

inspection report

Fostering Services

SWIIS Foster Care Limited

3rd Floor Royal Buildings
2 Mosley Street
Piccadilly
Manchester
M2 3AN

27th February 2003

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

Swiss Foster Care Limited

Tel No

020 7307 8383

Address

3rd Floor Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Piccadilly,
Manchester, M2 3AN

Fax No

020 7307 8384

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Swiss Foster Care Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Cynara Frances Ogden Smith

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

N/A

Date of Inspection Visit		27th February 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jacqui Malcolm	074739
Name of Inspector	2	Lolly Warren	074725
Name of Inspector	3	Hazel Chamberlain	
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		Not Applicable.	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		Not Applicable	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mrs Cynara Frances Ogden-Smith	

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 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**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of Swiss Foster Care Limited. 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 NCSC 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>Swiis Fostering Service is an independent fostering agency that offers a service to Local Authority Social Services Departments. It provides short term and long term placements for children and young people, including children with disabilities who are “Looked After” by Local Authority Social Services Departments.</p> <p>Swiis Fostering Service assesses, approves and supports foster carers and operates a fostering panel.</p> <p>The office is based in Manchester city centre and covers the Manchester and North West area. The team consists of 1 Head of Foster Care, 1 Deputy Head of Foster Care, 3 Senior Social Workers, 1 Family Support Worker, 1 Office Manager and 1 Office Administration Assistant.</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 service has been inspected for the first time against the National Minimum Standards introduced from April 2002. As a result, this report may contain a substantial number of recommendations and requirements. If so the number of these should fall significantly at the next inspection when the provider will have time to take account of the new legislation and standards and to take action to meet them.

Statement of Purpose and Function

The agency has a written Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide, which is well presented, informative and concise. The Statement of Purpose and Function needs to include the nature and outcome of any complaints made. The Children's Guide was well presented and child focussed, however amendments need to be made to ensure the guide meets with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Fitness to provide or manage a Fostering Service

The Head of Foster Care has a number of years experience in fostering and was appropriately qualified to manage the service. The agency appeared to be managed efficiently, in a well ordered, progressive and child focussed manner.

Management of the Fostering Service

The agency has clear and appropriate systems in place to monitor the agency and there was a clear line of accountability of the service.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

There was a robust assessment process in place to recruit and assess foster carers. There was evidence that the agency promoted diversity and sought to provide for the diverse needs of the children placed and this was an area that the agency continued to develop. Foster carers confirmed they received ongoing training, including child protection. There was a bullying policy in place and the agency collated information about complaints and allegations made. There appeared to be a great emphasis placed by the agency on health and education needs of children. Contact was promoted in practice and the agency presented as one that listened to the views of children, foster carers and staff alike.

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

The service agency a clear recruitment procedure in place. The agency has a commitment to recruiting experienced and qualified staff in the different posts available. There were, however, some changes needed to the recruitment process. Staff were inducted into the agency and were regularly supervised. The majority of foster carers reported that the agency was very supportive and were reassured by the on call support also offered by the agency. There was a mandatory training programme in place and there were plans in place to appoint a training officer to ensure training needs were being met and monitored.

Records

The agency had a clear policy and guidance on records and confidentiality. The agency maintained files for children and foster carers and there were also records maintained for all staff. A central record of complaints was maintained and was available for inspection.

Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service

The office was appropriate for the service provided and there appeared to be enough space for the team to work in and hold meetings and training events.

Financial Requirements

All of the agencies financial communications are dealt with at the Head Office in London. Foster carers confirmed they received prompt allowances and were provided with financial support to cover holidays and provide some continuity between placements.

Fostering Panels

There was a representative fostering panel in place with an Independent Chair. The panel served a number of functions including quality control, which appeared to work effectively. The fostering panel had access to health and legal advice and the Head of Foster care confirmed that all panel members had been CRB checked.

Short-Term Breaks and Family and Friends as Carers

Not assessed, as this standard is not applicable to this agency.

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:

Not Applicable.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

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	
			This is the first inspection by the NCSC and consequently there is no previous report to refer to.	

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 Not yet Registered.		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments Not yet registered.		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments Not yet registered.		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments Not yet registered.		

Lead Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	_____	Signature	_____
Date	_____		

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 and recommendations 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	3(1)	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must detail the nature and outcome of complaints made.	**
2	3(4)	FS1	The Children's Guide must be reviewed to fully comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 as detailed in this Standard.	**
3	20	FS3	All staff within the agency must have a valid CRB check.	**
4	12	FS9	The Safeguarding Policy must clearly set out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.	**
5	12	FS9	The service must provide information about the system for informing children about reporting child protection issues.	**
6	12	FS9	The policy must include information about contacting the Commission regarding the involvement or suspected involvement of young people in prostitution.	**
7	13	FS9	The unauthorised absence policy must clearly state the specific circumstances used to prevent a young person from going missing and meet with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.	**
8	13	FS9	The behaviour management policy must include clear guidance regarding restraint and include information if there are certain situations which may involve the Police.	**
9	14	FS10	There must be guidance available to staff, carers and children on the promotion of contact.	**

10	16	FS14	There must be a policy to prepare children and young people for independence or semi-independent living.	**
11	20 Schedule 1	FS15	There must be positive proof of identity sought for each worker recruited to the Fostering Service.	**
12	20 Schedule 1	FS15	Personnel files must include evidence that written references had been followed up by telephone enquiries.	**
13	20 Schedule 1	FS15	All personnel files must contain two references.	**
14	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The reference form must request the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability to work with children.	**
15	11(a)	FS15	All personnel files must contain a record of staff interviews.	**
16	18	FS22	The complaints procedure must be updated to include the elements as indicated in this standard.	**
17	30	FS24	The agency must chase up the agreed documents from the placing authority that are missing from some of the children's files.	**
18	22	FS24	All records must be signed by Social Workers following an entry in the files.	**
19	30	FS24	Foster care review forms must indicate that the appropriate checks have been made.	**

**The Registered Person must provide an action plan dealing with how and when the above requirements will be met.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS11	Written guidance should be made available to staff, carers and children about consultation.
2	FS3	The manager should have a qualification at Level 4 NVQ in Management by 2005.

* 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.

**the Responsible Individual is required to provide an action plan detailing the action to be taken to address these requirements and give timescales.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	NO
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	27/02/03
Time of Inspection	10
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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?

2

The Statement of Purpose and Function was last reviewed in January 2003 and was generally well presented. The manager reported in the questionnaire that the document had not been widely distributed to all stakeholders and other significant contacts at the time of the inspection. The Statement of Purpose and Function needs to detail the nature and outcome of any complaints made.

The Children's Guide was well presented and child focussed. The guide did not provide a summary of the complaints made on behalf of children placed with the agency/approved foster carers. The guide needs to include a summary of the Statement of Purpose and Function and also include the address and telephone number of the National Care Standards Commission. A copy of this document must be forwarded to the National Care Standards Commission on completion.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The manager has attained the BA Honours in Applied Social Studies and at the time of the inspection was not undertaking any management training. The manager had extensive experience of working with children and families in a number of different settings in the public and private sector.

Staff and foster carers indicated to the Inspectors that the service was well managed and they were clear about the aims and objectives of the organisation and what the manager expected from them.

There appeared to be an open and progressive and well organised management style and it was evident that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to ensure the needs of the service was being met.

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?

2

The personnel files inspected were generally well maintained. However, all but one Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks had been carried out. This was due to the check being processed at the time of the inspection. The organisation has a commitment to ensuring that CRB checks are carried out every three years and there was no evidence other than earlier identified to show this was not the situation.

The manager's file did not contain a photograph and in one Social Worker's file, it was impossible to distinguish their identity.

There was some evidence on the files to demonstrate that references had been followed up by telephone enquiries. However, two files contained one reference each. There was little evidence that a record of interviews were maintained, which would indicate who undertook the interview and demonstrate that all applicants were all being judged by the same criteria. The reference request also needed to ask for the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability to work with children. Requirements have been made under Standard 15 of this report.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager informed the Inspectors about the structures in place to monitor the service. Regular supervision was held with staff and their line managers to ensure that relevant tasks had been undertaken. The manager also had an overall responsibility for recruitment and selection and quality control functions. Regular team meetings, carer support group and supervision was also undertaken in conjunction with the Deputy Manager.

The fostering panel and independent review system also provided a forum whereby the quality of work could be assessed and comments would be made about the reports. The manager said that there was effective communication with the team and there was regular contact with carers.

The manager had access to monthly financial reports provided by the Company Finance Director.

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

2

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.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

Number of complaints made to NCSC 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**

A clear job description existed with respect to the manager, who was clear about her position in the organisation and whom she was accountable to. The manager did not hold any other positions in the organisation.

The manager informed the inspectors that delegated roles were undertaken by the deputy manager who also supervised staff. The deputy manager was in the named person in the absence of the manager. Staff spoken to indicated a full awareness of their own role within the organisation and of whom they were accountable to.

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?

4

There was a transparent and robust system in place to assess foster carers prior to approval. This process ensured that young people were provided with a safe, nurturing and healthy environment. The main Link Worker undertook the assessments and an initial report was drafted. This was followed by a Second Officer visit to ensure all issues covered were addressed and concurred with the First Officer's visit. Initial training and observational assessments was incorporated into this process to ensure potential carers were aware about the expectations from the organisation and visa versa.

Foster care agreements were noted on all files inspected. There was a 'safe care' policy drawn up by carers with respect to their home situation.

There was evidence that carers had been given information about the National Care Standards Commission. Carers welcomed visits from the Inspectors and co-operated with the Commission as part of the foster care agreement.

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 Inspectors were informed by the manager and foster carers that training and development was ongoing to ensure that children were appropriately placed and cared for.

There was training named "Valuing Diversity" which was planned on 27th March 2003 for foster carers and staff. Foster carers indicated that they benefited from all training and there was evidence that the needs of black and disabled children were being met with additional support provided where required by the agency. The agency also provided additional adaptations and equipment to foster carers caring for children with disabilities. There was also evidence that the placement process aims to match the carer's skills and experience with the child's needs. With respect to transracial placements, staff spoken to demonstrated to the inspectors the range of considerations and issues that would need to be considered prior to making these placements.

There was evidence that the agency strived to ensure that the team and carers recruited, including the fostering panel reflected the diverse community.

There was also evidence that where the parent's first language was not English, the service of an Interpreter was sought.

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**

Discussions with the agency and inspection of the children's files demonstrated that great consideration was given to the matching process to ensure that appropriate matches were being made and there was some evidence of this at the carer's approval panel. Discussions with the Panel Chair indicated that issues with respect to diversity are given serious consideration in the matching process between foster carers and children placed with them.

There was information available to demonstrate that the agency ensured they provided appropriate matches to ensure the needs of children were being met.

There was evidence that the agency did not always make a match between the ethnic origin, race, culture, religion and language of the foster carer to that of the child. However, upon further examination of the carers and child's file, there was clear information available to indicate that additional support, information and training had been provided and was regularly reviewed.

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?****2**

The agency had provided training to all foster carers recruited to the agency in caring for a child who had been abused. There were copies of 'safe caring' policies included in the files, which were produced by the foster carers in relation to their home. Foster carers indicated that they understood that corporal punishment was not an acceptable means of sanctions and there was written information provided by the agency to this effect.

There were systems in place at the agency to record and evaluate information following allegations of abuse.

There was a bullying policy in place and there was training in place for foster carers in recognising and responding to bullying.

The Safeguarding Policy needed to clearly set out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. There also needed to be information about the system for informing children about reporting child protection issues and the policy needs to include information about contacting the Commission regarding the involvement or suspected involvement of young people in prostitution.

The unauthorised absence policy did not clearly state the specific circumstances used to prevent a young person from going missing and additional information was required to the policy to ensure it met fully with the Fostering Regulations 2002.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	0	%
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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?

2

There was clear evidence contained on the files and through discussions with children and foster carers that contact was encouraged between family members and friends where permissible. Records indicated that there was no pressure for contact to take place in the foster carers homes where this was not felt to be appropriate. Some foster carers informed the Inspectors that contact sometimes took place in their own homes and they facilitated this process. In other cases, contact was undertaken at alternative venues.

Children spoken to by the inspectors expressed no interest in having contact with key family members and they confirmed they were not pressured to have such contact. Discussions with foster carers revealed that the children's views were not taken for granted and they were encouraged but not pressurised to have contact with key family members. There was no guidance available to staff, carers and children on the promotion of contact at the time of the inspection.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The children and foster carers consulted confirmed that children were encouraged to complete the pre-review consultation documents and present themselves at their reviews. The children said they thought their views were listened to and acted upon. The children spoken to also reported that their foster carers would explain review decisions to them.

The manager reported that the agency provided training and holiday activities for children and young people looked after in fostering families in which their views and concerns are listened to and discussed. It is also the intention of the agency to ensure that children are aware that they can discuss their concerns with the Link Workers. There is also information available in the young people's leaflets.

Children confirmed they were aware about the complaints procedure and knew who to talk to if they had an issue about any matter which affected them.

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**

The foster care agreement clearly specifies the child's state of health and identified health needs.

The agency is currently looking to recruit a Specialist Health Advisor to assist in addressing all health issues for young people.

There was clear information on the files, which demonstrated that thorough health assessments had been undertaken, including support to children with disabilities. Foster carers also maintained their own secure records of health appointments and hospital visits.

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?****4**

The promotion of education was contained in the foster care agreement. Foster carer confirmed their attendance at school evenings to ensure they are kept up to date with the child's progress. The agency work in partnership with The National Teaching Advisory Service For Looked After Children (NT&AS) to ensure the educational needs of children and young people are being met whilst in foster care. Each child is assigned a teacher who prepares a detailed background education report and identifies any issues for that young person. Records indicated that there was substantial input from this service. The manager reported that the agency and NT&AS are developing a monitoring form to record the educational outcomes for children.

There were copies of personal educational plans (P.E.P's) observed on the young people's files.

Children spoken to in foster placement had clearly made impressive educational achievements in School and appeared to be fully supported by their carers and the agency and the National Teaching Advisory Service.

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?****2**

There was no policy/procedure of what was expected of foster carers to prepare children and young people for independence or semi-independent living.

The agency's manager reported that the link workers work in conjunction with carers to promote age appropriate life and social skills in accordance with their needs and abilities. It is the aim of the foster carers in the agency to work with the Local Authority Leaving Care Team to ensure they are working towards the Pathway Plan.

The agencies manager reported that post approval training has been planned for all carers to address the issue of children and young people leaving care. It is also intended that the Specialist Health Advisor when in post will have a specific role in this area.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

The team consists of 1 Team Manager and a Deputy Team Manager who are qualified Social Workers. There are 3 Senior Social Workers, who are all qualified Social Workers. There is one Family Support Worker who is qualified to NNEB with extensive experience of working with children, young people and their families in a number of different settings. The Senior Social Workers are responsible for the recruitment, training, assessment, support and supervision of training. They are also responsible for referral, matching, co-ordination and monitoring of placements, recording and preparation of reports. The Family Support Worker is responsible for the provision of practical support to establish and maintain stability of placements. There is one Administrative Manager and an Administrative Assistant who are also suitably qualified.

The Inspectors met with the staff and they confirmed their roles as indicated above. In addition, staff demonstrated their knowledge and ability to carry out their roles.

A copy of the recruitment policy was made available for inspection.

There was some information missing from the personnel files as indicated earlier in Standard 3.

Total number of staff of the agency:

8

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

1

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 had a very clear and accountable management structure in place. Staff confirmed they received regular supervision by the managers, including the Manager, who received supervision from the Responsible Individual of the agency. The staff team presented as well supported and comments were made to this effect.

The manager reported that there were good staffing ratios with Senior Social Workers supporting a maximum of 10 carers. The manager also described the team as supportive, well-motivated professionals who provide mutual support. The agency also had access to appropriate professional advisor, including childcare and medical fields to ensure full support was being offered to foster care families.

In the manager's absence, the deputy manager was delegated to the manager's role and he had the appropriate skills and qualifications to undertake this role.

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**

At the time of the inspection, the agency was fully staffed.

Staff policies appeared to encourage the retention of staff and there was some staff that had worked for the agency for some time. These included foster carers, who commented positively about the agency as an employer. One carer described the support provided by the agency as 'tremendous'.

The agency had a clear recruitment policy and strategy to recruit carers from all sections of the community to meet the needs of children and young people. The manager reported that they have a clear policy in line with the Fostering Network protocol that means that they do not actively seek to recruit existing carers from other agencies. There was clear evidence to demonstrate that the agency has a clearly set out assessment process for carers and foster carers confirmed this was thorough and intensive.

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**

Swiis Fostering Agency has clear and established employment policies and procedures in relation to both staff and carers. Foster carers confirmed that there was out of hours support available to them and they confirmed that this was a valuable resource to them. Foster carers spoken to apart from one confirmed that they generally felt well supported by their Link Workers and said they were regularly supervise and appraised.

The agency had a comprehensive Health and Safety policy in place and there was a public liability and professional insurance policy in place at the agency. There was a whistle blowing policy in place which was made available to staff and carers.

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**

Training appeared to be a key feature at the Agency and there was an induction process for all staff that worked for the agency including an appraisal system. The agency appeared to be committed to ongoing training for staff and foster carers and the manager reported that training is also provided for extended family, support networks and carers children.

The manager reported that the agency plans to recruit a qualified trainer into the organisation in 2003. A training strategy for 2003 was also available for inspection which incorporated the views of carers.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

All staff had job descriptions that provided an accurate description of their role within the fostering agency. The manager reported that staff meetings were regularly held. Observations made of the staff team indicated that the team was mutually supportive and that they were listened to and the Inspectors observed a team meeting whereby decisions were being made about a referral of a young person. The manager and deputy manager presented as supportive and approachable towards staff in an informal but professional manner.

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**

Discussions with foster carers revealed that foster carers felt well supported and there was evidence of this in the files and through discussions with foster carers. There were regular foster carer support group meetings held and these were well attended. Foster carers spoken to said they had participated in social events arranged by the agency and found these events to be enjoyable both for themselves and their families. Foster carers also confirmed that Link Workers were accessible and supportive, they were visited and supervised regularly and they offered advice and assistance, including out of hours support.

Foster carers confirmed they were aware about the annual reviews and they reported that they were involved in this process.

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?****2**

Foster carer agreements were observed on the files, which included information to enable approved foster carers to have a full understanding of what was expected from them. The foster carer agreement complied with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The Inspector observed the foster carers handbook, which included policies, procedures and guidance and other relevant information. There was a clear system in place provided by the agency that addressed practical support to carers and there was evidence of this noted from the files and through discussions with foster carers.

The agency had a system in place to record allegations of abuse and there was clear guidance available regarding allegation against carers.

Not all foster carers and placing social workers reported that they had received information about the complaints procedure. The complaints procedure did not include the following information:

- The name, address and telephone number of the National Care Standards Commission.
- Information about the action to be taken if a complaint is made against the registered person.
- Complaints made on behalf of the child.
- The procedure needed to be made known to parents, children and young people, and social worker on request.
- There should be a central record of complaints. These need to be monitored, including a demonstration as to how they have been processed and the outcome.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The agency provided a fully comprehensive pre-approval and induction training for foster carers and children were not placed with prospective foster carers until the carers had been approved. Post approval training workshops at level 1, included 'Child Protection', 'Safe Caring', 'Recording', 'Contact', 'Managing Behaviour' and 'First Aid'. At level 2, training workshops included 'Separation and Loss', 'Valuing Diversity' and 'Communicating with Children'. Foster carers confirmed that this process was intense and thorough. Foster carers confirmed that training was mandatory and commented they were a valuable means of information to enable them to undertake their work with children and young people they care for in conjunction with other foster carers.

Staff at the agency also informed the Inspectors that training was also available to foster carers who cared for children with disabilities.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There was information provided by the agency for foster carers and workers, including a policy about records and the confidential maintenance of files in the agency. There were case files available at the agency for children and foster carers and these files were stored in order of fostering families and were easy to access. The Inspector was made aware that the placing social workers retained one set of files which contained details of the placement and documentation related to the child.

Foster carers reported that they were fully aware of the child's legal status and background information related to the children they cared for and on the whole felt fully informed and involved in the child's care plan. Carers were provided with a lockable storage file to enable them to record and securely store information related to the children they cared for. This was observed during a visit to a foster carers home.

One file inspected did not contain a record of the review decisions made about a child. The agency needed to develop a system whereby they ensured that agreed relevant documents from placing authorities were chased up in not promptly received.

Record sheets were not always signed by the agency Social Worker.

Foster carers review forms did not always demonstrate that the appropriate checks had been completed.

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**

The agency maintained records for staff employed by the agency, children looked after and foster carers. Separate records were kept with respect to complaints and allegations. These records were confidentially stored and there was clear written guidance about the recording and access to files. The I.T systems were reported by the manager to be secured with password and firewall protection.

The agency had introduced the 'soft box' database and information system. The purpose of this system is intended to hold information regarding carers, staff and children and young people referred to the agency. The system will also allow the tracking of all applicants through the training assessment and approval process, record terms of approval, vacancies and numbers of placements made. The system also has the ability to record significant events and generate reports.

The manager reported that placing social workers received regular reports on the children being cared for. It was reported however that full documentation was not always supplied immediately on placement. The manager reported that training for foster carers focussed on keeping good recordings and mementos for children. There was evidence noted of this during a visit at a foster carers home and the foster carer confirmed that they had received the appropriate Looked After Children (LAC) documentation.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

29

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

X

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

3

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

X

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager reported that she believed the office based in Manchester were well equipped and resourced. The manager indicated during the inspection that plans were underway in the near future to move to larger premises as the building expands. Upon inspection, the premises were found to be appropriate for the purpose of the service and there was adequate space for all staff to work in. There was also adequate space for meetings to be held and training courses. The premises were secure and protected by a security system. The manager reported that all social work and office based staff have mobile phones for personal safety and communication purposes.

The certificate of insurance was observed in a prominent place in the office.

There were computer terminals available for all staff to use.

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

The manager reported that the SWIIS International Group of Companies operates SWIIS Fostering Agency which has a financial infrastructure based at the London Head Office. All financial communications are dealt with in London and monthly reports are provided for managers in each region. Other financial issues such as payroll, tax, National Insurance and VAT are dealt with centrally.

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

As previously stated, the service operates to the policies and procedures as in respect of management and control and is governed by Head Office in London. Head Office deals with payments and other financial issues centrally as detailed above.

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**

There was written information available to carers on fostering allowances. The manager reported that carers received fees and allowances which are paid weekly and reviewed on an annual basis. The manager reported that Foster carers also received retainers to cover holidays and provide some continuity between placements. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that payments made to them were made regularly, and at the specified time. There was written information observed on the foster carers files about the level of allowance paid to them and information about tax and National Insurance 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

There were clear written procedures in place and written guidance about fostering panels and the Inspectors observed one fostering panel to approve carers during the inspection process. The agency has had a regional fostering panel in place since October 2000. The manager said that panel members reflected the community they served and had specific expertise in fostering and adoption work, education, children with disabilities and a service user perspective and there was evidence of this observed at panel. The agency also had legal and medical advisors who provided their expertise at panel. The manager confirmed that CRB checks had been obtained with respect to all panel members, including the Independent Chair who confirmed the check had occurred.

The Independent Chair had the experience and skills necessary for chairing a panel and when spoken to demonstrated the different aspects of the role and confirmed there was no conflict of interests involved. The Panel also provided a quality control function.

The Inspectors were informed that an experienced Independent Reviewing Officer chaired carer's reviews in Manchester and his reports were presented to the fostering panel for their consideration.

Foster carers annual reviews were also taken to panel.

The manager reported that Local Authorities were informed of all SWIIS appointed carers in their areas.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The manager reported that the agency does not currently offer this service, however it will be an area for future development.
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
Not assessed as this standard is not applicable to this agency.		

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)**

Not Applicable at this inspection.

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 27th February 2003 of Swiis Foster Care and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Providers comments and an action plan are available at the Area Office, where these have been submitted.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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 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 NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____
confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation
of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that
I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with
these.

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____
am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

--

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation _____

Date _____

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