



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Child Focus Fostering Agency

**2-4 Balmoral Road
Leyton
London
E10 5ND**

Lead Inspector
Mrs Angela Grier

Announced Inspection
30th October 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Child Focus Fostering Agency
Address	2-4 Balmoral Road Leyton London E10 5ND
Telephone number	020 8518 7896
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Child Focus Fostering Agency
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Jacqueline Anne Lawrence
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 12th September 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Child Focus Fostering Agency is an independent agency providing foster care for children and young people up to the age of eighteen. The placements are diverse and wide ranging from babies to young adults. The agency's offices are based in Leyton and are within easy access or transport links.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This inspection began at the offices of Child Focus Fostering Agency on 30th October 2006. Preparation work for the inspection including visiting the local CSCI offices in Ilford took place on 23rd October. Prior to the inspection the inspector attended a foster carer support group on the afternoon of 27th October. The Panel met on the evening of the first day of the inspection and the inspector interviewed the chair of the panel. Inspection activity including meeting and interviewing staff and reading files took place in the agency offices on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th November. Visits to the homes of four foster carers took place on 6th and 7th November. A date for feedback was arranged with the agency for 24th November but the appointment was cancelled due to illness and re arranged for 14th December.

The agency had two inspections in 2005. The inspector discussed the action plans submitted since the last inspection and identified two outstanding requirements which have been repeated in this report with a new timescale.

From this inspection there are 15 new requirements in this report and 4 new recommendations. Four recommendations have been repeated from the last inspection. Many of the requirements concern the working of the panel and the contents of the Form F assessment. Although changes have been made to the Panel format further external training for the chair and panel members would ensure decisions are taken with all the information about the applicants in place.

Policies and procedures seen during the course of the inspection must be reviewed to ensure that they are clear and easily understood by staff and carers and looked after children.

During the course of the inspection sensitive information about a carer who had resigned from the agency was given to the principal officer. He shared this with the inspector and agreed to let the inspector know the outcome of his enquiries. The inspector interviewed the carer as part of the case tracking process. This will be followed up in later inspections.

All staff within the agency cooperated fully with the inspection process.

What the service does well:

The service has made considerable efforts to meet the requirements from the last two inspections which took place in 2005.

The service has been in regular contact with the Commission to update action plans.

Foster carers confirmed that they receive regular contact from the service and understand that there is support available out of hours.

New applicants are invited to attend the panel when their application is heard. Guides for children and young people have been produced which are more child friendly.

What has improved since the last inspection?

There is a new panel which is working to improve their role and function within the agency. The training has been provided in house by the manager and staff, the chair of the panel has identified BAAF training for herself due to take place in 2007.

The manager has made strenuous efforts to obtain medical consent for children and young people in placement and will continue this process. Children and young people are now registered with local health services. Health and safety checks on the homes of foster carers take place on a regular basis and are documented.

The service has tried to engage children and young people providing an activity for young people during the half term holiday. The service provides support groups for carers which appears to be well attended and enjoyed by carers.

The inspector identified the need for a fire risk assessment for the building and this request was immediately implemented by the principal officer during the course of the inspection. The recommendations from the fire service will be forwarded to the commission with a response from the agency.

What they could do better:

The service has made improvements to the panel process but there is still much to be done.

The presentation of an assessment to panel must only take place once all the checks have been returned. Responses by referees were handwritten and not clear. The panel did not check on the accommodation for a foster child and ensure that children of the family would not be disadvantaged by the arrival of a looked after child. The assessment must ensure that applicants have completed any legal matters such as divorce, residence orders etc before becoming foster carers. The competences completed as part of the assessment were not detailed enough and consisted of recommendations for further training. More information must be provided within the competences regarding the ability of the carers to meet certain situations. Training of the social worker with responsibility for the assessments should be forthcoming. Panel provide a blanket approval of applicants for all the fostering tasks, this may not be appropriate for all applicants.

The role and function of back up carers needs to be addressed and if they are to be used on a regular basis written consent must be obtained from the placing authority.

Foster care allowances have not been increased for the last two years [2005,2006] although the agency has increased their fees to local authorities. There needs to be a transparent system of payments to carers including any discounts negotiated with the local authority on an individual basis. The policies and procedures referred to in this report need to be reviewed and written in a clear and concise way to ensure that foster carers and staff can follow them.

The service provides mainly in house training to foster carers on a regular basis but does not have an evaluation process to know what training works and what does not. The service should consider using outside agencies for training and providing each foster carer and each member of staff with a personal training development plan.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The quality judgement for this outcome is adequate. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered during the inspection. The agency promotes the health of children and young people placed with foster carers and enables them to access the health services.

EVIDENCE:

The agency promotes the health of the foster children by ensuring that all children have access to health care when they are placed with their foster carers. There was evidence on the files seen by the inspector and from interviews with foster carers that every effort is made to obtain consent to medical treatment when a child is placed. The manager confirmed that the agency had audited their files and had sent letters to the placing authorities to obtain suitable consent in June 2006 but this had not been followed up since that date. There was evidence that the agency social workers supported carers to register children with the health services when they were placed. However on one file seen by the inspector as part of case tracking a child with special needs had information that they were registered with a GP and a dentist but had no information on the outcomes of any appointments or visits.

The manager told the inspector that the agency plans to develop Health passports in the new year for all young people. The inspector recommended that any changes to records should also incorporate the reference to the competence of young people to refuse to accept medical treatment.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

6,8,9,15,30

The quality judgement from these outcomes is poor. This judgement has been evidenced from the inspection process, reading the relevant documentation and attendance at the foster care panel.

The agency must review the policies and procedures to protect children to ensure that the matching and placement of children and young people is with suitably approved carers in a safe environment.

EVIDENCE:

At the last inspection the acting manager was undergoing the registration process. This has been finalised and she is now the registered manager of the agency.

Following incidents last year the agency now has a more robust health and safety procedure with supervising social workers regularly checking on the homes of the carers when they visit. However in one of the Form F's presented to Panel the health and safety checklist noted that safety locks would be fitted if a child under 5 years was placed. Decisions regarding health and safety matters must be implemented within a clear timescale, and the date of the changes noted in the health and safety report. It should not depend upon a child being in placement. The registered provider must ensure that all the requirements of a health and safety assessment are in place before a child is placed.

All referrals to the agency are taken by the manager or, the principal officer. They decide which carers may be suitable for the child and contact the carer to advise them and seek their agreement to a possible placement. There is a vacancy board in the manager's office with details of the carers who are available. The inspector saw on the file of a carer who had two young children placed with her in February 2006 and who was selected to care for a new baby in June 2006. The carer did not have the correct approval rating but was instructed to buy clothes and equipment for the placement. The placement ultimately did not take place but the matching process did not take into account the needs of the existing children placed one of whom has special needs. Another example of the problems of this selection process is where a carer had decided to leave the agency and move to another agency. Correspondence took place about this decision and the carer had agreed to return to the agency on the understanding that she would be taking work outside of the agency. Two very young children were placed with the carer who had no equipment, and had to leave the children with a support carer the next day to shop for the necessary equipment. The principal officer explained to the inspector that in this recent case two carers were considered but the carer chosen was nearer to the placing authority. The process of leaving the agency had begun twice before and stopped when the carer changed her mind. Consideration should have been given to how stable this placement would be with a carer who was clearly stating that she was pursuing another career.

Details of the carers selected are given to the placing authority who will select the carer best suited to the requirements of the child they wish to place. Thus the matching process is determined by the placing authority who have all the information on the child. The manager stated that many of their referrals are often emergency placements. The inspector was shown three separate policies for the referral and admission of looked after children. The referral policy refers to emergency admissions but is not clear and must be reviewed. The admission policy and guidelines were also not clearly written and must be reviewed. A requirement has been made in another part of this report to review policies and procedures to ensure they are clear and enable staff and carers to understand the process. The registered provider must ensure that carers who are matched to referrals are within their approval range, have all the equipment they need to welcome a child into their homes prior to placement and that the carer has no other commitments that may mean another move for a child.

Information from the foster carer questionnaires indicated that issues around equality and diversity were discussed in training sessions and with individual carers when children were placed.

The manager told the inspector that she had previously worked for the NSPCC and used their training packs with carers and staff. She had not liaised with the local authority Waltham Forest to ensure that the child protection procedures for the agency were in line with the host authority. The inspector

recommended that to update their current practice staff should seek out child protection training courses run by their local authority.

Since the last inspection Key Planning /Key Protection and risk assessments have been implemented. These documents were on the files seen by the inspector but a risk assessment of a young person with a history of recent serious behaviour problems was not in the possession of the foster carer visited by the inspector. The foster carer confirmed that she knew of these serious incidents when the young person was placed but did not have a copy of the risk assessment. The inspector discussed the actual risk assessment process with the manager as the level of risk for some behaviours appeared to be scored on a low/medium rating and in the opinion of the inspector these should have rated a higher level of concern. The inspector was advised that risk assessments are reviewed regularly by the manager in supervision with staff. The responsible individual must ensure that further training in the completion of risk assessment should be undertaken by all staff to enable a consistent approach to the outcome of risk assessments and ensure that copies are given to foster carers. The safe caring policy seen by the inspector concentrated on complaints and allegations against carers and how this could be avoided. The policy places more responsibility on the carer to choose suitable 'child sitters' or 'stand in' carers when this should be the responsibility of the agency when they accept a placement of a child. More work needs to be done to ensure that each carer has a safe caring policy designed to fit in with their family life. The Form F seen by the inspector at the panel does not indicate that a safe caring policy has been devised with the applicants only that they are aware of the need for a safe caring policy. The registered provider must ensure that the agency reviews all safe caring policies and procedures and that supervising social workers support carers to devise their own safe caring policy which can be shared with each child placed in the home.

The Anti Bullying policy seen by the inspector was confusing and contained information concerning the disclosure of sexual abuse. Anti Bullying information is also noted in the young people's guides. The responsible individual must ensure that all policies and procedures clearly deal with the process and can be easily understood by staff and carers.

The last inspection report acknowledged that there were two unqualified foster carer supervisors supporting foster carers in their day to day tasks and taking an active part in the training and supervision of carers and the children they care for. The inspector discussed this matter with the two foster carer supervisors, the manager and the principal officer and read the two staff files. The person specification for this post seen on the two staff files indicate that 'a Diploma in Social Work or 'equivalent' is Essential. The job description describes 'working under the supervision of a qualified social worker'. Both workers have been undertaking NVQ 4 in Children and Young People but do not have any other formal qualifications. The manager assured the inspector that both workers are properly supervised and the inspector saw evidence of their

supervision sessions. There is a repeat requirement from the last inspection report which requires that the responsible individual must ensure that job descriptions accurately reflect the roles and the lines of responsibility. Contracts seen on the staff files do not indicate a salary for staff. The principal officer confirmed that this is the standard contract for the agency.

Both foster carer supervisors are included on the Out of Hours rota as the first point of call and the backup manager is one of the supervising social workers. The Emergency On call Policy guidelines state that a Senior Manager will be on call to assist the supervising social worker or foster carer supervisor. This policy also indicates that the foster carer supervisors may need to make an immediate home visit. A senior manager must be the back up on this rota if unqualified workers are required to make an emergency assessment. The inspector saw two staff files for new staff, one member of staff has not worked in this country and one member of staff did not appear to have a background in fostering. The agency will need to review their supervision policy to ensure that inexperienced staff receive the all the necessary supervision they need to acquire the skills need to support carers and children. The responsible individual must ensure that new staff are provided with all necessary support to complete their probationary period satisfactorily. The responsible individual must ensure that unqualified staff do not be cover the out of hours support rota as unqualified workers would not be in a position to make speedy decisions without referring to a manager and this may cause unnecessary delay in providing help to either carers or foster children.

The inspector read the minutes of the two previous panel meetings and attended panel on the first day of the inspection.

Serious concerns regarding the functioning of the panel had been identified in the last inspection. The agency has made changes to the Panel and the panel process which have improved the functioning of the panel.

The Chair of the Panel was a member of the previous Panel and is a foster carer for another agency. The chair of the Panel was appointed in September 2006 and was interviewed by the inspector. She confirmed that the new Panel had received training from the manager of the agency and that she had requested to access the BAAF Panel training in April 2007. She was clear about the role of the agency's decision maker – the Principal Officer and she will minute her concerns regarding any panel business to the manager or the Principal Officer. The minute taker works for the umbrella organisation Sherico Homes.

The inspector expressed her concern regarding the open ended approval process where applicants are approved for the whole range of fostering experiences, for example all applicants are approved as short term, long term, respite, pre adoption, parent and baby often in the 0-18 years age range with the presenting social worker acknowledging the applicants 'preference' [if any] for a certain age range. The ages of any children of the family do not appear to be considered. The chair agreed that this was the usual procedure for the panel and that it relied on the Form F and the social worker presenting the family. The inspector recommends that this procedure be reviewed in the light

of the comments made elsewhere in the report regarding health and safety checks and safe caring policies.

The panel procedure is appropriate, it allows all members of the panel to discuss each application and list questions to be asked of the presenting social worker and the applicants. During the course of the panel some of the questions or concerns raised were not followed through. Information on the Form F was not always accurate and up to date and outcomes to the competences were generally to be covered by further training. Where there appeared to be a lack of knowledge on behalf of the applicant the panel felt this would be overcome by the training provided by the agency. In some cases checks were still outstanding and legal issues such as divorce or immigration status had not been finalised. There is one social worker who is responsible for the recruitment of new carers and although qualified this person does not have the experience of assessment through the Form F process and agreed that training would be helpful. The assessments are passed by the manager before being submitted to Panel but there were still outstanding checks awaited and an expectation that these papers will be passed by the panel chair at some later date. After the panel the completed Form F is passed to the manager who will make any amendments to the text requested by the panel. This means that the wording of the Form F signed by the applicants and the social worker may be changed after the panel has considered the application and by the manager who has not attended the panel. It was not clear to the inspector or the chair of panel whether any changes to the text are advised to the applicants. This process should be reviewed to ensure that applicants know exactly what was written about them. The panel spent a great deal of time discussing the strengths/weaknesses of the applicants as future carers but little time considering how they could support children and young people are looked after. As in the previous inspection the panel failed to consider how the accommodation in the applicant's home would be suitable for a fostered child and whether the arrival of a foster child would impinge on the living arrangements for the applicant's children. The responsible individual must ensure that the panel only recommends approval of foster carers based on full information provided from the assessment process.

On the panel agenda attended by the inspector there was information about a complaint against a foster carer. The panel were unclear about the reasons for this case to be heard. The panel questioned whether they were monitoring an outcome of the complaint or monitoring the supervising social worker's work. The chair requested that the case be brought back to the next panel with answers to those questions. The inspector observed that the panel did not appear to agree on their role of overseeing the work of the agency when there was a complaint.

The panel does not perform a quality assurance role for the agency. The manager provided the inspector with an update of the panel including the requirements from the last inspection. The manager provided training to the

new panel which was considered by panel to be very helpful. The feedback from this inspection will repeat the need for the panel to keep to time for each case and if necessary reduce the agenda to enable the panel to finish at a reasonable time, to ensure that all paperwork sent out is complete, with all checks signed and dated and that the issues raised in the discussion of the case are properly answered. The responsible individual must ensure that the panel works with the agency to provide a quality assurance role on the work of the agency. The commission wishes to be advised when a replacement for the agency's supervising social worker who is now on maternity leave is agreed.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7,13

The quality judgement for this outcome is adequate. This judgment is based on evidence from the inspection process, the foster carer questionnaires and visits to foster carers in their homes.

The agency promotes and supports foster carers to enable children and young people to take advantage of the educational services in their placements. The training of foster carers recognises the diversity of children who are placed in foster care.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has a range of carers recruited from a wide variety of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The information on the foster carer questionnaires indicates that carers have been trained and understand the need to provide care to children which recognises and accepts their diverse backgrounds.

Education is promoted and supported by the carers. One carer visited by the inspector undertook two long journeys a day to keep the foster children in their last school while long term plans were being drawn up by their placing authority. Responses from the young people's questionnaires indicated that they receive support from their carers to continue their education. One carer visited by the inspector was supporting the foster child to make a complaint to the placing authority because schooling had not been put in place.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10.11.

The judgement for this outcome is adequate. The judgment is based on information from questionnaires from the foster carers, young people and the agency.

The agency has attempted to reach out to foster children to obtain their views and provide additional support to enable contact and consultation to take place.

EVIDENCE:

Contact between children and their families was supported by the carers and young people and their response to the questionnaires confirmed this. The agency states that training in contact arrangements is provided to carers. The inspector did not see this training package. Visits by the supervising social workers are expected to document any contact they have with the children in placement and this information is kept in the children's files.

This inspection took place at the end of half term and an ice skating trip had been arranged by the agency during the holiday for foster children. A trip to the local fire station was also arranged to promote health and safety issues. The manager told the inspector that a social work student working in the agency will review how the agency can reach out to children.

The new children and young people's guides seen by the inspector advise that complaints can be made but in the guide for the youngest age group the information was not age appropriate and the illustration related to pocket money rather than complaints, when these leaflets are reprinted this can be addressed.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

29

The judgement for this outcome is poor. The judgement is based on the policies provided by the agency, the foster carer files and a foster carer visit. The agency must ensure that foster carers have a clear understanding of their payments and any amendments to payments as part of their agreement to accept a child into their home.

EVIDENCE:

The agency is part of the Pan London consortium and advises the consortium of any increase in fees. The inspector saw evidence that the agency had increased its fees this year.

The principal officer confirmed that the foster carers allowance had been frozen since 2005. Foster carers are paid weekly and have a breakdown of their allowances in order to ensure that children receive the agreed amounts clothing and pocket money allowance. One carer was concerned that her allowance was reduced without warning because after she had accepted a sibling group. When she complained she was advised that the agency had provided the placing authority with a discount because a sibling group had been placed. The inspector requested details of this policy from the principal officer and was shown an email response to the local authority agreeing a reduction to the local authority. The financial process policy seen by the inspector states that 'each foster carer will receive a breakdown of the fees and an agreement for each foster child. This is to clarify the payment structure and the amount of fees due'. There was no information given in this policy that indicates that the standard foster carer fees may be discounted at the request of a placing authority and that this discount would be passed on to the foster carer.

The responsible individual must ensure that there is complete transparency in all communications with foster carers regarding any alteration to their allowance and include any such changes in the foster care agreement.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

17,21,24,26,22,23,1,16

The judgement for these outcomes is adequate. The judgement is based on the inspection documentation, visits to foster carers and the review of policies provided by the agency.

The agency must continue to build on the improvements in the support it provides to foster carers and to looked after children, policies and procedures must be scrutinised to ensure that children and young people receive support at all times from qualified staff and carers who are properly trained.

EVIDENCE:

The statement of purpose has been reviewed but changes will need to be made regarding the maternity leave for one member of staff and the dates for the completion of the outstanding NVQ 4 course to be completed by the foster care supervisors. A new member of staff is in the process of recruitment and will need to be included in the staff profile if successful. The agency has identified the need to target recruitment of certain carers to increase their range of carers representing the local community. The manager provides an overview of all the social work activity in the agency. The inspector recommends that the statement of purpose be updated and a copy of the document should be sent to the Commission.

The agency places a great deal of emphasis on the continued training of staff and foster carers. However much of the training is provided is 'in house' and is not evaluated properly. The training sessions are usually followed by foster carers meeting as a support group. The inspector attended a support group session and spoke to carers as a group. The inspector asked for a copy of the training handouts but none were available. Training is referred to in all the panel decisions as being the answer to improving the knowledge of foster carers but since there is no evaluation of each training session and it is not followed through in supervising social worker visits it is not clear how much the carers benefit from the sharing of information or whether they enjoy the networking provided by the support group. The manager told the inspector that there were no development plans kept in the foster carer files. The manager stated that she was developing a strategy to plan for the future training needs of foster carers. The previous inspection report commented on the need for specialist training to be provided by outside agencies and this recommendation will be repeated in this report.

The inspector discussed the foster care agreement with the manager and identified areas which need attention. The registered provider must ensure that the foster care agreement is reviewed to comply with Schedule 5 of the regulations. During the inspection the agency was notified by another independent fostering agency that a CRB check from a carer's relative had disclosed sensitive information which had not been disclosed to the CFFA. The inspector case tracked this carer and interviewed the carer and the manager and principal officer. The principal officer advised the inspector that he would investigate this matter and had made an appointment to see the carer after the inspection had finished. The Commission wishes to be advised of the outcome of the enquiries undertaken by the agency. The inspector saw the de-registration of foster carers procedures which requests the foster carer to write into the agency if they wish to resign. It does not indicate how the agency will respond or whether the information will be shared with the panel or whether this decision will trigger a foster carer review. The responsible individual must

ensure that there is a robust policy for carers who wish to leave the agency and to ensure that this is included in the foster care agreement.

There was evidence that carers are supported by the agency. However the wording of policies such as the Admissions policy which forms part of the referral and placement process seen by the inspector leave a great deal of responsibility to be negotiated by the carers directly with the placing social worker. The agency needs to ensure that a supervising social worker monitors and supports the carer from the moment a placement is agreed. This would ensure that the carer has all the equipment/ finance necessary to support a child.

The policy on support carers is not clear and confuses minimal support for example caring for a looked after child whilst the foster carer has a hospital appointment with placements which could last up to two weeks and would be respite care. The statement of purpose does not include any reference to the use of back up carers. The inspector saw the training policy for back up carers which assumes that support carers have as much understanding of the fostering process as approved carers who have attended the preparation training. There is no clear policy on who would pay a support carer and whether the placing authority is formally notified. The responsible individual must ensure that the agency has a comprehensive policy and procedure for the use of back up carers and that this is agreed with the placing authority of a child.

The inspector saw the case files for five foster children and visited four foster carers in their own homes. There was evidence on the children's files that supervising social workers meet with the children when they are visiting the carers. Some reports seen were poorly recorded and some were not easy to read. There is a separate contact sheet for each visit or phone call which is making the files extremely bulky and heavy. When a placement ends the foster carer returns the information on the child to the agency.

The offices used by the agency are one part of two semi detached houses in a side road. The other half of the building is used to house the offices of Sherico Ltd. Entrance to the agency's office is through the main front door of the first house. On the ground floor of the second house are the offices of the agency, on the first floor are the manager's office, the office of the principal officer and a large room used for the training sessions and the panel meetings. On the day of the training and support group there were 13 carers and 2 staff in this room. The inspector asked the principal officer if there was a fire risk assessment for this building when it was used for group work. No risk assessment has been completed The responsible individual must provide a risk assessment on the safety of the building and forward details of this and any actions taken to the Commission.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	x
6	2
8	2
9	2
15	2
30	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	x

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	x
29	2

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	x
4	x
5	x
16	2
17	2
18	x
19	x
20	x
21	2
22	2
23	2
24	2
25	x
26	2
27	x
28	x
32	x

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? YES

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS8	34	The responsible individual must ensure that carers who are matched to referrals are within their approval range, have all the equipment they need to welcome a child into their homes prior to placement and that the carer has no other commitments that may mean another move for a child.	31/03/07
2.	FS9	42	The responsible individual must ensure that all policies and procedures clearly deal with the topic and can be easily understood by staff and carers.	31/03/07
3.	FS6	11(a)	The responsible individual must ensure that the foster carers health and safety assessments are comprehensive to ensure the safety of young people placed.	31/03/07
4.	FS15	19	The responsible individual must ensure that unqualified staff do not cover the out of hours support rota as unqualified workers would not be in a position to make speedy decisions without referring to a manager and this may cause unnecessary delay in providing	31/03/07

			help to either carers or foster children.	
5.	FS9	42	The responsible individual must ensure that the policy and procedure to combat bullying clearly deals with the process and can be easily understood by staff and carers.	31/03/07
6.	FS9	11	The responsible individual must ensure that further training in the completion of risk assessment should be undertaken by all staff to enable a consistent approach to the outcome of risk assessments and ensure that copies are given to foster carers.	31/03/07
7.	FS30	26	The responsible individual must ensure that the panel only recommends approval of foster carers based on full information provided from the assessment process.	31/03/07
8.	FS30	26	The responsible individual must ensure that the panel works with the agency to provide a quality assurance role on the work of the agency.	31/03/07
9.	FS29	28[5]	The responsible individual must ensure that there is complete transparency in all communications with foster carers regarding any alteration to their allowance and include any such changes in the foster care agreement.	31/03/07
10.	FS21	28[2][a]	The responsible individual must ensure that the agency has a comprehensive policy and procedure for the use of back up carers and that this is agreed with the placing authority of a child.	31/03/07
11.	FS22	28[5]	The registered provider must ensure that the foster care agreement is reviewed to comply with Schedule 5 of the regulations.	31/03/07

12.	FS4	26	The responsible individual must ensure that the panel meetings are focused and additional issues are not discussed with the carer's individual cases. This requirement is repeated from the last report with a new timescale.	31/03/07
13.	FS21	24	The responsible individual must ensure that the agency has a comprehensive policy and procedure for the use of back up carers and that this is agreed with the placing authority of a child.	31/03/07
14.	FS26	23	The responsible individual must provide a risk assessment on the safety of the building and forward details of this and any actions taken to the Commission.	31/03/07
15.	FS17	21	The responsible individual must ensure that new staff are provided with all necessary support and training to complete their probationary period satisfactorily and provide a service to foster carers.	31/03/07
16.	FS22	29	The responsible individual must ensure that there is a robust policy for carers who wish to leave the agency and to ensure that this is included in the foster care agreement.	31/03/07
17.	FS16	21.1	The responsible individual must ensure that the job descriptions accurately reflect roles and lines of accountability. This requirement is repeated from the last report with a new timescale.	31/03/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS4	The responsible individual should ensure that each aspect of the unqualified worker's work is monitored and verified by the supervising social worker.
2.	FS22	Development plans for carers should be developed highlighting clearly training needs.
3	FS23	The responsible individual should consider more external training as a matter of good practice.
4.	FS12	The responsible individual should continue to pursue the medical consent forms for children and young people.
5.	FS30	The responsible individual should reconsider with the panel the blanket approval process for applicants.
6.	FS23	The responsible individual should evaluate each training course provided to staff and foster carers as a matter of good practice.
7.	FS15	The responsible individual should devise a process for updating staff and foster carer CRB.
8.	FS1	The responsible individual should consider reviewing the statement of purpose to include details of the new staff and other changes.

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