

inspection report

Fostering Services

Foster Care Associates (North East)

19 Portland Terrace

Jesmond

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne & Wear

NE2 1QQ

6th December 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?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Foster Care Associates (North East)

Tel No

0191 212 6900

Address

19 Portland Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne,
Tyne & Wear, NE2 1QQ

Fax No

0191 212 6904

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

B030000513

Name of Registered Provider

Foster Care Associates Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

16th March 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

16th March 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

6/1/04

Date of Inspection Visit		6th December 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Dennis Bradley	074426
Name of Inspector	2	Glynis Gaffney	074449
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		Matthew Horton	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Foster Care Associates (North East). 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.

Foster Care Associates (North East) is part of the national organisation Foster Care Associates. FCA (NE) provides family placements to children and young people in the North East of England. The main office is situated in Newcastle upon Tyne and there were sub-branches in Alnwick, Darlington and Seaton Burn. At the time of the inspection a fourth sub-branch was being opened in Middlesbrough. FCA (NE) has continued to grow since the last inspection. At the time of the inspection, FCA (NE) was offering a family placement service to 151 children and young people. The Agency offers a range of services to meet the needs of placing authorities, for example emergency, parent and child, short-term, bridging, assessment and long-term placements. FCA (NE) also specialises in offering placements to children who may challenge the service.

FCA (NE) provides a multi-disciplinary approach to working with children and young people, which amongst other things, offers opportunities for foster carers and social work staff to access therapy and educational support services. FCA (NE) also provides children and young people with access to group work and activities provided by a team of resource workers. Following an assessment of the branch and its sub-offices the Agency had recently achieved the Investors In Children award.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This is the report of an announced inspection.

The purpose of the inspection is:

- a) to assess progress made towards meeting requirements and recommendations (where applicable) from the previous inspection
- b) to assess the service against the National Minimum Standards.

Statement of Purpose

This Standard was met

The Fostering Service has a written Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide. The Children's Guide 'File of Facts' was in a form that will appeal to young people and it was also in a format for younger children.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.

Both of these standards were met.

The Director had appropriate skills and experience and exercised effective leadership. A Criminal Records Bureau check had recently been carried out in relation to the Director.

Management of the Fostering Service

Both of these standards were met.

Arrangements were in place to monitor the operation of the Service. The national FCA Quality Assurance Team regularly monitors the activities of the Agency. Staff were clear about their roles and lines of accountability. An Assistant Director provides cover in the Director's absence.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

7 of these 9 standards were met and 2 were almost met.

The assessment process for new foster carers is comprehensive. There was evidence that the specific needs of children and young people are given consideration when foster placements are arranged. However, decisions about the appropriateness of placements should be made by a qualified social worker. Agency staff and foster carers supported children and young people, where appropriate, to maintain family contacts and friendships. There was ample evidence that children and young peoples' opinions were sought about issues that were likely to affect them. In addition to a national forum for children and young people the Agency had set up 3 local forums. The Agency had recently been awarded Investors In Children accreditation. The Agency provides children and young people with regular newsletters. FCA(NE) provides staff, foster carers and children with access to specialist educational and therapy staff. The Education Team provides booster sessions to young people who have been identified as underachieving. Training is available for foster

carers regarding their role and responsibilities in preparing young people for independent living. The promotion of young peoples health was taken seriously by the Agency. However, there were delays in some placing authority social workers providing relevant information regarding children and young people placed with foster carers.

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

8 of these 9 standards were met and 1 was nearly met.

The agency provides good support to its staff and foster carers. Professional staff working for the Agency were appropriately qualified and experienced. Staff had regular team meetings and a formal system of supervision was in place for all social work staff. A system was in place to provide regular supervision to foster carers. Training programmes were in place for staff and foster carers and these are reviewed annually. Procedures were in place covering the assessment, approval and review of foster carers and these were implemented effectively. All foster carers are required to attend a course of training prior to their approval and post-approval training includes a core curriculum that all carers are expected to attend. FCA(NE) obtained the 'Investors in People' award in 2002. Staff interviewed demonstrated a positive commitment to the work undertaken by the Agency. The Agency recruits a range of carers and had suitable arrangements in place to ensure that there was an adequate number of experienced and qualified staff. There were clear recruitment and selection procedures for staff but appropriate checks had not always been carried out.

Records

Both of these standards were met.

There were written policies regarding case recording and what information should be held on children's and foster carer files. Appropriate records were maintained in respect of children although there were delays in foster carers receiving appropriate documentation. Post-approval training for carers included the course 'Helping Children Make Sense Of Their Past'.

Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service

This standard was met.

The premises used by the Agency were adequate for the operation of the Service and were well equipped. The Agency has its main office in Newcastle upon Tyne and sub-offices in Alnwick, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Seaton Burn.

Financial Requirements

1 of these standards was not inspected and the other 2 were met.

Arrangements were in place to ensure that the financial processes/systems of the Agency are properly operated and maintained. There was a written policy on fostering allowances and details of the current allowances are provided to carers annually. Foster carers confirmed that payments were made promptly. FCA has its own Quality Assurance Division.

Fostering Panels

This standard was met in full.

The Agency's Fostering Panel was observed to work thoroughly and effectively. The Panel provides a rigorous quality assurance function in relation to the assessment and review of foster carers. Criminal Record Bureau checks had been carried out in respect of all panel members.

Short Term Breaks

This standard was not applicable.

Family and Friends as Carers

This standard was not applicable.

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

NO

NO

NO

[illegible]

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		

**Regulatory
Inspector**
Second Inspector

**Regulation
Manager**
Date

Dennis Bradley

Fiona Millns

Signature

Signature

Signature

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	FS8	<p>Schedule 7 to the Children Act 1989 prescribes a usual fostering limit of three children. A person may exceed the usual fostering limit if the children concerned are all siblings with respect to each other. A person may exceed the usual fostering limit if he is exempted from it by the local authority within whose area he lives.</p> <p>The Agency must ensure that an exemption is obtained from the relevant local authority prior to any foster carer exceeding the usual fostering limit of three children.</p>	25/4/05

2	5, 7 & 20	FS15	<p>1. All staff personnel records must contain the information following information, as specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive proof of identity including a recent photograph; • Two written references, including a reference from the person's most recent employer; • Documentary evidence of any relevant qualification. 	30/5/05
			2. Ensure that telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references and that records of these enquiries are included in the person's personnel file.	25/4/05
			3. Ensure that, where a person has previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended is obtained. Maintain a record of the outcome of such checks.	25/4/05
			4. Ensure that Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out by the Agency prior to new staff commencing work in or for the Fostering Service.	25/4/05
			5. Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure that CRB checks, in respect of all people working in or for the Agency, are renewed every three years.	25/4/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should clearly refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and the action required to compensate for identified gaps.
2	FS8	In line with the Agency's Placements Policy, ensure that decisions about the most appropriate placements for children and young people are made by a qualified social worker. Ensure that when placements are made outside of the age, numbers and categories for which the foster carer has been approved by the Agency, this is referred to the next Fostering Panel meeting and the Agency Decision Maker for approval.
3	FS12	Ensure that, if full details of the health needs and history of a young person are not available before placement, a high priority is given to ensuring that the information is obtained and passed to the foster carer once the placement is made.
4	FS15	Schedule 1 to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 stipulates that the information required in respect of persons seeking to carry on, manage or work for the purposes of a fostering service should include a full employment history, and a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in a person's employment. In order to comply with this, the employment histories of applicants for positions within the Agency should specify the month, as well as the year, in which periods of employment began and ended.

* 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 12

Survey of placing authorities YES

Foster carer survey YES

Foster children survey YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals YES

- Directors of Social services NO

- Child protection officer YES

- Specialist advisor (s) NO

- Local Foster Care Association NO

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements YES

- Interview with children YES

- Interview with foster carers YES

- Interview with agency staff YES

- Contact with parents NO

- Contact with supervising social workers YES

- Examination of files YES

Individual interview with manager YES

Information from provider YES

Individual interviews with key staff YES

Group discussion with staff NO

Interview with panel chair YES

Observation of foster carer training YES

Observation of foster panel YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents YES

Inspection of records YES

Interview with individual child YES

Date of Inspection 6/12/04

Time of Inspection 9.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 103

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Statement of Purpose for Foster Care Associates was informative, easy to understand and well written. A supplement to this Statement included information about Foster Care Associates North East (FCA (NE)).

The children's guide to the Agency, the 'File of Facts', is clearly designed to appeal to young people, whilst also being both 'user friendly' and informative. A version of this had been prepared for younger children. The Director advised that there were no plans to make the 'File of Facts' available in different formats.

30 children and young people responded to a questionnaire issued by the Commission. 26 indicated that they had been given information telling them about the Agency, 4 indicated that they had not.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Director of FCA (NE) had a relevant social work qualification and a Diploma in Management Studies. He also had appropriate significant experience of working in children's services at a senior level and had been part of the management team at FCA(NE) for three years first as Assistant Director and, for 12 months, as Deputy Director.

It was evident that the Director exercised effective leadership in the course of his duties and promoted an ethos where staff were encouraged to be adaptable and resourceful. All of the staff interviewed confirmed that the Director and his management team were approachable and supportive.

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

There was evidence that records had been kept of checks and references that had been obtained and their outcomes. The Director had recently undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check.

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 was evidence that the Director had a clear understanding of the operation of the Agency. 'In house' arrangements were in place to monitor and control the Agency's activities and the quality of its performance. In addition the FCA Quality Assurance Department also monitored the activities of the Agency.

Although there was evidence of a degree of flexibility a scheme of the delegated roles and responsibilities of the management team and members of the staff group was in place. There were also job descriptions for each post. Staff interviewed confirmed that in general there were established lines of communication and accountability between management, staff and carers. Action had been taken to improve the communication between the Placements Team and social work teams. Financial procedures were in place.

FCA has a Corporate Prospectus. The Director advised that details of the amounts to be paid to foster carers and for other services, such as therapeutic assessments, would be made available to purchasers of the Service on request.

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

X

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.

1

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

11

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4) The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Director had a clearly defined job description and did not hold a similar position within any other organisation. Staff interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There were two Assistant Directors. Arrangements were in place for one of the Assistant Directors to manage the Service in the Director's absence.		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The standard of accommodation in the foster carer homes visited was satisfactory. Foster carers homes are inspected as part of their initial assessment and at each annual review. A health and safety checklist is completed this includes a vehicle check and an insurance and MOT check. This checklist was being revised. FCA(NE) expects that each foster child will be allocated their own bedroom accommodation, unless there are agreed reasons for not doing so.

The Foster Carers' Handbook contained reference to FCA's Health and Safety Policy and it is the Agency's policy to ensure that all foster carers receive training that includes a health and safety component. The training programme for approved foster carers included a two-day health and safety course.

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**

The Agency had a 'Valuing Diversity' Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy. The FCA Placement Policy includes a commitment to reviewing emergency placements within six weeks and identifying a more appropriate placement where this is in the best interests of the child. The Foster Carer Handbook included a commitment to ensuring that children and their families, are provided with services that promote equality and meet their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs. Prospective foster carers' attitudes to issues of diversity are covered as part of their assessment. Preparatory training for carers covered the principles of valuing diversity and this was also included in the core post-approval training programme.

There was evidence that the Agency had provided support to one carer, to help them meet the religious, cultural and ethnic needs of a group of siblings placed with them. This included the provision of an interpreter. However, in order to meet the needs of these children, the carers also had to rely on support from their own network of friends and contacts.

One of the targets included in the Agency's Marketing Development Plan is to recruit ethnic minority carers.

Those children and young people spoken to, confirmed that their foster carers encouraged and supported them pursue their interests and hobbies. This was also evident during the visits to foster carers' homes.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

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

There was evidence that staff at FCA(NE) tried hard to ensure that children and young people were carefully matched with foster carers who were capable of meeting their needs. A member of staff in the Placements Team said that over 50% of referrals by local authorities were not accepted because appropriate matches could not be made. It was confirmed that supervising social workers, foster carers and their families, were usually consulted and provided with relevant information throughout the matching process. It was evident that where practicable, planned introductions were arranged between the child to be placed and the foster carer.

However, there was evidence that, on occasion, matching took place without an agency social worker being involved in the decision-making. This was contrary to the Agency's own Placements Policy and related procedures. Action had been taken to address this matter. There was also evidence that the placing authority social worker for one child had not been consulted about, or informed of, the placement of other children with the carer.

There was evidence that, sometimes, foster carers had children placed with them where this was not consistent with the ages or number of children they had been approved to care for. There were also delays in exemptions, or changes, to the carer's approval being agreed. In addition, there were three foster carers who had more than the usual limit of three foster children placed with them. In one case, the reason for placing more than three children with the carer was not consistent with The Children Act 1989 guidance regarding family placements or with the Agency's Placements Policy. None of the local authorities where the children were placed had exempted the carers from the usual fostering limit.

There were examples where limited information about a child or young person had been obtained prior to the placement commencing, particularly in relation to emergency placements. This could make the task of identifying appropriate carers for a child more difficult. However, of the 35 foster carers who completed a questionnaire, 31 indicated that they were adequately informed about the backgrounds of children placed with them.

Although the Agency had made efforts to improve the information recorded in foster placement agreements, matching considerations were not always clearly recorded.

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**

There was evidence available that the Agency had suitable arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people. Preparatory and post approval training for foster carers covered child protection issues and safe caring. Child Protection training was part of the core post-approval training provided to foster carers. Foster carers are given a copy of the NFCA 'Safe Caring' guidance document and prepare a safe caring policy for their own household. The Foster Carer Handbook contains guidance on bullying and how it should be addressed. A session on 'Bullying Issues' was included in the training programme for carers. An external consultant also provided training to staff on this subject. A Missing Child Procedure was available for staff and carers and the Carers Handbook clearly states that the use of corporal punishment is not acceptable. All of the foster carers who completed a questionnaire confirmed that the Agency had made clear to them what punishments were acceptable. Staff and foster carers are expected to attend training in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention.

In their responses to a questionnaire: all the placing authority social workers confirmed that they considered the children placed with FCA(NE) to be safe, 59 indicated that they thought the foster carer was looking after the child 'very well', 7 indicated 'quite well' and 1 'ok' – other options were 'quite bad' and 'very bad'; 25 of the 30 children confirmed that they had been told how to make a complaint about how they were being looked after, if they needed to; 35 of the 36 foster carers confirmed that the Agency had given them information about how they could complain on a child's behalf.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

There was evidence that, where appropriate, Agency staff and foster carers encouraged and supported children and young people to maintain family contacts and friendships. The Foster Carers Handbook contains clear guidance regarding how staff and carers should support foster children to maintain and develop their family contacts and this is also covered in the preparatory training for foster carers. The Agency provides venues for contact to take place as well as staff to provide supervised contact where necessary. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they were clear about the contact arrangements for the children and young people placed with them.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The Agency had a range of arrangements in place to ensure that children and young people were consulted about the Service and issues that might affect their daily life and future. These included:

- Providing foster carers with clear guidance regarding what the Agency expects in respect of listening and responding to children, this is also covered in the preparatory training for carers. In their response to a questionnaire 23 children indicated that their foster carers 'often' asked them for their opinions and ideas, the other 7 indicated 'sometimes'. 22 children confirmed that the Agency had asked their opinion about their foster carers;
- Children's forums, and 'children who foster' groups, had been set up in each area covered by the Agency and consideration was being given to setting up a forum for children under 9. Despite being activity based some children and young people were reluctant to attend these forums. However, staff also organise a range of activities for children that provide a more informal opportunity for them to raise any issues or concerns. The Resource Team regularly consults children regarding the work they do and the activities that are organised;
- Foster children aged over seven are asked about their views of the placement when foster carers' annual reviews are carried out. ;
- Statutory reviews provide an opportunity for children and their families to be consulted. Agency staff were working with children and young people to support them to become more involved in review meetings;
- A group of young people in foster care meet with staff and Fostering Panel members to review how foster carers are recruited and how the Panel carries out its work. Arrangements were being made for some young people to undertake a Connexions course in recruitment, so that they could be involved in the recruitment of staff;
- There is a national Children and Young Peoples Forum and in October 2004 FCA held a national Young People's Conference that focussed on young people moving on.

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?****2**

FCA(NE) had established links with the local health services and, in particular, good links with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health services. The promotion of young people's health and development was taken seriously. However, a higher priority needs to be given to ensuring that information about young peoples' health needs and history is obtained quickly and passed to the foster carer.

FCA (NE) makes clear its expectations of foster carers in respect of their role in helping to promote the health of children in their care. Foster carers maintained records of the health care needs and treatment of the children placed with them. Those interviewed were clear regarding their responsibilities in respect of meeting the health care needs of children. Training in health and hygiene issues, as well as first aid, is available to foster carers and the 'core curriculum' for approved carers included a two-day course 'Promoting and Safeguarding the Health and Development of Children and Young People'.

Foster carers spoken to valued the therapy service provided by the Agency. However, there was evidence that the more could be done to inform carers and social workers about what the Therapy Team had to offer. This may lead to the team being involved at an earlier stage in placements that may disrupt.

There were delays in the Agency obtaining the appropriate Looked After Children documentation from placing authorities in respect of some children. One carer interviewed said that they were still waiting for medical histories for two children placed with them. One of these children had been in their care for 8 months. Arrangements were in place for 'Health Passports' to be maintained for each young person placed with the Agency.

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**

Education is actively promoted by the Agency and children and young people were supported to develop and achieve. Of the 123 children and young people who were of compulsory school/college age 119 (98%) had established school/college placements.

The Agency has an Education Team that, in collaboration with foster carers, has the role of supporting children to meet their educational needs. Additional support is available from the Resource Team when needed. Education Support workers focus on preventative work, providing support in school if there are difficulties, as well as outreach support with an educational component to young people who are not at school. The Team also provides booster classes for young people who have been identified as underachieving. All of the foster carers spoken to valued the service provided by the Education Team.

The Agency was working with an scheme to provide young people not at school with the opportunity of gaining qualifications which gave more focus to the home based work

undertaken by these young people. The Agency also has its own educational award scheme for young people who have either done well, or put in lot of effort at school.

A one-day course for carers on Education is included in the core curriculum for carers. The Carers Handbook specifies the foster carers role in relation to meeting the educational needs of the children placed with them.

Where placements are planned the Senior Education Liaison Officer is usually consulted regarding the suitability of a proposed placement in order to ensure that the child's needs could be met, particularly if they have special educational needs. However, there was evidence this did not happen for one young person and that this had lead to difficulties in arranging an appropriate assessment for them.

Although Personal Education Plans (PEP) were not in place for each young person there was evidence that action had been taken by the Senior ELO to address this matter. It was agreed that the Agency would prepare and implement a policy on the use of taxis to transport children and young people and that this would cover the arrangements that would be put in place to safeguard them.

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 Agency supports and prepares young people for leaving care.

The Agency had clear expectations regarding the role of foster carers in preparing young people for adulthood. The training programme for foster carers included a course on preparing young people for leaving care. FCA recently organised a national conference for young people that focussed on leaving care. Although the Agency had only had a small number of care leavers, there was evidence that young people were consulted about their future and encouraged to become actively involved in the decision making process. The Director advised that one of the strong messages from young people who attended the conference was that planning for leaving care needed to be started as soon as possible and, that this had been taken on board by the Agency. FCA(NE) social workers and the Resource Team were preparing a programme for care leavers that involved the provision of an 'after care' service.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There were clear written recruitment and selection procedures in place for appointing staff. However, appropriate checks were not always being carried out.

There was evidence that:

- Staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of foster care;
- Staff were interviewed prior to being appointed. However, although two written references were usually obtained, telephone enquiries were only being made to follow up one reference. In one file there was no evidence that either reference had been followed up. For 5 staff there was only 1 written reference on file;
- For one member of staff there was no recorded evidence that verification had been sought as to why their previous position working with children had ended. Their application form only detailed their previous employment history in years. This makes identifying any gaps in employment, and obtaining a satisfactory written explanation of them, more difficult;
- All staff had had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. However, in some instances this had been carried out in their previous employment. A fresh CRB disclosure application must be made for all new staff recruited;
- The social workers and other professional staff employed by the fostering service were appropriately qualified and experienced. However, documentary evidence of qualifications was not available in some of the personnel files. None of the files examined contained a recent photograph of the member of staff;
- Two foster carers police checks had not been renewed within three years.

Total number of staff of the agency:

47

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

There was evidence that:

- A management structure was in place with clear lines of accountability;
- Staff were managed and monitored by people with appropriate skills and qualifications;
- Workloads of staff were monitored and reviewed – the Agency aims to recruit a additional supervising social worker and resource worker for every 10 new foster carers;
- Systems were in place for the assessment, approval and review of carers;
- Social work staff and full time resource workers received regular supervision;
- Staff and carers have the opportunity to undertake on going training and appropriate professional development. Carers maintained a training portfolio;
- There was an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support;
- The Agency had access to 'in-house' educational, medical and legal advice.

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?****4**

In order to provide an effective service the Agency recruits a range of foster carers and had suitable arrangements in place to ensure that it has an adequate number of experienced and qualified staff.

The Agency had 100 foster families who provided a range of placements that included: short and long term placements as well as parent and child placements. The Agency's draft Business Plan for 2005 included plans to set up an emergency placement scheme as well as specific targets in relation to the recruitment of new foster carers particularly for children over 12. There were clear procedures in place regarding the assessment of foster carers. The Fostering Panel was thorough in monitoring the quality of these assessments. Suitable arrangements appeared to be in place to monitor staffing levels and workloads. Additional staff had been recruited as the Agency grew and workloads increased. Staff were also employed on a sessional basis when needed. Arrangements were in place to encourage the retention of salaried staff and foster carers.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

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

The Agency provides good support to its staff and foster carers.

Newly appointed staff receive an employment contract, a statement of terms and conditions and a job description as well as copies of FCA's disciplinary and grievance policies. Carers are required to complete a Foster Carer Agreement and are provided with copies of the Agency's Whistle Blowing and Complaints and Representations Procedures. Staff and carers confirmed that they were aware of these policies. FCA (NE) provide an out of office hours 'on call' service. In addition, arrangements were in place to introduce a national duty social worker response service.

Systems were in place for the regular supervision and support of carers. It is the Agency's policy that carers receive fortnightly support visits when children are in placement, although these may be monthly if the carers have established, long term placements. Carers interviewed confirmed that support visits could be more often when needed.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

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

The Agency supported staff to access training for their personal and professional development.

It was noted that:

- An appraisal system was in place for staff. Supervision sessions and annual appraisals identified staff training and development needs. However, it was noted that there had been delays in carrying out some appraisals. It was agreed that action would be taken to resolve this matter;
- Joint training between fostering staff and foster carers took place;
- Induction training for all staff included one day's training at the national headquarters. A 2 week induction programme was in place for social work staff;
- Social work staff had access to PQ1 training and resource workers could undertake NVQ 3 training;
- FCA(NE) obtained the 'Investors In People' award in 2002.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Suitable arrangements were in place to support staff and ensure that they were clear regarding their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>There was evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are provided with a copy of the job description for their post which details their duties and responsibilities; • Staff had access to the policies and procedures for the Service. Copies were available in the office; • In addition to regular team meetings, weekly placement meetings were held; • All staff, including administrative staff and resource workers, received formal supervision. However, there were differences in the frequency and regularity of supervision sessions, particularly for senior staff. • Records were maintained of the content of the supervision and there was a set agenda for supervision sessions; • A system of annual appraisals was in place. 		

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?	4
<p>The Agency had a clear strategy in place for working with, and supporting, carers.</p> <p>Supervising social workers and carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. Annual reviews of carers were being carried out. Only the first annual review report is presented automatically to the Panel, subsequent reports are presented to the Panel only if there is an identified need to do so. Reviews are usually held at one of the Agency's offices. The foster carer, supervising social worker, placing authority social worker and young person being fostered are asked to complete a form requesting their views about the placement. Arrangements were in place to provide foster carers with up to 3 weeks respite care a year. Foster carer support groups were held regularly in each of the sub-offices of the Agency. Those individual carers who were interviewed were satisfied with the support they received from the Agency. This was also reflected in the feedback received at the Carers Support Group meetings. 31 of the 36 carers who completed a questionnaire indicated that they were 'very satisfied' with the level of support they received, 3 indicated 'quite well' and 1 'ok'.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

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

The Agency provides foster carers with a good level of support and supervision as well as opportunities to develop their skills and experience.

The FCA (NE) Foster Care Agreement is well written and contained detailed information for carers regarding what the Agency expects of them and what they can expect from the Agency. Foster carers received appropriate support from social workers and had access to other professional support – including the Agency's Therapy and Education Teams. The draft 2005 Business Plan included plans to employ a health professional to provide training and support to carers and children. There was evidence that supervising social workers carried out unannounced visits to foster carers homes.

All Foster Carers are provided with a detailed and comprehensive Carers Handbook that is kept under review. There was a package of practical support available for carers that included membership of Fostering Network, 21 days paid respite per year and public liability insurance cover. The Carers Handbook included information complaints, representations and allegations. Records of Complaints and Allegations were being maintained.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

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

The Agency provided foster carers with a good range of opportunities to develop their skills and experience.

Prospective foster carers are provided with pre-approval and induction training. Those with no previous experience also receive 'Impact Training'. This involves a prospective carer being mentored by an experienced carer for approximately three months. The Agency's 'Equal Opportunities Policy' included a commitment to provide all training within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice and there was evidence that this was implemented. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they are encouraged to attend training and that the timing of training and the venues were satisfactory. Child-care and expenses are provided where required.

A programme of post approval training and development for carers was in place. This included a core curriculum that all carers are expected to complete. The training programme is evaluated and reviewed annually. FCA also encourages carers to undertake NVQ Level 3 training. The annual reviews of fosters carers includes consideration of their training needs. Experienced carers who have completed the core training are encouraged to develop their own training pathways in consultation with their supervising social worker. Records indicated that 2 of the carers who were 'case tracked' had not attended any training during the previous 12 months.

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?

3

It was noted that:

- Case records were in place for each child and these were stored securely. Some foster carers recorded information about the children placed with them in a diary rather than the Agency's record sheets and some files did not have copies of the foster carers records. It was agreed that this matter would be addressed;
- Arrangements were in place for the transference of relevant information regarding a child to the responsible authority as and when required. However, the social worker for one child indicated that they were not being informed of significant events or receiving regular written updates about the child, as had been agreed;
- Foster carer preparation training included a session on recording and post approval training included the course 'Helping the Child Make Sense of their Past';
- The Agency's Standards of Practice for carers requires carers to keep information on children placed with them confidential and secure. There was evidence that this expectation was being complied with;
- The relevant LAC documentation was not in place in all of the files examined. The Agency needed to be more active in trying to ensure that the relevant documentation is in place.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Separate records were in place in respect of staff, carers and children. Arrangements were in place to monitor the quality of these records. Confidential records were securely stored in lockable cupboards. Arrangements were also in place to ensure that information held on computers was also secure. The Carers Handbook included guidance on how carers can access their files. A Children's Register and a Register of Foster Carers were in place. Central records were kept of complaints and allegations. The complaints record format had been revised to ensure that all the relevant information is recorded. It was agreed that separate records of accidents and allegations would be maintained. To facilitate monitoring, these records would benefit from being kept in chronological rather than alphabetical order.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			151
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:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- **The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.**

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used by the Service consisted of sub-offices in Alnwick, Seaton Burn, Darlington, Middlesbrough and the head office in Newcastle upon Tyne. Access arrangements were appropriate with the exception that disabled access was not available in the Darlington and Newcastle offices. Apart from the Seaton Burn office, where there was no designated room for carrying out work with children, each of the offices had space for therapeutic and educational work. Security measures were in place in respect of the safe storage of confidential information and the information retained on the computer system. The Agency appeared to be suitably equipped with office equipment and IT systems. The draft Business Plan for 2005 included plans to provide all therapy staff with computers.

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?

0

Not assessed. This standard was assessed earlier in 2004, as part of the registration of the responsible individual for the organisation by the relevant Area Office of the Commission.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All financial records were kept centrally at the FCA national head office. There was evidence that the Finance Section based at the head office was staffed by an appropriately qualified and experienced team. There was also evidence that the Agency was financially viable. Monthly accounts are produced. The Agency's budgets are monitored on a monthly basis by the Board of Directors of FCA and an accountant. The corporate FCA Brochure contained a statement of its charges for each type of placement as well as a breakdown of charges for additional services such as supervised contact.

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?

4

The Foster Carers Handbook contained clear guidance on the Agency's fostering allowances, payments and expenses and this included details of the frequency and method of payment. Foster carers receive an annual summary of fees and allowances. Each of the foster carers interviewed confirmed that payments were made promptly. This was also confirmed by those carers who were at the support group meetings attended by an Inspector.

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?

4

The Agency's 'Fostering Panel Operational Procedures' cover those matters referred to in Standard 30. CRB checks were carried out on panel members. The Panel Manager's role included ensuring that assessments of prospective carers were carried out satisfactorily and were fed through to the panel in an efficient manner. The Panel addressed its quality assurance function and undertook a thorough consideration of the assessments/annual reviews presented to it. Arrangements had been put in place to ensure that the reports presented at panel were made available to panel members within the specified timescales. Panel members were observed to be well prepared and a structured decision making process was evident. Plans were in place for the FCA Quality Assurance Team to provide training to Panel members.

The minutes of the Panel meetings should clearly identify the reasons why changes to a carer's approval status had been granted. Consideration should also be given to providing the Panel with regular reports regarding unplanned endings of placements and the outcomes of foster carers reviews. This would inform the assessment and review process.

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?	9
Not applicable.		

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 December 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

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 16 May 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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>

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, Mr M J S Cockburn of Foster Care Associates Limited (Foster Care Associates North East) 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	_____

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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