



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Bury Social Services - Fostering

18-20 St Mary`s Place

Bury

BL9 0DZ

6th 7th 11th & 12th October 2004 10th
November 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Bury Social Services - Fostering

Address

18-20 St Mary`s Place, Bury, BL9 0DZ

Local Authority Manager

Diana Powell

Tel No:

0161 253 5102

Address

18-20 St Mary`s Place, Bury, BL9 0DZ

Fax No:

0161 253 5466

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

14.10.04

Date of Inspection Visit		6th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Julie Bodell	076213
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Diana Powell – Family Placement Team Manager.	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Bury Social Services - Fostering. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The fostering service forms part of the family placement team. It incorporates a number of different arrangements including permanent, temporary, respite and family and friends as carers. The Home from Home scheme offers regular short planned breaks to disabled children and young people for up to twenty eight days a year.

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 was the third inspection of the fostering service under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Statement of Purpose (1 standard was assessed and was met)

The fostering service has a statement of purpose, which meets with Regulation 3 and complies with Standard 1. The family placement team is currently reviewing the way in which it delivers fostering and adoption services. Once the consultation process has been concluded the statement of purpose will be revised to reflect any changes.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service (2 standards were assessed and both were met)

The current manager is qualified for the post. She has a CQSW award, a BA in Applied Social Studies and a CIM Advanced Certificate in Marketing. She also has many years experience as a family placement worker and manager. From discussions it was clear that the manager is valued by both the staff and foster carers and was described by staff members as being well-organised, approachable, supportive, open and fair. This has been recognised by the department and the manager was awarded the Employee of the Year Award in November 2003.

Management of the Fostering Service (2 standards were assessed and both were met)

Additional management hours for the family placement team had been agreed at the last inspection. A second family placement team manager post has recently been filled. How best to utilise this post within the overall service is currently under review.

Security and Promoting Welfare (8 of 9 standards were assessed and were met)

The inspector visited four foster homes, meeting with a total of seven carers. The inspector found these family homes to be comfortable, homely and well maintained. As stated in the previous inspection reports, the inspector was impressed by the way the local authority has enabled seven profoundly disabled children to receive respite care in a family home. The scheme continues to increase recruitment of carers from ethnic minority groups. The service has three Jewish carers and there has been an increase in Muslim carers. An Awards Ceremony for Looked After Children at the Town Hall. One of the categories was for educational achievement. Both young people and foster carers said that they had thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Recruitment, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (6 of the 9 standards were assessed and none were met)

There has been a significant increase in the publicity budget since the last inspection. A concerted campaign started in May during National Fostering Week, which included advertisements in the local paper, on a local radio station and an advertisement on the back of a bus. The campaign resulted in a 100% increase in applications. Many of the applicants are interested in fostering teenagers or the short break care scheme for young people age 8-14 as part of a strategy to prevent family breakdown.

Records (2 standards were assessed and neither were met)

The LACS documentation is causing some difficulties because it is out dated and foster placement agreements as part of this process were found to be unsigned. The computerised system needs to be upgraded to ensure that registers meet the Regulations.

**Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service
(1 standard was assessed and was not met)**

The Family Placement Team continues to expand into what are already very cramped working conditions. Car parking arrangements are inconvenient. All staff members have access to the internal e-mail system. However some staff members are required to share a computer. This can impact on the day-to-day running of the family placement team.

Financial Requirements (1 of 3 standards were assessed and was not met)

The main issues of concern that were raised by foster carers with the inspector centred about financial arrangements for foster carers and provision of school uniforms. A decision is to be reached shortly in respect of a recent review of how monies are allocated and distributed.

Fostering Panels (1 standard was assessed and was met)

In November 2003 joint training for both the panel and the family placement team was undertaken. This training was to review the competence model of assessments, share their views on the role and functions of the panel, and examine value bases.

Short Term Breaks (1 standard was assessed and was met)

A review of the Home from Home scheme has recently been undertaken. It has been agreed that this provision will transfer to the children's disability team. The fostering service is also developing a Short Break Scheme for non-disabled children as part of a prevention strategy.

Family and Friends as Carers (1 standard was assessed and was met)

Plans for development in this area continue. Since the last inspection an additional social worker has been appointed to work with carers who are family and friends. All carers now have an allocated worker. Link workers are looking at ways of increasing the rate of family and friends as carers in line with other countries. A network is developing between a number of local authorities with the same aim.

The inspector would like to thank all those who took part in this inspection for their hospitality.

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?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Julie Bodell Signature _____
Second Inspector _____ Signature _____
Locality Manager Ian Jeavons Signature _____
Date 22 November 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 are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	34	FS24	That foster placement agreements are signed by all relevant parties.	31.12.04
2	22 & 31	FS25	That the computerised system is upgraded to ensure that registers meet the Regulations.	31.12.04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS26	That adequate space is provided within the present premise to allow the staff team to work efficiently and effectively or that a realistic timescale is reached on a move to another premises.
2	FS29	That a decision is reached in respect of a recent review of how monies are allocated and distributed.

* 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
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The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	5
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	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
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	NO
Date of Inspection	06/10/04
Time of Inspection	09.15
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	36.30

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a statement of purpose, which meets with Regulation 3 and complies with Standard 1. Elected members formally approve the statement of purpose in November 2003.

The family placement team is currently reviewing the way in which it delivers both the fostering and adoption services. Once the consultation has been concluded the statement of purpose will be revised to reflect any changes in respect of the fostering service.

The department has produced a colourful box type folder for looked after children. It contains a detailed children's guide and a copy of the Young People's Guide to the Children's Rights director. The children's guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate and about how to complain.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The current manager is qualified for the post. She has a CQSW award, a BA in Applied Social Studies and a CIM Advanced Certificate in Marketing. She also has many years experience as a family placement worker and manager.

Discussions with staff indicated that the manager was an effective leader and that the service was organised and managed in a way to deliver the best possible service within the constraints of the resources available.

It was evident from discussion with the manager that she has extensive knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering issues.

Her level of professionalism and commitment to the task continues to impress the inspector.

Since the last inspection the manager has attended the following courses: Family and friend carer training, diversity, foster panel training day and Adoption and Children Act 2002.

From discussions it was clear that the manager is valued by both the staff and foster carers and was described by staff members as being well-organised, approachable, supportive, open and fair. This has been recognised by the department and the manager was awarded the Employee of the Year Award in November 2003.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

As noted at the time of the last inspection, all the documentation required under Schedule 1 (Regulations 5, 7 & 20), in respect of the manager had been obtained by the local authority.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are written referral and assessment processes.

Discussions with the manager indicated that she was aware, at any given time, of the situation within the service in terms of foster placement vacancies, recruitment and staff workloads etc. Staff members consulted during the inspection said that their workload was allocated fairly. There is a clear organisational structure. It was evident from discussions with staff members and foster carers that there was a good understanding of roles and responsibilities.

There is a statement on conflict of interest in the fostering panels procedures and guidelines. Potential conflicts of interest are identified and addressed.

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

1

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.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

As stated at previous inspections the manager demonstrates a high degree of skill in managing the service efficiently despite time and resource restrictions and inspectors were of the opinion that the manager had a heavy workload having overall responsibility for both fostering and adoption services. At the last inspection the department had recognised this to be the case. Additional management hours had been agreed and a new post for a second Family Placement tem manager was advertised. This post has recently been filled. How best to utilise this post within the overall service is currently under review.

The LAC service manager would assume responsibility in the event of the managers' absence. There is also a senior practitioner.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence on file that the assessment and recruitment process is thorough. The inspector visited four foster homes, meeting with a total of seven carers. Two of the homes visited were providing either short term or long-term foster care. One couple were providing a home for family member. Another couple were Home from Home carers. The inspector found these family homes to be comfortable, homely and well maintained. The inspectors saw evidence of annual health and safety assessments. Discussion with foster carers also demonstrated that family policies were developed which included safe caring arrangements. Training is provided in a number of health and safety areas including child car seat safety. The service provides health and safety equipment such as fireguards and stair gates. The foster carers' handbook also covers health and safety topics. Foster carers were aware that they could be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission inspection process.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Both the foster carers agreement, and the handbook, stress the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality. Training in equality and diversity is provided at both pre-approval and post approval levels. Training also includes developing a positive identity that looks at discrimination against children who do not live with their parents, building secure relationships and considers ways of boosting self-esteem. Provision is made for disabled children by means of supplying the necessary equipment and adaptations to the carers' homes. As stated in the previous inspection reports, the inspector were impressed by the way the local authority has enabled seven profoundly disabled children to receive respite care in a family home. The scheme continues to increase recruitment of carers from ethnic minority groups. The service has three Jewish carers and there has been an increase in Muslim carers. During discussion with young people the inspector was given examples of instances where the local authority has provided finance to enable them to pursue their special interests.

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?**

3

The inspector was satisfied that, where possible, efforts are made to secure an appropriate match of carers and young people. However, many placements are arranged as the result of a crisis situation and therefore cannot be planned in advanced. In such cases the influencing factor might centre upon the availability of approved carers. It was noted that the service has been stretched to capacity over recent months, with 45 placements being made since April. There has also been an increase in the number of children being placed out of the borough with independent fostering agencies, some at a considerable distance away from Bury. The manager will be attending forthcoming reviews of children and young people in this situation to see if it would be in their best interests to return to the local authority. This process must consider each child's wishes and feelings on this matter.

Whilst the inspector acknowledge, that in practical terms it may not be possible to arrange planned placements, they were satisfied that the service acted in the best interests of each child. Concerns were expressed in foster carers surveys about the lack of adequate information provided by the child's social worker in cases of emergencies and about not being kept fully informed. Emergency placements are kept under review and more appropriately matched placements sought if necessary.

Due to the nature of the Home from Home scheme the service able to plan introductory visits prior to placement.

The young people, who were consulted during this inspection, spoke positively about their foster homes.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service provides training on child protection. Safe caring procedures have been implemented and a video is shown to new foster carers. Foster carers visited talked realistically about the need to achieve a balance between the needs of both the foster children and their own children within a safe framework. A letter from the Child Protection Co-ordinator stated there were no outstanding child protection concerns at this time.

The foster carers' handbook and the foster carers' agreement clearly state that corporal punishment is not permissible. This is discussed at the initial assessment stage. Young people gave examples of punishments for poor behaviour in returned surveys as being "grounded", sent to their room, removal of TV, being told off and reduction of spends.

There is a policy and procedure in place in respect of allegations made against foster carers and a record is maintained. There is a missing person's procedure.

All the young people who were consulted said that they would approach their foster carers if they needed to discuss anything and felt confident that they would act appropriately.

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

0

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Where appropriate, the service actively encourages contact with family and friends. Contact arrangements form part of the placement agreement meeting and are recorded. Risk assessments are carried out by the child's social worker.

Some foster carers had found contact arrangements to be quite time consuming and impacted on the needs of the rest of the family. If necessary, supervised contact can be arranged outside the foster home at a local centre. Support with transport in respect of contact can also be arranged. The fostering service pays for transport costs for contact arrangements.

Contact is positively promoted during the pre-approval training. For approved carers, further training is available – "*Working in Partnership with Parents and the Department.*"

There were mixed views from young people about contact with birth families. Some young people would have preferred more contact with parents and others less. Concerns were expressed though about maintaining contact with siblings and their perceived differing standards between placements. The letterbox scheme was felt to be a good idea by young people.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The young people consulted at this inspection were a group who were eleven and above. As with previous inspections although there were no concerns expressed, they were vague about the reviewing process. They said that they would discuss any problems they had with their foster carers or social worker before the review meeting. The manager's self-assessment form states that it is planned to carry out a consultation exercise with young people on participation in reviews later this year. This matter will be looked at again at the next inspection. Young people have access to independent advocates who would attend reviews if the young person wished.

Examination of young peoples files demonstrated that reviews were held in accordance with statutory requirements.

All the young people who attended the meeting had the same LAC social worker. Young people spoke highly of the social worker and it was noted that young people said that they had experienced less change in social workers recently.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Policies and procedures are in place that cover the health of looked after children and young people. There was evidence in case files to demonstrate that specialist healthcare services were accessed if necessary, for example paediatricians, psychologists, hospital services and CDT. As at previous inspections the LAC nurse is said to be very supportive. The LAC nurse is scheduled to deliver induction training to foster carers on health and HIV this month. The manager said that a new recording format sheet is being developed to clearly identify health issues of the young person during their placement that will be easily transferable to the child's case file when the placement ends. A new CAMHS outreach service for looked after children is available.

Training for foster carers is provided in health topics including first aid and moving and handling. There were 49 participants in first aid training this year with more courses planned for outstanding foster carers in December. At the last inspection it was noted that specialised training is provided if individual circumstances dictate, for example tube feeding.

The inspector is concerned about problems in respect of signing the LACS documentation. If this does not happen then there is no emergency consent to treatment in place for the child.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The service offers training for foster carers in "*Promoting Educational Achievement.*" All the young people consulted during this inspection said that they attended school regularly. The manager said that the LAC teacher had informed her that there are no permanently excluded children within the fostering scheme at this time. One of the LAC teachers is to deliver induction training on education this month. Case records contain evidence of personal education plans having been completed. Foster carers said they were involved in parent's evenings and open days.

During this inspection the inspector was invited to attend an Awards Ceremony for Looked After Children at the Town Hall. One of the categories was for educational achievement. This has been the most successful year for GCSE results for Looked After Children. The inspector was unable to attend due to ill health. Both young people and foster carers said that they had thoroughly enjoyed the event and commended the efforts of all those people involved in setting it up which was said to be an achievement in itself. Foster carers said that the event had been carried out fairly and that no child was left out of the proceedings and it was great opportunity to meet up with other carers. Foster carers raised no issues in respect of education during the inspection.

The service provides all young people with laptops to assist with schoolwork. All the young people spoken to had access to a computer to enable them to produce work for school. Young people said that they would be able to take part in organised activities, for example football and school trips and that they would not feel held back by their circumstances. Learning mentors for young people are to be appointed in the near future.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The carers' handbook contains written information about the preparation for adulthood. During this inspection none of the families consulted were currently fostering a young person who was approaching adulthood. There are currently eighteen 15-year-old children placed within the scheme with a further eleven placed in independent fostering agencies. An "Extra Mile" worker from the leaving care service provided by the NCH is identified once a young person reaches fifteen.

There is great emphasis on the part of the fostering service in terms of recruitment for foster carers to work with teenagers at this time. This will include a higher level of funding and an additional training package which covers relevant topics such as promoting independence, drug awareness, facilities for young people, promoting mental health, offending, sexual health and communication and managing challenging behaviour. A speaker from Connexions has attended a Foster Care Support group and information about Connexions has been included in the foster carers newsletter.

Some of the young people talked about what they would like to do in the future in relation to further education and employment.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The local authority has clear written recruitment and selection procedures.

At the last inspection inspectors examined a sample of staff files. They contained the majority of information required by Schedule 1. However there was no evidence on files to demonstrate that staff members were appropriately qualified. The manager said that this matter had now been addressed. The manager's self-assessment form comments that all staff and foster carers are appointed following CRB checks being undertaken. Clarification is to be sought by the inspector in respect of Schedule 1 for foster carers in relation to employment history and employment references, to ensure that all those working for the purpose of the fostering service meet with national recruitment requirements. The manager also raised concerns about regional discrepancies advise in respect of the interpretation given in respect of conflict of interest. Some areas interpret it as all local authority employees, some social services employees only and others family placement workers only. This too needs to be clarified and applied consistently.

The staff team have access to the skills and expertise of the LACS team, which includes a nurse, teachers, psychologist, CAMHS, social workers and outreach worker.

There are three family support workers and they are supervised by the senior practitioner.

Discussions with staff members suggested that they were aware of their roles and responsibilities and were supportive towards each other.

Total number of staff of the agency:

19

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

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

As identified at the last inspection there are clear lines of accountability within the management structure. With the recent appointment of a second team manager the structure of the service is currently under review. All staff members have contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. It was clear, from discussions with the manager, and staff members, that workloads are monitored and staff supervision is given high priority.

There is appropriate administrative back up.

A range of policies and procedures are in place including, equal opportunities, and disciplinary and grievance.

It was not clear that when the local authority uses agencies that they check the Commission inspection reports before doing so.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

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

The family placement team continues to grow, with a second manager and three social workers joining the team since the last inspection. Foster carers did however state in the surveys returned that they felt there were not enough workers.

All staff members have experience of working in childcare services.

There has been a significant increase in the publicity budget since the last inspection. A concerted campaign started in May during National Fostering Week, which included advertisements in the local paper, on a local radio station and an advertisement on the back of a bus. The campaign resulted in a 100% increase in applications. Many of the applicants are interested in fostering teenagers or the short break care scheme for young people age 8-14 as part of a strategy to prevent family breakdown. Both these areas are within the fostering service target group and pressure will now be on the team to assess them all within the timescales.

There is a clear written process for recruitment. Following an enquiry, a prospective carer would be visited by a link worker, after which the person would be asked to take part in pre-approval training. An assessment period lasting 4 or 5 months would follow. Foster carers need to be approved by the fostering panel before they are ready to take a child on placement. The inspector examined a number of written assessments and found them to be very detailed.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

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

At the last inspection inspectors examined copies of staff contracts, recruitment and selection, grievance and disciplinary procedures and equal opportunities. There is a whistle blowing policy in place. Staff policies and procedures can be located on the intranet.

Thorough checks are made for both staff and foster carers, for instance CRB checks. Other agencies such as the NSPCC, health visitors and probation services are contacted.

At this inspection foster carers in both discussion and from returned surveys said that they had "excellent" relationships with their link worker and received good support from them as link workers and the family placement team in general. They had had consistency from the family placement team, which they often had not had from the child's social worker. The emergency duty team is accessible to foster carers out of office hours. A six month pilot for a family placement out of hours service commenced on 1st September 2004, which will operate from 5-11pm on working days and 2 – 11pm on non working days. Outside these hours foster carers can access the emergency duty team.

Evidence of health and safety assessments was seen on files. These include professional assessments were appropriate.

At previous inspections the manager said that foster carers were covered under the local council's public indemnity insurance.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

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

At the last inspection it was required that each staff member had an appraisal, which include training and development. The manager was due undertake training in the new local appraisal scheme on 28th October 2003 after which it was agreed that the new system was to be implemented for all staff. The manager said that this had been done.

A new member of staff, an experienced family placement worker said that they had received induction training at the Seedfield Centre and regular supervision from the manager.

At the last inspection it was noted that as a professional development tool, regular study days are arranged to enable staff members to share information and learning from the training courses they have attended.

All three of the fostering service family support workers have gain places on a part-time social work course at Salford University and it has been agreed that all can attend. A post for a part-time for 20 hours has been agreed to help with the logistical difficulties that this may create. A family support worker said that this was a "fabulous opportunity".

Seven members of the staff team have now obtained PQ1 and senior practitioners are being prioritised to undertake PQ 2-6.

A training record is maintained for all staff and foster carers.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>All staff members said that they received regular formal planned supervision from their present manager and that this was seen as a high priority. They said that the manager was approachable and available for consultation at other times.</p> <p>Staff members said that they felt valued and supported by the manager. It was also clear from discussions that staff understood their responsibilities and accountability to the service.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>It was clear that a number of strategies were in place to support carers. These included, the carers' handbook, foster carers' support group, quarterly newsletters, automatic membership of the foster carers network, post approval training and the "buddy" scheme.</p> <p>There was evidence on file of the provision of regular supervision from the link worker. This included identification of training needs. All annual reviews have been completed.</p> <p>Family support workers provide an invaluable service in terms of practical support to both foster carers and children. In order to support placements for large sibling groups additional support has been made available for ironing and cleaning. Additional finance has also been made available for nursery placements and summer scheme placements. On two occasions carers have been provided with a people carrier on a hire basis.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)		
The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector examined a number of foster care agreements. These included sections on support, confidentiality, complaints and allegations, and discipline.</p> <p>All foster carers consulted during this inspection said that they had a link worker. They were all confident that if they needed advice or support from the link worker this would be provided.</p> <p>Carers are provided with copies of the foster carers handbook.</p> <p>There are written complaints and allegations procedures. Records of both complaints, and allegations of abuse, are maintained. Those examined by the inspector appeared to have been dealt with appropriately.</p>		

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?

4

The inspector continues to be impressed by the commitment shown by this service to the provision of training for foster carers.

The senior practitioner takes responsibility for co-ordinating training for foster carers. She is seconded to the training section for this purpose one day a week.

The inspector was invited to observed part of a recent pre-approval training course. Unfortunately the inspector did not attend on this occasion due to ill health. Training takes place over 14 hours, on 2 Saturdays and 1 evening, and covers a range of topics including safe caring, understanding behaviour, and confidentiality. Courses are arranged at differing times to accommodate people's circumstances. For some courses a crèche is available.

The senior practitioner has revised the post-approval training to encompass the new standards, and evidence competencies. Since the last inspection in March 2003 training has been provided in topics such as drug awareness, child mental health, HIV and Hepatitis, caring for children who sexually abuse others, promoting equality, diversity and rights and promoting educational achievement.

Foster carers training needs are reviewed regularly and documented. Foster carers spoke positively about the training opportunities available to them.

It was clear from discussions with the senior practitioner that training is regularly evaluated, revised and an annual written report is produced.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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An up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child and retained at the allocated social worker's office. Files examined were well maintained. LACS documentation was completed. The method of completing LAC documentation has changed from hand written triplicate sheets that were often illegible to typed, which is an improvement. However the changes have meant that now many of the placement agreements are now unsigned. LACS documentation as a national recording system for looked after children has been accepted at previous inspection despite there being discrepancies in respect of Schedule 6 and the fact that foster carers sign against legislation that has been revoked under Regulation 51. A new national integrated recording system is now under consultation with local authorities however there are similar discrepancies in the new documentation as the old in terms of Schedule 6 and Regulation 51. Feedback is to be given back through the consultation process. It is hoped that this problem will be solved by the next inspection. A number of foster carers commented that they did not feel that they were not provided with sufficient information in respect of each child placed with them by social workers, particularly when an emergency placement had been made. Confidentiality is included in the pre-approval training. A section on confidentiality also forms part of the foster care agreement. Children and young people are encouraged to keep appropriate memorabilia such as photographs. They are assisted to compile life storybooks and some keep diaries.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The fostering service's administrative records contained the majority of the information required by the regulations. The new RAISE computerised system does have the capacity to incorporate all the information stipulated in the regulations and continues to be developed. The system, though generating large amounts of data, is presenting some difficulties in terms of the registers for both children and foster carers as specified in Regulation 22 Schedule 2 and Regulation 31, which makes it difficult to audit the service. Numbers of placements made and ended have therefore been omitted. The manager is aware of the problem and is dealing with the short falls, which include clearer inputting across all areas of service provision as well as identifying those children placed in Independent Fostering Agencies.

There is a policy and procedure “ Recording with Care” available to staff members. Entries in case records are clear and legible. The manager monitors the quality of these records through the supervision system and signs and dates the records to evidence this. Confidential information is securely stored.

There are currently 64 mainstream carers, 24 Family and Friends as carers and 17 Home from Home carers.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	105
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	30
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	4
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	193.20
Maximum £	232.75

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?

2

The premises are situated in the town centre. At previous inspections the manager said that the building and contents were covered by the Council's insurance.

Records are kept in locked cabinets in a lockable room.

The Family Placement Team continues to expand into what are already very cramped working conditions. Car parking arrangements are inconvenient. All staff members have access to the internal e-mail system. However some staff members are required to share a computer. This can impact on the day-to-day running of the family placement team.

The inspector was informed that there are plans for the team to move to another facility in the future. There is no clear timescale for when this might happen.

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?
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This standard was not assessed as part of this 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?
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	0
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This standard was not assessed as part of this inspection.

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**

Boarding out allowances include payments for weekly maintenance, pocket money and clothing allowances. Annual payments are also made towards the child's birthday and Christmas expenses. A holiday grant is available. Allowances received are based on the child's age.

Discussions with foster carers at this and at previous inspections indicated that there were some concerns about the adequacy of the allowances and the inconsistencies in the allocation of funds, for example for school uniforms and clothing in general. The issue of independent fostering agency foster carers receiving higher allowances for an equivalent role was also raised in foster carers. Concerns were also expressed about the difference in funding arrangements for family and friends as carers, particularly at the initial stages of placement where the foster family are adapting to change and settling the child into the family. There has recently been a review of financial arrangements for foster carers and a number of proposals have been put forward to council. A decision will be given this month. The proposals are as follows:

- Increased Boarding Out rate particularly in relation to young people age 11+.
- A full fee plus an additional £25 a week to carers who take a young person at age 11+.
- An extra £25 a week to carers who complete a new training package for carers of a young person aged 11+.
- To introduce school uniform grants when a child starts a new school.
- Initial clothing grants for children placed without sufficient clothes.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering panel has written procedures and guidelines, which include details of its functions and decision-making process.

The panel members have a wide range of expertise that meets with the expectations of the regulations. At the last inspection, inspectors were of the opinion that there was a possible conflict of interest in relation to the new chairperson who is also Service Manager for Conferencing and Reviewing and Child Protection Co-ordinator. This was challenged by the fostering service under Regulation 24(2)(a) and after consideration by a Regulatory Manager within the CSCI was accepted. Fostering panel minutes evidence that any conflicts of interest are discussed at the start of each meeting.

The inspector did not attend the fostering panel meeting scheduled for 14th October 2004 due to ill health. The agenda indicates that recommendation for approval, changes to approval, advice on assessments and reviews were to be discussed and all paperwork as prepared in advance of the meeting.

A panel member confirmed that in November 2003 they had attended joint training for both the panel and the family placement team to review the competence model of assessments, share their views on the role and functions of the panel, and examine value bases. The panel member said that this training had been very informative, particularly when looking at competencies.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The fostering service has a Home from Home Scheme that provides short term breaks for children and young people with disabilities. The service recognises that demands for this service are high. A review of this provision has recently been undertaken and it has been agreed that this provision will transfer to the children's disability team.

As stated in the last inspection report, the inspector is impressed by the way the Local Authority have provided specialist adaptations and equipment in one home to meet the needs of seven children and young people who have manual handling needs on a rotational basis. Specialised equipment and adaptations are provided as required. A moving and handling adviser provides training where necessary. The scheme has written policy and procedures.

The foster carers visited said that they had good communication links with the family placement team and continuity. They were complimentary about the support provided by the link worker.

The fostering service is also developing a Short Break Scheme for non-disabled children as part of a prevention strategy. The fostering service anticipates that there will be a co-ordinator in post to develop this scheme by the end of the year.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Plans for development in this area continue. Since the last inspection an additional social worker has been appointed to work with carers who are family and friends. All carers now have an allocated worker. This worker recently attended a conference on Assessment of Family and Friends as Carers. Link workers are looking at ways of increasing the rate of family and friends as carers in line with other countries. A network is developing between a number of local authorities with the same aim. Encouraging carers who are friends and family to attend post approval training has not been successful. Feedback at this and previous inspections suggested that they did not wish to be viewed as "professionals" and simply wished to live an ordinary family lifestyle. It was felt that some of the services offered stigmatised the children and young people that had come to live with them further. The fostering service has now developed a training pack for family and friends as carers, which is undertaken by the supervising social worker. The pack includes the following documents, family and friends as carers, your legal position, contact, developing a positive identity and developing a family policy. Family and friends carers receive a quarterly newsletter, a handbook, accident book and a diary. They also have access to a foster carer support work.</p>		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 6, 7, 11, 12 October and 10 November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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 20 December 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ 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 _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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