



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Seafields Fostering Agency

**Seafields House
29/31 Malvern Road
Hornchurch
Essex RM11 1BG**

Lead Inspector
Joanna
Moore

Announced Inspection
20 July 2005 10:00

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

Reader Information

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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 Seafields Fostering Agency

Address Seafields House, 29/31 Malvern Road,
Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1BG

Telephone number 01708 733735

Fax number

Email address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Seafields Fostering Ltd

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Ms Joanne savage

Type of registration IFA Fostering Agencies

No. of places registered (if applicable)

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places IFA Fostering Agency

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 12 September 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Seafields is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from a main office based in Hornchurch and has been established since 1996. The agency provides a range of services including short and long term fostering, including sibling groups, for children between 0-18 years of age. All placements are commissioned by a local authority and Seafields Fostering subscribes to the PAN London Agreement. The service aims to meet the identified needs of children and young people placed with them and to fully support foster carers within that task. Carers are widely dispersed throughout the home counties and additional offices operate from Newick and Newmarket. Homefields is also part of the seafields group and provides permanent placements. Seafields places a strong emphasis on support, training and supervision with the aim of providing a high standard of safe care to the children and young people placed in their care. The past few months seen significant management changes in the agency which has caused some concern and unease both for staff in the agency and foster carers. In the three months running upto the inspection both the responsible individual who was a director of seafields and the registered manager have left. Another director has since been regsitered as responsible person and a new manager is in place. the company however now seems to be coming out the other side of the disruption and staff ackknnowledged that whilst the changes had been unsettling, that it was forcing some much needed change and providing new career oppourtunties within the company.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was an announced inspection which was carried out over six days including visits to the offices to interview staff and management and review records, attendance at a support/ training group and visits to the homes of four foster carers to meet with them and the young people in placement. These days were spread across a three-month period. Questionnaires were sent out to ten foster carers, twenty young people and fifteen placing authorities, last year an excellent response was received in relation to the questionnaires unfortunately they were not so successful this year. The inspector would like to send their thanks to the carers and young people who welcomed the inspector into their homes and those who took the time to complete questionnaires. The inspector would also like to thank the agency and its staff for their openness and hospitality.

What the service does well:

The agency keeps safe care and the welfare of children at the centre of all its work.

The agency is a fair and competent employer who offers good support systems and training for its staff.

Staff and carers feel valued and respected for the jobs they do.

The agency offers excellent levels of support for its carers.

The questionnaires sent out asked Young people what's the best thing about fostering and these are some responses:

"You get looked after and you are loved"

"Seafields is the best agency in the world"

"Everything, the carers are gr8 (great) people"

"I'm much more settled now and get to do more things I want. I'm allowed to have my friends sleep over"

" I get to go to lots more places"

" nothing, I miss my family"

Foster carers questionnaires asked what's the best thing about the agency and these are some comments received:

Supportive staff- link, social and support workers.

Friendly environment at the office- admin staff.

Support group meetings.

Someone at the end of a phone 24hours a day.

The level of support they offer us, being able to pick up a phone and ask for help and advice.

Feeling genuinely valued and appreciated

What has improved since the last inspection?

The agency has now developed a system where young peoples records are kept separately to carer's records.

What they could do better:

The agency must ensure that young peoples case records are comprehensive and include all relevant information obtained from the point of referral to the ceasing to be accommodated by seafields carers.

Young people and carers would benefit from the agency developing a formal system and guidance for preparing young people for independent living.

Foster carers questionnaires asked what's the worst thing about the agency and these are some comments received:

The office environment is too small to access if you are in a wheelchair or have a buggy.

Geographical logistics. My support group is about 40 miles away.

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 outcomes these Standards are:

- 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 outcomes for standard(s) 12

The agency in this and in previous inspections has evidenced that it and its carers take a proactive role in 'promoting' children's health and any specialist needs in relation to any disability.

EVIDENCE:

Through discussion and written information contained in policies and good practice guidance, there was evidence to demonstrate that Seafields provides foster care services which help each child or young person to receive health care which meets his/her needs for physical, emotional and social development, and that children/young people are enabled to make informed decisions about health needs.

Foster carers were clear about their responsibilities in respect of registering a child/young person with a GP or dentist and taking the child to any health appointments when required and this could be evidenced as occurring in practice. One child with global delay was visited and it was evidenced through discussion and daily notes that all specialist services such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, orthotics department, and portage workers were providing support. The child was also taken to regular check ups with the consultant paediatrician. Health care records showed that babies and young children were immunised according to department of health guidance. Support workers are available if required to escort and assist foster carers taking young people to hospital appointments. There are a number of children/young people with specialist healthcare needs and there was evidence that the carers were meeting their needs and that carers effectively advocated for the best medical care available. Where information was not received from the placing authority systems were in place to follow this up. The agency in this and in previous inspection has evidenced that it and its carers take a proactive role in 'promoting' children's needs in relation to their disability.

The children's questionnaires all said that carers helped promote safety and healthy lifestyles. Comments included.. "they get me to eat fruit and vegetables".. "they say don't eat too many sweets, keep yourself clean and don't talk to strangers".. " I eat lots of fruit and vegetables and do lots of sport to stay healthy"

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3,6,8,9,15 & 30

The people working for and managing the agency are fit. In order to fully safeguard young people the agency must ensure that its recruitment practices are absolutely in line with regulatory requirements. The service ensures that children and young people are offered the most suitable match that the agency is able to provide. The agency centres all its practices around safe care.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering panel was not observed as part of this inspection but has been as part of the previous three inspections. The fostering panel has been shown in previous inspections to meet all regulatory and good practice requirements. Those members of the panel who have ceased to sit due to leaving the company have the inspector was advised been replaced appropriately. A discussion was held with the new manager regarding the panel process and length of time that a member can serve. Some panel members are approaching the end of their first term and the agency is in the process of putting in to place a new formal system for approving panel members to serve a second term not exceeding three years.

The new responsible individual and manager have been approved by the CSCI as fit persons to carry on and manage a fostering agency. Three staff files were checked to ascertain recruitment practices, two files held all the

information required under the regulations. However a third staff file evidenced only one reference taken up at the time of recruitment. This was the inspector was informed, known to the responsible person and a decision had been made that as it had not been possible to obtain a reference from their referee that the person would be recruited without this. No record of any such decision was however held on file. The registered person is required to ensure that a two written references are obtained for each and every member of staff prior to employment.

The Inspector visited a number of foster homes in the course of the inspection. Foster carers were made aware of and understood that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the inspection process.

All of the homes visited were warm, adequately furnished and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Within the homes visited, all the fostered children had their own beds. Only young siblings shared rooms. The accommodation arrangements reflected the child's/ young person's assessed need for privacy and space. An issue where it was unclear whether a foster child had shared a room for one night with the foster carers child was raised and the agency discussed this with the carer. It was not clear whether this had indeed occurred but the agency has clear guidelines and this matter was discussed with the carer.

The carers' homes were visited regularly as part of the carers' supervision and in addition an annual household review is carried out at which point all issues regarding health and safety are formally reviewed and the information considered at panel. Health and safety matters are covered in the foster carers initial training. As per the last inspection it is recommended that carers of disabled children be provided with moving and handling training.

Through interviews with key staff, discussions with foster carers and inspection of files, the Inspector tracked the process of referral and placement of children/young people. This was easier than at the previous inspection as the agency now has individual files for each child placed, these still however have a long way to go and will it is acknowledged be developed over time. From discussions with carers and Seafields social workers it was evident that the agency ensures that comprehensive information is received from the placing authority and takes into account the child's care plan and written assessments of the child/young person and their family, prior to the identification of a foster carer and passes what information they have to the carer. Questionnaires and visits to carers noted that the agency promotes effective matching. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is often difficult to get information from the Local Authorities, Seafields Fostering Service has been pro-active in addressing this issue, they have produced standard letters that are sent to Local Authorities requesting the required information in line with their responsibilities. Where possible, a period of introduction is planned for the child/young person to visit the proposed foster carer this was evidenced through individual discussion with foster carers regarding the moving in and moving on processes for young people. It was also evidenced in discussions at a support group

session where ways of helping children settle included discussions and suggestions about assisting the child with the process. For example initially visiting the child and showing photos of their home with a toy dog on what would be their bed, the toy dog in the lounge, the garden and all the other rooms and then giving the child the toy to look after until they came to the foster carers home. From discussion it was clear that such introductory visits had not always occurred and for emergency placements were unlikely to in the future but that the expectation was that they would occur where the time frame allowed.

All foster carers receive training in the recognition of abuse, how to respond to signs or indicators of abuse and caring for a child who has been abused. This was evidenced by discussion with foster carers and staff. The training aims to develop foster carers' awareness and understanding of all issues relating to the protection of each child / young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. The agency places a high focus on the provision of "safe care". The Foster Carers Practice Guide contains clear information and guidance to foster carers in safe care practice. There are clear policies and procedures on anti-bullying; that corporal punishment and restraint are not acceptable practices; and to follow if a foster child is missing from home. The agency places a high focus on "safe care" practice and this was constantly reinforced through supervision, training and support groups. Management systems were in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care.

Foster carers were clearly able to recognise symptoms of abuse and were clear as what to do with the information and the importance of clear record keeping of any disclosure. The agency has consistently kept the Commission informed of all issues relating to child protection and their outcome since the last inspection and has liaised with Local Authorities to ensure that they undertake their statutory duties effectively.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 7,13 & 31

The agency works with the child, carers, local education authority and Placing Authority to promote the best educational outcomes for the child/ young person. The agency offers the best available placement match taking into account issues of diversity and all care needs. Matters of diversity and equal opportunities are discussed as part of the training prior to carers being approved and are related to everyday practice in support groups.

EVIDENCE:

Through discussion with staff and foster carers and from attendance at support groups and previously at the fostering panel there was a lot of evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service ensures that children, young people and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. This principle is reinforced through policy and procedure, the "Good Practice Guide for Foster Carers", regular supervision and training. Carers were carefully considered as part of the matching process in relation to equalities issues. Issues such as race, culture, language and disability were considered as well as the central ability to respond to the young peoples other care needs such as a history of abuse and experience in working with babies or difficult teenagers. The agency then offers what it considers to be the best match that can be provided within Seafields and the Placing authority makes the final decision.

From discussions with foster carers, case tracking, feedback questionnaires, policies and good practice guidance there was a lot of information to demonstrate that the fostering service as a whole and foster carers individually give a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person. Foster carers were seen to promote an environment in which education and learning are valued. Foster carers discussed how they had liaised with local educational authorities to obtain appropriate placements for the child including specialist support and further education opportunities. For older children this had been clearly done in partnership with them. The Inspector found evidence on files of requests to responsible placing authorities for information in respect of addressing the need for a personal education plan. The inspector was advised that the carers attended school open days, parent's evenings etc in the parental role however that this would be shared with the parent according to levels of contact. Young peoples questionnaires identified that they were offered support with their homework and that for one young person an after school homework club was arranged for extra tuition. The foster placement agreement identifies the financial responsibility for all associated school costs. Foster carers are clear in respect of their role in school contact, for example parent's evenings, open days, discussions with teachers.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 10 & 11

The fostering agency and its carers are clear on the need to work in partnership with young people and consult them on all aspects of their lives according to the age and understanding. Contact arrangements are clearly known and followed.

EVIDENCE:

There was evidence of clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. It is an expectation that contact arrangements form part of the Foster Placement Agreement and Care plan. The inspector was advised if this information was not included, then a written request would be sent to the local authority for this information to be obtained.

The Inspector was able to evidence that carers record outcomes of contact arrangements in their daily diary.

There is a contact suite within the main office building with tea and soft drink facilities. This allows families to have contact in a neutral setting, with fully trained contact supervisors who provide observational reports to inform the care plan. The child/young person is on occasion transported to and from the contact suite by the contact supervisor, whom they will have had the opportunity to meet and become familiar with, prior to the first contact. If contact was to occur at another setting attempts were made to ensure familiar escorting where possible but this in essence remained a placing Authority arrangement. Children and young people had a variety of contact arrangements and carers were clear as to their roles in supporting these, which for some had great impact as it meant almost daily visits to the centre.

The young people and children placed varied according to their age and ability and used different means of communication for example behaviour in order to express their needs and wishes. Those foster carers met were clearly able to demonstrate their skills in working with the children placed with them and in listening however expressed which was evidence of the quality of relationships developed. The Inspector heard from foster carers that they were encouraged to seek out children's/young people's opinions and understand the importance of listening to the views of children / young people in their care. This was further evidenced in direct observation of carers, comments made by young people and feedback questionnaires from foster carers and young people. The questionnaires included many positive comments. Examples of consultation included.. *"I get asked what I would like to do in my spare time. What I would like to eat and drink. We might be moving house and I was asked what sort of home I'd like and where it should be. I asked if meal times could be at the same time after school to fit in with my friends."* *" I get asked what I want to eat, what clothes I want to buy" "everything, all different things"... "about how to get to places. About general things and about how my mechanics course is going"*

From information in feedback questionnaires it was evident that children/young people had been "told how to make a complaint". Seafields have developed some written information for fostered children on "how to complain" in a format that is user friendly and age appropriate and the inspector was advised that they are currently investigating the possibility of providing this in other formats such as video tape.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 14 and 29

Carers engage with young people and begin to prepare them for adulthood both emotionally and practically however there was no set expectations or processes in place to ensure all young people received a standardised minimum level of support.

Foster carers spoke very positively of Seafields and its financial process, which ensured that they received clear timely and regular payments.

EVIDENCE:

Discussions with young people, carers and social workers evidenced preparing young people for adulthood and there was individualised informal planning. One young person was visited who was of an age (16) when decisions regarding adult living were relevant yet no pathway plan was in place. A review had been booked to discuss this matter further but the issue had been complicated by the young person moving from the looked after children team to the leaving care team. The young person advised the inspector that they were consulted about their future by the carer and actively encouraged to be involved in decision-making and thought they would be involved in the development of the Pathway Plan. However this young person did not really want to engage in discussions with the inspector any further at that time. The inspector was advised by the foster carer that the young person was encouraged to develop the practical life skills for independent living as a gradual development of skill rather than waiting for the Pathway plan to be implemented. The young person had been involved in cooking and recently

decorating their room. It is strongly recommended that the agency develop a formalised and planned approach to promoting independence skills.

Through documentation viewed and discussion with foster carers there was evidence to demonstrate that each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child/young person placed with him/her.

Foster carers commented that they always received their payments promptly and at the agreed time. They receive clear information about allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child/young person is placed.

The agency has a written policy on fostering allowances and allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Management

The intended outcomes 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 cares 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, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s)
2,4,5,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25 &26**

The agency has clear systems in place to offer good levels of support and training to both its carers and staff. Some requirements and recommendations have been made but these do not significantly detract from the over all impression that the agency is managed effectively and is a fair and competent employer.

EVIDENCE:

The current manager has taken up post within six months of the start of this inspection and has been deemed fit by the Commission. The responsible individual has similarly changed and again has been deemed fit by the Commission. Both these individuals whilst new to holding these responsibilities have worked for the company for a number of years and are familiar with its staff and operating systems. Feedback from staff indicated that this had helped in a period of great change and concern. Management styles staff said of course had changed somewhat but that it was acknowledged that some of the changes being made were necessary and timely and that staff remained confident in the management team of the organisation. The newly registered manager has a Diploma in Social Work and extensive experience of working with children / young people and families at a senior level and is studying for NVQ level 5 in business management.

The organisational structure provides clear roles and procedures for managing and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance. There was evidence to demonstrate clear lines of communication and accountability between managers, staff and carers, which was well understood by all parties and avoided confusion and potential conflicts of role. There was evidence of sound financial procedures, which are reviewed on a regular basis. Good information is provided to purchasers of the service. Clear financial procedures and information is provided to foster carers in writing. The inspector was advised that the company is developing databases to make information centrally required such as complaints and child protection, more accessible. Health and safety systems were under a quality review and updated in line with changes in legislation and good practice. There were designated administrative and clerical support services and an infrastructure that ensures all staff receives appropriate levels of support to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. There were systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads and staff commented to the Inspector that their individual workloads are manageable, this was supported by feedback on the quality and levels of support offered to carers.

Professional supervision and consultation was provided for social work staff by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Not all social workers were however receiving this on a monthly basis partly due to management changes. It is recommended that all social workers receive monthly supervision. All other staff in the fostering service receive supervision in line with their roles and responsibilities.

Seafields Fostering Service has an Employees Handbook, which includes policies on grievance and disciplinary procedures, equal opportunities and health and safety.

There was evidence to demonstrate that currently the agency has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

There is a clearly set out process for the assessment of foster carers. This is further supported by the standard of Form F assessments and the monitoring of the standard of the assessment process by the panel chair. The Inspector was informed that foster carers are recruited in accordance with the British Agencies for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) Guidance and the Competency Framework, which is used as part of the Form F assessment of foster carers. Annual household reviews are carried out but some had passed their annual review date, the agency had noted this and was in the process of arranging as a priority at the next panel for the due household reviews to be carried out.

Foster carers commented positively on the level of support that they received from their supervising social workers and Seafields fostering service. "24 hours a day, 365 days a year they are always available to help and support". Two carers said that they would like more family fun days and days for carer's children.

Carer's comments were as follows:

"seafields offers excellent support, we have turned up on the doorstep of the agency before now. Seafields took the foster child whose behaviour was unmanageable and cared for them, took my kids and cared for them and then sat me down with a cup of tea and offered me emotional support" ...

"I have called them at 3am and got support"...

"they have sent in their social workers to my home to give practical support"...

"they sent chocolates and a thank you card at the end of a placement"..

"They sent card and a bottle of wine as a moving in to our new home acknowledgement"...

"the social workers came to support me when I handed over the fostered baby to the new adoptive parents"...

"we have never had any concerns we have found them a really good agency"..

"the best thing about seafields is the level of support they give us. Always feeling like we can pick up the phone and ask for advice/ support on difficult/ sensitive situations"...

"Feeling genuinely valued and appreciated and being praised for doing a good job" ...

"Having had previous experience as a carer with my local authority I have to say there is no comparison to the level of support and remuneration I now receive for what is feel is a difficult and demanding job. I would recommend seafields to any potential foster carers. I have had reliability and continuity with my link worker which I never had with the Local Authority."

The inspector was satisfied from these comments and other feedback from carers that there was a highly effective out of hour's management and excellent support service available to foster carers.

Management systems were in place for carer supervision, appraisal and support. The agency operates on an excellent ratio of supervising social worker to foster carers and foster carers receive visits every 1-3 weeks depending upon their needs. Staff and carers felt that this was one of the main strengths of the agency.

Foster carers were encouraged to attend the monthly support groups and these were always well attended. The support group attended was experienced as a useful arena where carers could share good practice examples and receive suggestions from other carers in how to approach difficult issues / behaviours which arise. Carers viewed these groups as an important part of their support network. The agency was the inspector was advised, able to provide support with child care to enable carers to attend.

One carer raised the issue of not being provided with enough practical support when completing NVQ training, this has been raised with the agency who advised for future carers they were looking at how to more effectively support them practically through this process. It is recommended that this indeed occurs and practical support mechanisms are put into place. Training was provided to foster carers and the agency was in the process of setting itself up as an NVQ assessment centre as one of the ways identified to support carers. Training carers said they had attended included contact issues, drug awareness, safe care challenging behaviours, working with parents, semi independence, educational support, moving on to new carers, working with asylum seekers, preparing for adoption, attachment theory, promoting culture and record keeping.

The agency now holds individual case files for each young person which is an improvement since the last inspection however more work needs to be done to ensure these files contain all the information received from the point of referral to the point where the child ceases to be accommodated by Seafields carers. The information held in these files must include all the LAC forms and decisions made.

There was a whistle blowing policy, which is known to all staff and carers. There was public liability and indemnity insurance for both staff and carers. One staff was in the process of returning to work and the agency on a temporary basis was providing some free childcare on site.

Three staff training records were viewed as part of the case tracking and these evidenced that a variety of training was available to staff. Staff in all departments who were interviewed as part of this and the previous inspection have said that the organisation is committed to training its staff. The agency is accredited with investors in people. In the six months leading up to the inspection staff training had taken a 'back seat' due to management changes but this was the inspector was advised being put firmly on the agenda again and the evidence has been that in the long term seafields has been committed to training. Each foster carer is regularly supervised by a named, appropriately qualified, social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice to enable the provision of consistent, high quality care for a child/young person placed in his/her home. Unannounced visits are undertaken at least once a year. This was evidenced through documentation in foster carer files and through discussion with foster carers.

Information about complaints and representations is available to foster carers in the "Good Practice Guide". Records about allegations of abuse are kept retained and monitored. There is a clear policy, which details the circumstances in which a foster carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

The organisation's Head of Business Services has responsibility for data control. All information is stored in a secure manner and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Where necessary information is not forthcoming from the placing authority, the Inspector found evidence of written requests to obtain relevant information and records.

The premises used as offices by the fostering provider are suitable for the purpose. The premises are well equipped and maintained with good quality furnishings and fittings. There are adequate facilities on the premises for training, meetings and contact visits. The premises and its contents are adequately insured. The office administrator maintains fire records and there is a clear health and safety policy with evidence of appropriate risk assessment undertaken. Some comments were received that the agency through increases in activity and staffing numbers was beginning to outgrow its current premises, the inspector was advised that the agency was reviewing current arrangements with a view to seeking further premises.

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	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	3

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	2
29	3

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

no

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

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.	15	20	The registered person is required to ensure that a two written references are obtained for each and every member of staff prior to employment.	01.12.05
2.	21	29	The agency is required to ensure that each foster household is reviewed on an annual basis.	01.12.05
3.				
4.				

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.	8	As per the last inspection it is recommended that carers of disabled children be provided with moving and handling training.
2.	16	It is recommended that all social workers receive monthly supervision
3.	18	it is recommended that the agency ensure sufficient practical support is provided to carers whilst completing their NVQ training.
4.	24	The agency must ensure that young peoples case files contain all the information received from the point of referral to the point where the child ceases to be

		accommodated by Seafields carers.
5.		
6.		

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