

inspection report

Fostering Services

Kent Homefinding and Fostering Ltd

67 College Road

Maidstone

Kent

ME15 6SX

17th August 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

Kent Homefinding and Fostering Ltd

Tel No

01622 765646

Address

67 College Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6SX

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

H060000596

Name of Registered Provider

Mr Stephen Harry O'Brien

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mrs Jayne Charlton

Date of first registration

30th October 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

30th October 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

24/04/03

Date of Inspection Visit		17th August 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sophie Wood	108854
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Jayne Charlton	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the 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.
<p>The Home Finding and Fostering Agency seeks to provide both short and long term foster care placements for children and young people of all ages, throughout Kent, London and Sussex.</p> <p>A wide range of Carers are recruited in order that placements can be made, pertaining to the specific needs of the individual child, including; mother and baby placements, sibling groups and those with a history of enduring different forms of abuse.</p> <p>A particular strength of the Agency remains with its provision regarding 'Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minors' and to this end, Carers of African origin are specifically sought, as are those living in the Brighton region, with regards receiving children from Eastern Europe. The 'physical location' of Carers is 'key', in terms of placing young people close to their own particular Placing Authority and two members of the team are dedicated to working with this particular group of Carers.</p>

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This was the second announced inspection to be conducted under the auspices of the Care Standards Act 2000 and The Fostering Services Regulations 2001. A total of 30 standards were inspected, as the latter two, pertaining to 'Short – Term breaks' and 'Family and Friends as Carers' were not applicable.

It was very positive to note that the two requirements and three recommendations made from the previous inspection of 24/4/03 had been fully implemented and from this visit; 29 Standards were met, with two found to have exceeded the performance indicators, therefore receiving 'commendable scores'.

Over the course of the inspection process the inspector spent two days at the Agency's office. Four sets of Carers were randomly selected and each were chosen due to their different circumstances, location and registration approval categories; in order that the broad range of expertise within the Agency could be reflected throughout this report. The inspector studied all of the Carers' files, in order to case track the process from their initial application, assessment, registration, placement of children, and subsequent 'day to day' experiences of working for the Agency. Within this process, the files of all of the children currently placed with the Carers were also inspected; in order to examine referral details, the matching process, the current care plan and the ongoing plans for the future. Whilst at the office, the inspector spent time with the Directors, Manager and a selection of the staff team. It was also extremely helpful to meet with a parent who was having 'contact' and kindly offered his positive views about the Agency. Further time was spent inspecting numerous written records including; policies, procedures, staff personnel files, the complaints log, Panel meeting minutes and training records.

Additional information, used to complete this report was gathered from the Manager's Self Assessment, Agency Pre –Inspection questionnaire, and further questionnaires received from Carers, Placing Authorities and Young People.

Carers and young people were visited in their own homes and the inspector found their openness, honesty and willingness to cooperate with this process invaluable.

In addition, the inspector observed a Panel meeting whereby two assessments, three reviews and one request for a change to current registration were presented.

This proved to be a very positive inspection, greatly assisted by all of the personnel who took part. Below is a summary of the inspection findings, which are explained in greater detail throughout the main body of this report.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1):

As was required from last year's inspection, this document had been reviewed and amended. Clear detail was included to effectively describe the services offered by the Agency and the Young People spoken with confirmed they had received a Young Person's Guide upon joining the Agency. This Standard was met.

Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 –3):

Both of the Standards were inspected and both were met. The Directors and Registered Manager are qualified and experienced professionals who have very clear and specific roles within the Agency. A recommendation has been made with regards the Manager obtaining a 'management' qualification.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4 – 5):

Both of the Standards were inspected. One was found to have 'minor shortfalls' pertaining to the evidencing of 'monitoring' and a requirement has been made with regards implementing clear monitoring systems and forwarding a report to the Commission following any such review. Standard 5 was clearly met and Agency staff and Carers informed the inspector that they felt well supported and knew about own and others' responsibilities.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6 – 14):

All of the nine Standards were inspected and all were met. Clear policies and procedures were in place and being followed. Prospective Carers are subject to a rigorous recruitment and assessment process, as are new Agency staff. Training is provided with regards 'diversity' and 'equal opportunities' and Carers from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds are constantly being sought to reflect the referrals received for placements. Agency staff are clear about the initial referral process and a high number of those received do not reach the next stage, if the 'right' Carers haven't got a vacancy, demonstrating sound evidence of the Agency's regard for 'Matching'. Case tracking exercises demonstrated that every child placed was living with Carers who had the skills, experience and approval status to meet their individual needs. Agency staff and Carers were clear about the Agency's guidance pertaining to behaviour management and use of approved methods of discipline. The Agency has sound policies and procedures pertaining to 'contact' and employs a separate Contact Coordinator, whose services can be accessed by Placing Authorities. This provision was viewed by the inspector to be a particular strength of the Agency. Two thirds of Carers felt they had been consulted about the 'day to day' running of the Agency and Young People stated that their carers and Agency staff routinely asked for their own views and opinions about their care. Records indicated that Young People are well –supported with regards their own health and educational needs and the Standard pertaining to 'Preparing for Adulthood' received a commendable score.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15 – 23):

All of the nine Standards were inspected and all were met. A sound and robust recruitment procedure is in place and a perusal of staff records supported this. Agency staff and Carers work to clearly defined job descriptions and receive ongoing support, supervision and training, which is all clearly recorded and documented.

Records (Standards 24 – 25):

Both of the Standards were inspected and both were met. Case records are securely held at the office, with only key personnel having access to them. Administrative records are well – ordered and maintained. A recommendation has been made with regards Carers receiving explicit guidance upon using own home computers to store and send information pertaining to the child(ren) in their care.

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

This Standard was inspected and was clearly met. The office is large enough to comfortably accommodate all of the staff employed and further houses separate meeting rooms. The Manager has a separate office and confidential records are held in a separate, lockable

room.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 – 29):

All three Standards were inspected and all were met. Evidence was seen to support that the Agency continues to be 'financially viable' and secures the ongoing services of a registered accountant. Carers confirmed that they are always paid promptly.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30):

This Standard was inspected through the perusal of the Agency's policy and procedure with regards the role and function of the Panel, reading of previous Panel meeting minutes and attendance at a Panel meeting on 2/9/04. A recommendation was made with regards the provision of additional training for the members, in respect of the role and function of the Panel.

Short – Term Breaks (Standard 31):

This standard was not applicable.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32):

This standard was not applicable.

This was a very positive inspection, reflected by only one Statutory Requirement being made. The inspector wishes to thank all of those who took part and looks forward to receiving the Agency's Action Plan in due course.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

**Lead Regulatory
Inspector**

Sophie Wood

Signature



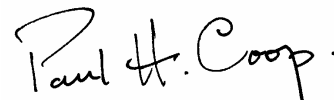
Second Inspector

Signature

**Regulation
Manager**

Paul Coop

Signature



Date

2/12/04

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	42(1)(a)(b) (2)	FS4	<p>The registered person shall establish and maintain a system for-</p> <p>(a) monitoring the matters as set out in Schedule 7 at appropriate intervals; and</p> <p>(b) improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person shall supply to the Commission a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1).</p>	Action plan to be received by CSCI by 10/1/05

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
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1	FS2	It is recommended that the Registered Manager seek to obtain a professional management qualification.
2	FS22	It is recommended that the Agency retain a signed copy of the Foster Carer's Agreement on file at the office.
3	FS24	It is recommended that the Agency provide clear and explicit guidance pertaining to the use of own computers by Carers when transcribing and sending information pertaining to the child(ren) in their care.
4	FS25	It is recommended that the complaints /allegations pro forma be reviewed, to include the timescale and specific outcome(s) of the investigation.
5		It is recommended that Panel members are provided with training pertinent to the role and function of this group.
6		It is recommended that records pertaining to complaints /allegations from young people about neglect / abuse are demonstrated to be regularly scrutinised and evaluated.
7		It is recommended that the Agency provide clear and detailed guidance for Carers with older children, pertaining to effective and approved sanctions.

* 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	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	17/8/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	39

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

Further to the requirement made from last year's inspection, the Statement of Purpose was reviewed on 6/3/03 and a revised document was forwarded to the CSCI.

The information included is consistent with the elements as listed under standard 1.4 and the nature and types of placements offered are accurately described.

Placing Agencies and parents are offered a copy upon request and the young people placed are provided with a 'Young Person's Guide' to the Agency, which is further verbally explained to them by Agency workers and their Carers.

From speaking with young people throughout the course of the inspection, it was positive to receive confirmation that they were indeed aware of the role and function of their Carers and more widely, the Agency itself.

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 Organisation boasts an experienced and knowledgeable management structure, with the Managing Director and Responsible Individual having been involved in childcare and social work for many years collectively.

The Registered Manager is a qualified Social Worker and prior to obtaining this qualification, already held NNEB and NAMCW Certificates.

The staff team interviewed voiced their confidence in the leadership style of the management team, which was further evidenced through rigorous supervision and appraisal meetings, details of which were seen.

Although the Responsible Individual has a management qualification, it is strongly recommended that the Registered Manager seek to obtain such, as well.

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

The Agency operates to clear and specific recruitment and vetting procedures.

It was positive to note that, following a recommendation made from the previous inspection; telephone verification of references are now being made regarding each new applicant.

Personnel records were sampled throughout the course of the inspection with regards Senior staff, Social Workers, Administrative personnel and Drivers. In all cases, original references were held and evidence of the recently introduced practice of telephone verification, was also seen.

The recruitment procedure of the Agency further requires sight of original proof of identification evidence and professional certificates; copies of which are retained and candidates are questioned with regards any gaps in their employment history.

The inspector was advised that Enhanced CRB checks are made with regards all candidates and evidence of this was seen within all of the files inspected.

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?

2

A clear Organisational structure is in place, detailing the roles and responsibilities of the Agency workers and Management team. Within this, lines of accountability are clear and both the Staff and Carers advised the inspector that they knew whom to refer to and when. There are clear 'deputising' arrangements to cover the absence of Senior staff and the Carers interviewed spoke positively of their relationships with their Link worker and all other Agency staff.

Regular financial audits continue and evidence was seen to support that Carers receive prompt and accurate payments, whilst Service Purchasers receive routine itemised statements.

Whilst some clear evidence was found to support the ongoing monitoring of the service; the Management team is reminded of the matters as listed under Schedule 7, Fostering Regulations 2002 and the 'Review of Quality of Care', as described under Regulation 42, with regards producing a report in respect of such monitoring and supplying a copy to the Commission.

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

4

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

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

The Manager has a clearly defined job description, as do all other agency employees, and she does not work for any other Organisation.

A designated, suitably qualified and experienced member of the team deputises in her absence and clear evidence was seen to support that the Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual work in unison with regards the overall management of the service.

The staff interviewed informed the inspector that they are positively supported and a perusal of supervision notes reinforced this statement.

Carers spoke positively with regards the frequency and content of the support visits received and stated that 'communication' is a particular strength of the Agency.

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

An inspection of documentation provided written evidence to confirm that Carers households are inspected in detail as part of the assessment and recruitment process, and again on an annual basis, with regards the 'health and safety' requirements of the Agency.

The inspector visited four separate households during the course of the inspection and although each of the homes offered very different types of accommodation; with regards size, style and physical location, it was evident that all of these 'individual' factors had been considered, in terms of suitability when placements were being considered.

All of the Carers confirmed the receipt of training and guidance with regards 'health and safety', which covered environmental hazards, own insurance needs and any equipment that may be required; for example, safety barriers and childproof locks on cupboards.

Carers' files held written documentation pertaining to own insurances and checks made by the Agency with regards the use of their own transport on behalf of children placed in their care.

All of the homes visited were clean; well –maintained and free from any obvious hazards.

Older, unrelated young people placed in the same household were provided with own bedrooms and a sibling group were sharing; in accordance with the agreement of all involved parties, and deemed as being in the best interests of the children concerned.

All of the Carers visited were fully aware of the inspection process. They, and in some cases, their children also, provided the inspector with detailed responses to the questions asked and are thanked for their honesty and helpful contributions.

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 continues to seek to recruit Carers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and training courses offered to Carers include; 'Valuing Diversity', 'Raising Awareness' and 'Unaccompanied Minors Legislation / Policies'.

Social Workers employed by the Agency confirmed that their own ongoing training provision covers areas including diversity and discrimination also.

The inspector noted that the Form F Assessments seen for the purposes of this inspection were comprehensively completed with regards this subject and where appropriate, recommendations had been made for some Carers to receive further training / guidance.

One single Carer was providing care to a child of mixed parentage, who also had complex care needs, including learning disabilities. It was therefore positive to find that an individually tailored training and introduction programme had been initiated, to incorporate both the needs of the child and the Carer.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

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

A list of Carers with vacancies and an outline of their expertise and experience is routinely updated and made available to the Agency staff dealing with incoming referrals; in order for the 'matching' process to commence at the very beginning. It was most positive to note that a high number of initial referrals are 'turned down' because the Agency does not, at that particular time, have the specific type of placement needed, even though it may have Carers with vacancies.

Four Carers' files were randomly selected and those of the children placed were also inspected, in order to seek evidence of a careful 'matching' process being applied.

From the evidence found, the inspector was able to confirm that a clear policy and procedure is in place and most importantly, it is followed.

The inspector was able to identify that the presenting needs of the child had been used as the indicators to decide that the particular Carers approached could indeed offer the care required. Through meeting all of the above Carers, the inspector was able to establish that they had only been approached by the Agency with prospective referrals that matched their own details and registration category. Those children seen and interviewed fully endorsed that their current placement was meeting their needs and the information inspected through the case tracking process further supported this.

One individual Carer spoke very positively with regards the additional support and training that she received, as it was recognised that specific training would be required in order for the placement to be successful.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

The Manual provided for both the Agency's Staff and Carers holds clear and detailed policies and procedures pertaining to bullying, safe caring skills, behaviour - management and recognising signs of abuse.

It is a requirement of the Agency that all Carers 'sign up' to their Foster Carer Agreement, which requires the implementation of these procedures.

In addition, such very topics are also included within the Carers' rolling training programme and evidence of attendance was seen.

Through visiting carers and children in their own homes, the inspector was able to explore how such guidance is understood and implemented in practice. Young people confirmed the application of sensible and understandable rules by their Carers and those who have endured either bullying at school, or other forms of distress, confirmed the positive support they received in response from their Carers.

Carers demonstrated an empathic awareness as to the difficulties that may be experienced by their foster children and gave positive examples whereby the training and guidance provided by the Agency has helped them to support their child.

Without exception, every Carer accurately described the Agency's policy and procedure with

regards accepted and unaccepted forms of behaviour - management and the steps to be followed in the event of a child being 'missing'. A number of questionnaires highlighted that those carers with older children would like additional guidance with regards appropriate sanctions and this was fed back to the Agency Manager.

A perusal of written documentation demonstrated that whereby young people have either complained about their care or alluded to dissatisfaction, the Agency has swiftly investigated and taken appropriate action. It is recommended that this particular aspect be evidenced to be subject to regular review and evaluation, in accordance with standard 9.5.

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

92

%

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?

4

The Agency implements clear procedures with regards promoting positive family contact arrangements and has a number of staff employed to assist with travel arrangements and, where necessary, the supervision of such meetings. The Agency employs a 'Contact Coordinator' who arranges transport, venues, drivers and supervisors in order for visits to occur, as agreed with the Placing Authority. She utilises a number of venues across the South East in an attempt that families, carers and children won't have to travel too far and is currently implementing health and safety checks on venues and is preparing to conduct unannounced visits to contact sessions to ask parents for their views and feedback. This aspect of the service provision is clearly expanding as a response to demands from Placing Authorities and the Contact Coordinator is commended for her enthusiasm and drive to further develop this service.

During the course of the inspection, the inspector met with the birth father of a child, who was having 'arranged contact' at the Agency office. He spoke very positively about the Agency, stating that he is always made to feel welcome and the inspector observed the staff to be supportive and empathic during this difficult time.

Whilst visiting young people in their homes, the inspector was advised by some older children that they are able to spend time with their friends and invite them back to their home, as would any child who is not 'in care'. One comment received, which was also mentioned within returned questionnaires, regarded the difficulties experienced in obtaining 'permission' from own placing agencies to attend 'sleepovers' at friends' houses.

Through the inspection of children's files, one example included the restriction of contact between a child and their birth family. The reasons for this were very clearly recorded and communicated to both the Carer and the child.

Whereby Carers provide assistance with the maintenance of contact visits, written documentation was seen to evidence that the nature, type and frequency of such arrangements were clearly recorded and agreed between the Agency and the Carer. Such visits were 'written up' and Carers spoken with confirmed prompt payment of expenses.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

Through the return of children's questionnaires and from speaking with young people in placement, the inspector received very positive feedback with regards the 'consultation process'.

Written records demonstrated that individuals are actively encouraged to participate at own review meetings, in particular regarding educational decisions and plans for leaving care. Most positive, were the responses received with regards the 'smaller', 'day to day' decisions including; bed times, clothing and activities. All of those young people spoken with confirmed that their Carers provide ample opportunities for children to express themselves and share own views and opinions.

The Agency routinely consults with children through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms, resulting in young people telling the inspector that Agency Link workers routinely speak with them privately to ask for their feedback and views about their care. Three individuals told the inspector that they would approach the Agency staff with any complaints or issues, before their own Social Worker as they see them more frequently and trust that they would listen and take appropriate action.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

Foster Carer Agreements clearly state the Agency's expectations that Carers will;

1. Register a child with local Doctor and Dentist surgeries,
2. Support the child to attend all necessary health care appointments,
3. Maintain accurate records of such appointments,
4. Promote 'good health' generally with children placed, for example, healthy eating and personal hygiene.

One Carer was looking after a child with complex medical needs and the documentation held and recorded by the Carer was of an excellent standard, detailing all medical appointments, follow ups and the specific daily interventions needed in order to maintain the child's well being. Such information ensured that any progress or problems could readily be identified and tracked through the child's review meetings. Given the complexities of the child's needs, the inspector advised that the Agency routinely 'copies' information recorded by the Carer onto the child's file held at the Agency office.

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**

Clear policies and procedures are in place pertaining to meeting the educational needs of the children and the 'responsibilities' of Carers, with regards supporting children in school, are clearly outlined within the Foster Carer Agreement.

All of the young people seen by the inspector were attending school and those of a younger age, were in nursery, or other appropriate provision.

Older children were provided with access to a home computer and other necessary materials for the completion of school projects and homework and Carers confirmed their attendance at school plays, open evenings, etc.

The Agency does have a number of young people who are not attending school for various reasons and was able to demonstrate that the number of such children and the reasons why, are recorded and monitored. There have been occasions whereby the Agency has funded home tuition or 1:1 support in the classroom.

Some of the files seen did not hold all of the required P.E.P. information, however, it is noted that this has not been forwarded by the placing agency and such examples have been 'chased' by the Fostering Agency.

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?****4**

For the purposes of this inspection, a number of children of varying ages were randomly selected, in order for a case tracking exercise to be undertaken. Within this, a number of the young people seen were in their late teens, approaching the transition into 'adulthood'.

The inspector was presented with clear evidence to support the preparatory work being undertaken by Carers in order that independent living skills could be focused upon. Such work was seen to be consistent with the Agency's own After Care Policy, which details the support required in terms of finding accommodation, managing finances and continuing with education.

It was evident that pro- active steps are taken by the Agency, in partnership with placing agencies, to ensure that Pathway Plans are developed and implemented at an early stage, to ensure that thorough and detailed planning can occur.

It was also positive to note that a number of Carers were exploring the option of becoming a 'Supported Living' placement for those young people who did not wish to leave their care upon reaching the age of eighteen.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency works to sound and robust recruitment procedures and evidence of these being implemented in practice was seen. Personnel files were randomly selected and each were found to contain;

1. Original application forms and written evidence of the interview
2. Original references which were 'followed up' with telephone verification
3. Enhanced CRB Disclosures, Pocal and Local Authority checks
4. Proof of identity and qualifications.

The staff group interviewed demonstrated a sound understanding and knowledge as to their own specific roles and responsibilities, which were clearly recorded within contracts of employment and job descriptions. Those employed as Social Workers had a social work qualification and a background of working with children and families.

The Agency does provide placements for student Social Workers and also trains its own unqualified staff. In these circumstances, the qualified personnel of the Agency provide clear direction and guidance.

Total number of staff of the agency:

13

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency operates in accordance with its own clear Organisational structure. Throughout the inspection process, it was evident from speaking with the Directors, Senior staff, Social Workers and Administrative personnel that all parties understand lines of accountability and responsibility.

Clear and explicit contracts and job descriptions ensure that individuals are given tasks that they are qualified and experienced to carry out and regular supervision meetings ensure that workloads are monitored.

Training for both Agency staff and Carers is planned in advance and monitored to ensure that appropriate and valuable courses are attended.

The Agency employs a sufficient number of Administrative staff, who each have 'specific', as well as 'general' responsibilities defined within their job descriptions.

The 'supervision' of staff is conducted by individuals who are qualified and experienced to

provide this and all of the staff are provided with the Agency's policies and procedures pertaining to; grievance and discipline, details of the services offered by the Agency, equal opportunities and health and safety matters.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Given the total number of Carers and children placed, the inspector was satisfied that a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced staff is employed by the Agency. This finding was also endorsed through the returned carer questionnaires and from speaking with individual Carers.

Confirmation was also given with regards the expectations of the Agency being made clear at the very beginning of the assessment stage, in accordance with Standard 17.6.

The frequency and duration of recorded visits to Carers and the prompt response to 'on call' situations further supports that the Agency is sufficiently staffed to meet the needs of Carers and children. Given that the Agency aims to provide a quality service to asylum seeking young people, it was positive to note that this aspect of the Agency is well – resourced, in terms of experienced personnel and the provision of specific training for Carers.

The Agency's recruitment policy with regards Carers is clearly outlined and those staff undertaking assessments have the experience and competence to undertake this task. The number of prospective Carers who do not succeed in joining the Agency further supports that the Agency is very selective in terms of Carer recruitment.

Four separate Carer files were selected for the purpose of this inspection and in every case, the areas as detailed under performance indicator 17.7 were comprehensively 'covered' throughout the assessment process.

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

Returned questionnaires and conversations with staff members and Carers all provided sound evidence to support that individuals feel valued and supported by the Agency.

The 'on call' provision ensures that Carers have a point of contact and support at all times and many regarded this aspect of the service as invaluable.

The inspector noted through reading records that the annual review process clearly tracks the progress of Carers and recommends additional training and/ or support where this is deemed to be necessary. Similarly, Agency staff receive regular supervision and appraisal of their performance, again to ensure that appropriate and relevant training and support can be provided.

The health and safety policy and procedure of the Agency is shared with both staff and Carers and guidance is provided for all Carers with regards them obtaining sufficient insurance cover to fulfil their role.

The staff spoken with were conversant with the Agency's 'whistle blowing' policy, and the Carers seen throughout the course of the inspection were clear as to how and to whom, they would report concerns 'externally', should they arise.

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

Evidence within staff personnel files was found to support the existence of a comprehensive induction programme. Those files pertaining to longer –serving employees were found to contain written evidence of an annual appraisal system in place, followed by regular supervision meetings. Within this system, the training needs of individuals are tracked and planned.

The Agency continues to keep abreast of changes in legislation and good practice guidance and staff members attend relevant training sessions alongside Carers on a regular basis. A group of five of the Agency's Social Workers were interviewed throughout the course of the inspection. Each gave clear examples of the training courses attended since being with the Agency and a common comment made was, "the training offered here is over and above the courses required to do your job".

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

As has been previously stated, the Agency operates within clear lines of accountability and responsibility and this includes the 'line management' and supervision of all of the staff. Written evidence supported that both supervision and appraisal meetings are booked in advance and these meetings are documented. Such notes are securely held, with a copy given to the supervisee.

Minutes of Team Meetings were sampled and the contents supported that such meetings occur regularly and encourage communication to flow between the senior management and the rest of the team.

Every member of staff interviewed advised the inspector that they feel entirely supported to fulfil their role. One particularly positive example was given with regards the Senior Practitioner, who has a reduced 'working caseload' of Carers, in recognition of the other additional aspects of her role, which included 'deputising' in the Registered Manager's absence.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Written Foster Carer Agreements contain detailed and specific guidance with regards the type, nature and frequency of support that Carers can expect to receive from the Agency. A total of 49 questionnaires were received from Carers; 94% of which contained written comments positively endorsing the support received on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>A clear 'out of hours on –call' system is in existence and this provision was most positively referred to throughout the received questionnaires and by speaking with Carers, individually. Those interviewed understood the 'annual review' process and also knew the differences in the roles of their Agency social Worker and the foster child's Social Worker.</p> <p>A review of children's files supported that clear lines of communication exist between the Agency staff and Placing Social Workers, with regular reports being forwarded by the Agency and its Carers.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)		
The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector was impressed with the standard and content of the reports written following the support visits made to Carers by the Agency staff. These followed a set 'pro forma', whereby the Supervising Social Worker was required to complete text under headings pertaining to; the child(ren) placed, any issues / concerns, training needs, etc, and these are 'signed off' by the Carers also as a true record of the visit. Staff are also required to identify any remedial action needed in response to any of the above. From the four Carers files selected, every one was found to hold such records, indicating that such visits had occurred on a 4 weekly basis, with any 'issues' clearly being identified and tracked.</p> <p>The Carers interviewed confirmed receipt of the Agency's written policies, procedures and other pertinent guidance and informed the inspector that any amendments / updates are swiftly communicated. Through the interviewing process, it was evident that they were fully conversant with such documentation and clearly understood their own roles and responsibilities in relation to the Fostering and Placing Agencies.</p> <p>From the four sets of Carers randomly selected, everyone interviewed confirmed receipt of a written Foster Carer's Agreement, copies of which were seen on their files. Scrutiny of these records confirmed that all of the elements as listed under Schedule 5 of the Fostering services Regulations 2001 were included and such Agreements were signed and dated by both the Agency and the Carers.</p> <p>The Carers interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of the Agency's Complaint's Procedure and knew exactly how the procedure would be implemented with regards a complaint being made about them as Carers. A separate 'log' pertaining to complaints / allegations is held centrally at the Agency's Head Office and this was scrutinised by the inspector. Information was appropriately held, and it was evident that the management team respond swiftly and refer to external agencies appropriately.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

All four sets of carers interviewed confirmed the receipt of extensive induction training. This was stated to include pertinent training courses, as directed by BAAF guidance and an element most highly regarded was being introduced to existing Carers.

The Agency retains accurate records pertaining to all of the courses attended by Carers and a requirement as detailed within the Foster Carer's Agreement, is to attend the training courses as directed by the Agency.

A review of Panel Meeting minutes provided evidence to support that recommendations and requirements are routinely made for Carers to attend specific training courses, provided by the Agency. It was positive to note that NVQ training for Carers is now well underway.

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

The Agency has clear policy and procedural guidance in place with regards 'case recording', resulting in both Agency staff and Carers being aware of what to record, how and when. Children's files were inspected throughout the course of this inspection and these were well –ordered documents, containing relevant information, such as; the reason for the placement, its intended duration and purpose and details of the child's legal status. Such files were securely stored at the office, with only key personnel having access.

Carers confirmed the receipt of clear guidance from the Agency in terms of completing 'Life Story Work' with children and evidence of this was seen throughout the visits to Carers' homes. The inspector recommended that Carers are provided with specific guidance pertaining to the use of own computers when compiling, storing and sending information about the child(ren) in their care.

The most common 'complaint' received from Carers concerned the lack of information received from Placing Authorities. The inspector noted through examining children's files, that where this had occurred, the Agency continued to pursue the department, in writing, requesting that any such outstanding, pertinent information be forwarded.

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

Over the course of the two 'Office –Based Days', the inspector examined records pertaining to;

1. Staff
2. Carers
3. Children
4. Complaints and Allegations

Clear policy guidance was in place regarding the completion and storage of such records and the staff spoken with were conversant with this. Further policy guidance was also seen with regards the retention of files and how these can be accessed by parents and children. All Panel members and Agency staff are provided with guidance pertaining to storing and managing confidential information.

Written entries within files were clear, legible, signed and dated. Such entries distinguished between fact, opinion and third party information and were expediently passed onto the Placing Authority where necessary.

A separate file is kept by the Manager, pertaining to complaints and allegations and this was inspected. Details within this log were separately held, so as to protect confidentiality and evidence was found to support that full 'investigations' had occurred; with findings and outcomes clearly stated. In accordance with the Agency's policies and procedures, complainants had been advised of their right to take complaints to the Panel / Directors and Outside agencies if not satisfied.

The Manager was advised at the end of the inspection that the timescale and the outcome of investigations should be explicitly recorded, for example; Upheld, Not upheld, Partly, etc and that greater evidence of the monitoring of such incidents should be evidenced in future.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			180
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			133
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			101
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			32
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			7
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	350.00	Maximum £	350.00

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 Agency is based within a detached property on the outskirts of Maidstone town centre and the premises are not shared with any other business.

Over two floors, the Agency staff have a kitchen, toilets and two large meeting rooms and these can be used to accommodate training groups and contact visits. There are a number of separate rooms, occupied by different 'groups' of staff and the Manager has a separate office. Files pertaining to children and carers are held within a locked office that has restricted access.

All staff have access to computers and e-mail and every member of staff interviewed spoke positively about the 'physical' working environment.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Throughout the course of the inspection the Agency continued to demonstrate 'financial viability'.

The Agency is a 'Limited Company' and has sound financial policies and procedures in place.

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

The Agency works to clear, prescribed protocols regarding financial procedures and a registered accountant regularly audits the accounts.

All of the staff of the Agency spoken with were fully conversant with procedures pertaining to expenditure, (including the recording of this), on behalf of the Agency.

Staff salaries, 'terms and conditions', extensive support to Carers, (including on –call 24hrs per day), and the provision of 'quality' training, further supported that the Agency is sufficiently funded to meet its Statement of Purpose.

Evidence was seen within children's files whereby the Agency had provided the Placing Authority with a clear description and 'breakdown' of the cost of a placement, whenever this has been requested.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

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

The inspector saw documented evidence to support that Foster Carer Allowances are reviewed annually. Those Carers visited and interviewed confirmed that this happens in practice.

Further written evidence was seen to support that allowances and any additional expenses are agreed prior to a placement commencing.

Throughout the interviews and from the questionnaires received, no adverse comments were made with regards Carers' payments.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Clear written policies and procedures are in place pertaining to the role and function of the Panel, including the decision –making process when all members are not in agreement. Written details pertaining to all of the Panel members were seen and these included Enhanced CRB certificates and a description as to the area(s) of expertise of the individual members.

Members of the Panel currently include a Deputy Head Teacher, previous Foster Carer and an individual who was previously in foster care. Other members include Agency staff and one of the Directors as the Panel Chair.

The Panel has access to both medical and educational expertise and evidence of accessing this was seen through the perusal of the minutes of previous Panel meetings.

The inspector attended a Panel meeting and witnessed some detailed questioning and debates pertaining to the assessments presented.

The Panel was observed to be a cohesive group and the inspector recommended that further training with regards Panel functions would be of benefit, particularly for 'first time' members.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
This standard is not applicable.	

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?
This standard is not applicable.	9

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 17/8/04 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

NO

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 4/1/05, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all 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 Stephen O'Brien of The Home Finding and Fostering Agency, confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I, Mr Stephen O'Brien of The Home Finding and Fostering Agency, am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

--

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

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

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