young man was well known to Agency and had been placed on a number of occasions with two previous carers. The files of the previous carers hold detailed information on this young person, which indicated that he had previously displayed overt sexualized behaviour as well as unpredictable moods that had resulted in violence. The foster carer told the inspector that she was not made aware of this information. Documentary evidence should have been provided and clearly articulated in the foster placement agreement as recommended in standard 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4. During the placement this young man allegedly sexually assaulted the foster carers grandson. This incident was not reported to the area child protection team by the fostering service as required by Regulation 12.1.b and 12.2.b.

These two incidents contravene Regulation 11 a (Duty to secure welfare of children placed).

There is no written evidence to indicate that the Agency consult with the children to be placed, that proper introductions take place or that contact issues are taken into account when making a placement, however the responsible individual informed the inspectors that this does take place.

Written foster placement agreements must be obtained from the Responsible Authority, which contain specific reference to elements of matching considered and identifying areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and the carer. The Agency must ensure that it offers carers only if they represent an appropriate match for a child for whom Local Authorities seek a carer.

#### **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?**

1

Regulation 12 requires the Fostering Service to have a written Child Protection Policy. Child Care Bureau Ltd's Child Protection procedures are inaccurate and could lead to confusion about whose role it is to investigate matters. The procedures need to be checked by the ACPC both in the Agency's local area and the area where foster carers live to secure appropriate and accurate procedures for their staff and carers.

The foster carers interviewed showed a good understanding of safe-caring guidelines and principles of managing behaviour in order to avoid potentially aggressive behaviour, however there is confusion about whether the foster carers are allowed to restrain young people in their care. It appears the Agency occasionally use the placing authority's own restraint procedures with specific young people. However their foster carers have not received appropriate or recognised training in this area. This is a potential risk to both foster carers and young people alike.

The manager needs to regularly monitor all allegations of neglect and abuse as outlined in standard 9.5. and ensure that all notifications are carried out as specified in Schedule 8. As already stated elsewhere in this report the social work staff need to obtain and provide full information about each prospective foster child to the foster carers to enable them to protect their families and any other foster children in their care, as outlined in Standard 9.7.

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

X

%

#### **Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

**The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.**

##### **Key Findings and Evidence**

##### **Standard met?**

1

At the time of the inspection foster placement agreements were not in place, although during the inspection the Agency produced its own document that covered all the matters to be addressed in schedule 6. Some foster carers had signed LAC agreements. These however did not provide all the information required by Regulation 34.3 Schedule 6 and Standard 10.1, and 10.7.

Whilst it is recognised that it is the Responsible Authorities who must draw up the Foster Placement Agreement, the Agency have a responsibility to obtain all the information outlined in Schedule 6 to be able to make an appropriate match and to be able to comply with the

## Standards and Regulations.

The Agency did not have clear procedures setting out how contact should be established, maintained, monitored or reviewed as for Standard 10.2. Whilst contact is reviewed at the foster carer annual review it is not specific to the needs of individual children. Whilst the LAC care plan would evidence the nature of the contact for each child placed, as stated elsewhere in the report these documents were not fully completed, consistently used or were missing.

There is no recorded evidence that contact issues were taken into consideration by the fostering service despite, in one case, a specific request by the placing authority. This omission led to confusion and stress for a foster family struggling with the responsibility of transporting 5 children cross country for contact 2-3 times a week. This practice is not consistent with Regulation 14.

There was no written evidence that the views of children were taken into account prior to placement regarding their contact arrangements as recommended by Standard 10.4. There was evidence that foster carers were very supportive in assisting foster children to maintain contact with their families and inspectors were impressed with the good practice that individual foster carers were contributing in this area. The Agency needs to develop ways of recording more detailed information of the impact on a foster child of the contact arrangements to be passed back to the child's social worker as recommended by Standard 10.9.

### 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
<p>Most foster children visited as part of the inspection were unaware of the name of the fostering service with whom they were placed and none of them had received a children's guide. The Agency needs to address this issue and ensure that written records are maintained about consultation with children that takes place at any foster carer support or supervision visit and that these demonstrate their views accurately.</p> <p>Most foster children interviewed felt that their foster carers listened to them and took their wishes into account.</p> <p>All children in placement had received a copy of the Agency's complaint's procedure.</p>		

**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?****1**

Child Care Bureau had produced its own Young Persons Health document but this was not consistently being used or fully completed. Not all children placed had signed consent documents for medical treatment on their files and a number of children who had been in placement for some months still did not have relevant and important health information on their file. As a result some placements were made by the fostering service with little information about the child and as a result little information could be passed on to foster carers. Whilst it is understood that it is difficult to obtain this information, including Foster Placement Agreements, from busy placing authority social workers, the Agency needs to be proactive in this area of obtaining crucial information and record the attempts they have made in this area.

Two children with disabilities had been placed with carers who had received no written information about what to expect and no training was provided. The Agency did not fully inform itself, prior to placement of these children, of any specialist services available for these carers and young people.

The inspectors did not see any evidence that young people were aware of health records or of their right to access this as outlined in standard 12.4, this information could usefully be incorporated into the children's guide mentioned earlier in the report.

Foster carers understood their responsibilities toward the health care of the children placed with them and were active in ensuring that these were carried out. All foster carers had undertaken training at their own expense in health, hygiene and first aid. They all contributed in providing information on health issues at the children's reviews .

This Agency needs to develop good links with health agencies in the areas that their carers live to assist carers to secure services as necessary for each child placed.

**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?****1**

The Agency has an Educational Policy Statement, which needs to be amended to encompass all the Standards and Regulations.

Presently, there is a great deal of good work being undertaken by foster carers to support children, placed with them, in their educational achievements. However, a number of children the Agency has placed, have been excluded from school or have been out of school awaiting the outcome of an educational statement. The manager has expressed frustration at the lack of response from placing authorities, whose responsibility it is to sort this out. However, there is little evidence from the files that the Agency have been proactive in chasing these authorities to sort this out. As a result, there have been occasions when foster carers who have had placements where the child is not in school, have often struggled for

long periods to provide 24 hour care, to often very challenging young people, without the appropriate support. The responsible individual informed the inspectors that it was not the Agency's philosophy or practice to provide support workers in these instances as it cut across the idea of normalising the child's experience of family, although this sort of support had been offered and provided where it was realistic to do so. Whilst this is a very laudable philosophy, it is not realistic and fails to recognise the real possibility of the breakdown of a placement in such circumstances. It also, does not reflect the Agency's responsibilities as outlined in the Standards and Regulations.

Standard 13.7 outlines the Agency's responsibility to assist foster carers in the provision of arrangements to include structured occupation if a child is not in school and Regulation 16.3 requires the fostering service provider to ensure that any education it provides for any child placed with foster carers who is of compulsory school age but not attending school is sufficient and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs he may have. Regulation 17 also states that the fostering service provider must provide training, advice, information and support as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. There is no evidence to suggest that this is being done in a proactive way and foster carers are being left to get on with it. These regulations and standards indicate strongly the need for appropriate educational advice to provide a full service for children and young people in this area as outlined also in Standard 16.13.

The inspectors were told that the Agency do find out about a child's educational needs prior to the placement but there was no documentary evidence of this as would be found in the Foster Placement Agreement. The Agency should ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the child's education prior to the placement or very soon after and that a child's educational needs are taken into consideration in the matching process.

The Agency needs to ensure that the details of Standard 13.4 and 13.8 are included in the foster placement agreement.

The Agency state that they are in the process of developing a system to demonstrate the educational achievement of children placed as outlined in Standard 13.6.

#### **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?**

**1**

The inspectors were told by foster carers about the imaginative ideas they had in preparing young people for adult lives. This was based mainly on carers drawing from their own experiences and using their own initiative. The Agency informed the inspectors that their social work staff were active in providing assistance to their foster carers in this area via the support and supervision visits. However the Agency needs to develop clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent living as outlined in standard 14.2. Regulation 16.5 requires the fostering service provider to assist with the making of, and giving effect to, the arrangements made for the education, training and employment of any child placed with them, who has attained the age where he is no longer required to receive compulsory education. These arrangements need to be clearly articulated in the foster placement agreement as outlined in Schedule 6 Regulation 34.3.

The Agency must make sure that foster carers receive training in assisting young people to

move to independence and that they are involved in the implementation of pathway plans which, for some young people, had not been provided by their placing authority. The Agency should ensure that responsible local authorities make those plans available.

The Agency have taken a number of mother and baby placements and have devised a useful document as an assessment tool for foster carers working in this area. There was evidence that foster carers with the support of their supervising social workers were doing some good work in this area. However the Agency must make sure that foster carers are appropriately trained in assessment skills for this area of specialist work.



## 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?

1

Issues relating to the suitability of foster carers have been dealt with under Standard 6. There are clear written recruitment procedures for staff but it is not clear who is responsible for this process. The manager has not been involved in drawing up the job description for the new social worker posts and was not sure who was involved in shortlisting applicants. The inspectors have already expressed concern about the confusion of roles within the Company and the involvement of the responsible individual in professional social work matters. It is strongly advised that the manager is fully in control of the recruitment of staff and afterwards accounts on the decision making process to the Directors. Training in recruitment and selection is strongly advised for the manager and the responsible individual as recommended in Standard 15.2.

It is important that all Panel members as well as staff are recruited in a manner which adheres to the equal opportunities policy and that all panel members are assessed as outlined in Standard 15.3 and Schedule 1.

Inspectors were informed that 2 new social workers had been recruited, one commenced her induction period during the course of the inspection and another was due to start the following month. The manager told the inspectors that she will be directly assessing and monitoring their work.

The manager needs to ensure that she directs and supervises the work of any sessional workers as outlined in Standard 15.8.

The number of staff accounted for below includes 2 of the directors who are directly employed by the Company.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

6

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

1

**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?****1**

The Company have not ensured that there are established lines of communication to enable fostering activities to be managed effectively. This is because the directors have been involved in making operational decisions, social work decisions and the because the manager's role and lines of responsibility are not clearly defined.

The inspectors were concerned at the time of the inspection that the manager had no professional support or supervision and suggested that an outside, independent advisor with the relevant qualifications, skills and experience in the provision of fostering services should be bought in to provide the appropriate consultation for the manager as outlined in Standard 16.8. The Agency followed this advice promptly and arranged for this to take place quickly. The manager needs to develop links with other professionals to have access to a range of advice on issues relating to the fostering service as outlined in Standard 16.13.

The Agency should ensure that all its employees, sessional workers, and consultants have written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service, as outlined in Standard 16.14.

At the time of the inspection, due to a member of staff leaving suddenly and new staff not yet able to undertake operational duties, there were no other qualified social work staff providing a service, apart from the manager. As already stated elsewhere in this report the manager was carrying out essential social work tasks. The Agency needs to have systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads and assign tasks to appropriate staff as outlined in Standard 16.4 and 16.5.

**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?****1**

As already stated elsewhere in this report the manager was heavily involved in the social work duties of the agency carrying out support and supervision visits, as well as providing much of the foster carer training, and undertaking prospective foster carer assessments. The responsible individual was not only managing the service, but also carrying out support visits, unannounced visits and providing support on the "out of hours support" service. The manager informed the inspectors that the Agency had made a number of attempts to recruit staff over the last year but they had only recently been successful. Clearly at the time of the inspection (partly due to the part time member of social work staff who had left suddenly) the Agency did not have enough sufficiently qualified staff to operate effectively and efficiently and it is not acceptable that directors step into both management and social work roles.

The Agency has a recruitment policy but this is limited to details about how to proceed once a referral has been received. The Agency need to develop a strategy for recruitment of carers (cross reference to Standard 7 e.g advertising in the Black Press) to address the issue of providing a broader range of foster carers to provide for the broad range of children they aim to provide a service for, such as children with special needs, or they need to reduce the sort of placements they offer in their Statement of Purpose.

As stated earlier in this report the fostering service need to set out clearly their assessment process for prospective carers as presently there is a confusing mixture of parts of the BAAF and Fostering Network process in some files, which do not always cover all aspects of the assessment as outlined in standard 17.6 and 17.7.

#### **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?**

**1**

During the inspection inspectors were concerned to note:

- ♠ The involvement of the directors, who are not professionally qualified, in decision making on issues and in many areas of professional practice of the fostering service.
- ♠ End of placement forms and meetings are inadequate, as they fail to explore and record the reasons for any disruptions or breakdowns in the placement. Issues such as; the future training needs for the carers or for the agency need to be addressed during this process; the need to change the approval status of the foster carers considered and the original match reviewed.
- ♠ The Agency have a tendency to blame carers if things go wrong rather than evaluate or analyse their own practices. One carer described it as a “reversal of blame” another stated “we were blamed for it”.
- ♠ The Directors have informed inspectors, that they (on legal advice) only give factual references, even where they have real concerns about carers they have deregistered continuing to care for children. Their practice has been to make files available for inspection with the permission of the foster carer or staff member. The inspectors have acknowledged that this may not be contrary to Regulations, but advised that it is good practice within children’s services to be as open as possible about information that is potentially relevant to child protection. Further, it is concerning that, if the Agency have sound evidence to suggest that carers should not be looking after children, they have not referred them to the POCA list.

The inspectors noted that the staff handbook document was heavily weighted in favour of the Company i.e. the employee has to give 3 months notice to the Company, but the Company need only give 1 months notice to the member of staff. Inspectors were told that this was a typing error, which will be amended to 3 months notice required of both parties.

The foster care agreement terms and conditions for foster carers and the contract for services, which the carers have to sign, are weighted in favour of the Agency and both the documents could be perceived as unfair. The Company’s service agreement for carers includes a 2 year contract which is inconsistent with Regulation 29.11.

**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?****0**

This standard has not been assessed during this inspection.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

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

As stated elsewhere in this report (Standard 2,3,5,16,17,18), there are major difficulties in this area.

The manager intends to provide regular and planned supervision of her new social work staff. She needs to ensure that this happens with all sessional workers as well and that she keeps proper record of this is outlined in Standard 20.3

It is not appropriate for the manager to receive her appraisal from the directors who are not qualified to offer this service. It is suggested that this is undertaken by the consultant brought in to provide regular professional social work supervision.

As outlined in Standard 20.5, clear distinction should be made between the regular professional social work team meetings chaired by the manager, which would not include the directors due to the possible conflict of interests (as mentioned elsewhere in this report) and other meetings, where the manager may feed back on a regular basis to the directors about the operations of the fostering 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**

This was an area of work that the Agency were doing well. There was a clear strategy for working with carers. Support visits were done fortnightly by the assistant social worker/support worker and supervision visits were being done by the manager but will be delegated to the new social work staff in the future. Proforma documents covering the content of these visits were helpful but need to include all the elements outlined in Standard 21.2 i.e: support services and respite care.. Unfortunately, the documents were not fully completed and lacked an investigative, analytical and evaluative approach. Also there lacked any continuity between the information in one report and the next.

The out of hours support needs to be provided by professionally qualified social work staff or, if an unqualified social worker or social work assistant is providing this service they need to have access to a qualified social worker or the manager whilst on duty. It is not appropriate for directors to be involved in the provision of this service. Whilst it is recognised that this will undoubtedly put pressures on this small fostering service it is necessary to avoid the difficulties and confusions caused the implications of a Director being supervised by a subordinate.

Foster carers felt that the level of support was generally good and appreciated the regular weekly phone call from the manager or social work staff to see how things had gone over the weekend.

**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?****1**

At the time of the inspection the Agency had no system for provision of respite. However three children had been sent on P.G.L. Holidays to enable the foster carers to have a break, and there is written evidence that agency were offering this as an appropriate method for the foster carers to manage their holiday entitlement. Clearly this style of respite is not appropriate for the majority of children placed. However for those children and young people placed for whom this sort of respite is a possibility, the Agency need to ensure that a full risk assessment is undertaken on each child, together with all parties involved, during the planning stage to ensure that this arrangement protects and safeguards the welfare of both the child in question and all other parties( i.e in the event of a young person who has been identified as exhibiting sexualised behaviour, safe caring measures will need to be addressed, consideration regarding sharing of rooms etc..? cross reference Standard 6.5). Information should also be kept on the file of all necessary checks and risk assessments undertaken by the Agency about the organisation that provide the holiday.

The responsible individual stated that another alternative was that mainstream foster carers would assist in providing respite. However this was not a recognised practice and foster carers identified respite as an area of development for the Agency. The responsible individual informed the inspectors that there were some foster carers who were dedicated to provide respite in the past and this is something the Agency would aim to provide in the future.

The Agency need to develop a clear documented strategy which includes all the elements outlined in Standard 21.2 and 22.7

The Agency has a satisfactory complaints procedure but inspectors have concerns about whether this procedure is followed in practice. Some former foster carers have stated that they felt unable to use the Agency's own complaints procedure. The reason for this is that they felt that the present organisation of the Company, with so many family members and friends as directors or employees was not sufficiently safe to have their complaint heard fairly. Some had attempted to use the procedure, but due to the confusion of roles or due to the lack of understanding about what constituted a complaint, this had not happened. The complaints had not been discussed with or passed on to the independent advisor at stage 2 or to the panel at stage 3 as set out by the Agency's own complaints procedure even though the issues had clearly not been resolved.

Those complaints that have been noted by the Agency are poorly recorded and decisions are poorly documented. They need to be collated together in the complaints file, as well as stored on each individual carer's, child's or staff file.

The Agency needs to amend the procedure to deal with investigations of allegations made about foster carers, as it is presently inaccurate and misleading (Standard 22.9). The Agency do not currently pay the Fostering Network to provide this service to their foster carers.

The Agency's foster care agreement does not meet all the requirements as set out in Regulation 28.5.b Schedule 5 and Standard 22.4.

The Agency were undertaking their responsibility in carrying out unannounced visits to foster carers as recommended by standard 22.6 but as stated elsewhere in this report it is not appropriate for directors to be involved in unannounced visits to foster carers due to the confusion and difficulties arising for staff and carers in the lines of accountability. The directors have informed the inspectors that they intend to carry out unannounced visits to the foster carers as a way of monitoring the fostering service. Inspectors have sought guidance about this matter and advise that the visits by directors to foster carers as part of the monitoring role should not be unannounced as this will confuse the function of the unannounced visits required by the fostering services regulations.

### **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?**

**0**

This standard was not fully assessed during this inspection though foster carers reported that there was sufficient training and that the quality was generally good.

## 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?	1
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This Standard has already been addressed elsewhere in this report. There is a written policy on case recording as outlined in Standard 24.2. However, generally the records for the children were very sparse indicating a lack of essential information gathering. Records are therefore unhelpful in being able to contribute to a child's past.

There is no evidence to assure inspectors that Standard 24.3 is met.

There was not an effective integration of information to enable continuity, consistency and follow through, for example; information about a decision made during supervision of a carer, was not followed up in the next support or supervision visit.

There was no policy on children having access to their own records.

Foster carers are doing some good work on helping children to understand their past according to the child's age and in keeping appropriate memorabilia.

### 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?	1
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Although the Agency provided its staff with a policy and procedural guidelines about record keeping there was no system for monitoring their accuracy and quality. Indeed, examination of a wide sample of records that the Agency is required to keep, revealed that they were not fully completed, not clearly expressed, and did not distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information. There was a lack of evaluation and analysis in the report writing and a habit of using exclamation marks to denote something of which the meaning was unclear. There was also a heavy use of innuendo, generalisations and clichés. This is a serious shortfall for an Agency, the services of which rely heavily on accurate record keeping and reports that should be non stigmatising and clear.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			17
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			45
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			35
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			5
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			6
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	301	<b>Maximum £</b>	350



## 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

Inspectors have been informed that the Agency is about to move premises. At the time of the inspection the premises were adequate for the provision of the fostering service.

The Agency are still working on developing systems to ensure appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems.

## 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?

2

The directors oversee the financial requirements and viability of the fostering service., Contingency plans need to be in place should financial crises arise and it is imperative that such procedures take into account all matters outlined by standard 27.2 and that they are available for inspection.

### 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 Company needs to produce a set of written principles governing its financial management and which describe the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants, professional experts, directors and any manager as outlined in Standard 28.3 and 4. The agency has a clear policy for the charging of fees. There are distinct fee structures for experienced and new foster carers.

**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?****2**

Foster carers receive their payment fortnightly, 1 week in arrears and 1 in advance. Foster carers reported that this was paid promptly and that they were satisfied with system.

There was some confusion about who was able to authorise extra or emergency payments. The manager was not aware of what her involvement or authority was in these matters and this needs to be addressed to avoid confusion for carers and staff alike. This issue needs to be clearly agreed in a written policy.

## 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?

1

The following information has been gathered by an interview with the panel chair, reading the panel policies, procedures and minutes and observing a panel meeting.

There are written policies and procedures for the Panel but they do not cover Standard 30.2. The fostering services' own policies and procedures are not implemented in practice.

At the time of the inspection no regular meetings had taken place between the manager and the Panel chair. The Panel Chair was relying heavily on advice from the responsible individual, who has not got the professional qualifications to provide such advice.

The Panel is not constituted properly as the Agency decision maker (one of the directors) also sits on the Panel as a member, which directly contravenes Regulation 28.4.

The Vice Chair for whom the regulations for the Chair of the Panel apply (Regulation 24.2.b), is also employed by the Agency to provide training. This is in conflict with Regulation 24.9.b and a conflict of interests.

There was little evidence that the panel had carried out a quality assurance function as outlined in Standard 30.5. The Panel Chair informed inspectors that she had never seen the minutes of previous panel meetings and could not therefore check their accuracy.

The panel chair did not read the Company's annual reports and assumptions were made as to the authenticity about information provided to them, implying a level of trust. The panel are therefore failing to check information in a thorough and rigorous way as outlined in Standard 30.5.

The Panel does not comply with Standard 30.4, 30.8 or 30.9 and need to address this immediately.

The Agency's information about the Panel is misleading to foster carers and it needs to alter its documentation to ensure that it is understood that the Panel makes recommendation about approval and deregistration, and the Agency decision maker makes the final decision taking into account the recommendation.

In the panel policy, Panel members have a responsibility to hear/consider any complaints representations in stage 3 of the fostering services' complaints procedure. The panel chair however, was not aware of this function and the panel had not received appropriate training to assist them in carrying out this function.

As stated elsewhere in this report the panel members must have all checks satisfactorily completed, as outlined in Regulation 5,7and 20 and Schedule 1.

At the time of the inspection the panel was cancelled so the observation of the panel took place 3 months later. The inspector had the opportunity of observing a panel considering an application for approval and a six monthly review.

The Agency have been given detailed verbal feedback regarding the Inspectors' observations and have provided reassurance about actions they intend to take to resolve a number of shortfalls identified.

- The Agency's procedures and written policy should include information on tape recording panel discussions, if this practice is to continue.
- The Agency should ensure that it conducts its own Criminal Records Bureau checks on all prospective foster carers.
- The Agency should ensure that the panel has access to medical expertise.
- The Agency should ensure that the panel's quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process, in particular to review and monitor the work of the assessor in a more analytical and robust way, since there was little evidence to support current statements about the applicant's competency in certain areas.
- The written review of foster carers should provide more information and detail about the carer's performance, skills, strengths and difficulties in order that the panel have a fuller picture about their performance.

It is accepted that the panel chair was new to her role at that panel and training for panel members was in its infancy. However it was of concern that although the chair did identify some questions that should be raised, some of the salient points were not mentioned. There were also assumptions made about pertinent issues from previous panel minutes that were not explored, analysed or evaluated, for example on a child protection issue.

## 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?
Not Applicable	9

## 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?
Not applicable.	9

**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.**

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**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

NO

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2004, 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: <enter details here>

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 \_\_\_\_\_ of Child Care Bureau 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 \_\_\_\_\_ of Child Care Bureau 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.