



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Seafields Fostering Agency

Seafields House

29/31 Malvern Road

Hornchurch

Essex

RM11 1BG

9th September – 17th December 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Seafields Fostering Agency

Tel No

01708 733735

Address

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

Fax No

Email Address

Mike.Kearns@seafields.com

Registered Number of IFA

G050000369

Name of Registered Provider

Seafields Fostering Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

14th March 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

17th February 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

17/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		12th September- 17 th December 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:45 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Joanna Moore	073902
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Mike Kearns/ Ms carol Carter	

Introduction to Report and Inspection
Inspection visits
Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings
Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection
Statutory Requirements from this Inspection
Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings
(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

- D.1. Provider's comments**
- D.2. Action Plan**
- D.3. Provider's agreement**

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Seafields Fostering Limited is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from a main office based at Seafields House in the London Borough of Havering 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. The company is in the process of liaising with the CSCI offices in those areas to understand whether those offices require separate registration. The company is allied to Homefields fostering which operates out of Newmarket and specialises in permanency placements and which is accredited as an NVQ assessment centre. Both companies work closely together and a number of staff work across both. Seafields Fostering 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.

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.)

Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service.

The registered person and the manager were both qualified and experienced to operate the agency. Through discussion with the manager, agency staff and through observation there was evidence to demonstrate effective leadership within the agency. Staff report that they have positive, professional and supportive working relationships with their respective managers. Recruitment practices were robust.

Management of the fostering service

The organisational structure has provided 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.

Securing and promoting welfare

All young people visited and who responded to questionnaires were provided with a safe, warm and nurturing environment. Through discussion with staff and foster carers and from attendance at the fostering panel and support groups, 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. The agency places a high focus on "safe care" practice and this was constantly reinforced through supervision, training and support groups. Through inspection of files and discussion with staff and foster carers the Inspector was able to evidence ongoing work to encourage, maintain and develop family contacts and friendships for children/young people in foster care. 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. 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.

Recruiting, training and supporting staff and carers.

The fostering service was seen to operate a robust recruitment procedure. From discussion

and inspection of documents, files, policies and procedures, there was evidence to demonstrate that the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and that they are recruited, managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. There were designated administrative and clerical support services and an infrastructure that ensures all staff receive appropriate levels of support to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. 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. All staff and carers spoke highly positively of their experiences of the agency as an employer. Comments included: fair, supportive, committed to the needs of carers and staff, committed to training and most importantly committed to the ethos of protecting and supporting the children and young people in the agency's care. The organisation is accredited with investors in people and received a very positive report regarding staff support. 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". The agency was able to evidence a strong commitment to training for both carers and staff.

Records

The records for children were not clearly held in separate files but mixed in with the carers it was therefore not possible to comprehensively case track a young person from records held. It is recommended that the agency hold individual case files for each young person and that these contain all the information received from the point of referral to the point where the child ceases to be accommodated by Seafields carers. 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. The fostering service's administrative records contained all significant information relevant to the operation of the foster care service and as required by regulation.

Fitness of Premises

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.

Financial requirements

There are systems in place to deal with all accounting and financial arrangements. The organisation has a Business and Financial Plan, which is open to inspection by the CSCI. The Inspector was satisfied that the agency is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. 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.

Fostering panels

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

The panel chair ensured that there was the required quorum for the panel to function.

The Inspector observed robust discussion of issues and appropriate facilitation by the chair.

Detailed consideration was given to the Form F assessment, acknowledging strengths and identifying areas in need of development. Form F assessments were noted by the Inspector to be of a very high standard. Panel members have expertise in education, child health and child protection. There are two panel members who are foster carers for local authority fostering service. The panel has access to medical expertise as required. The panel was observed to have a role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			There were no requirements outstanding from the previous inspection.	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Locality Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	A Children's Guide to the fostering service included information on how to complain, but it is required that this include the address and telephone number of the local office of the commission.	1.4.05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	It is recommended that the guide also be produced in other formats such as video for children.
		It is recommended that carers of disabled children be provided with moving and handling training.
2	FS11	It is a recommendation that Seafields Fostering consider developing some written information for fostered children on "how to complain" in a format that is user friendly and age appropriate.
3	FS24	It is recommended that the agency hold individual case files for each young person and that this contain all the information received from the point of referral to the point where the child ceases to be accommodated by Seafields carers.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B	INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS
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The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	7
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	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	12/09/04
Time of Inspection	1000
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	50

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A clear and comprehensive Statement of Purpose was in place, which included all of the information required by legislation. The Statement of Purpose had been reviewed within the twelve months prior to the inspection. A Children's Guide to the fostering service included information on how to complain, but it is required that this include the address and telephone number of the local office of the commission. The guide is child friendly and given to each child on its placement in the foster home. It is recommended that the guide also be produced in other formats such as video for children. The inspector was advised that a copy of the Statement Of Purpose was issued to all staff.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The current manager has a Diploma in Social Work and extensive experience of working with children / young people and families at a senior level. The manager is in the process of obtaining an NVQ level 5 qualification in management and was registered as the manager of the fostering service within the twelve months prior to this inspection. Through discussion with the manager, agency staff and through observation there was evidence to demonstrate effective leadership within the agency. Staff report that they have positive, professional and supportive working relationships with their respective managers.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The recruitment files were checked for two staff members were checked and were found to meet regulatory requirements.

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 organisational structure has provided 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.

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

3

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.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From discussion with the manager, staff and through viewing documentation it was evident that the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. The manager has a clear job description setting out his duties and responsibilities. The level of delegation and lines of accountability are clearly defined through the job description and supported by the management structure. There are clear arrangements in place to ensure the continued effective management of the service, in the absence of the manager. The responsible person and a number of directors were based on site in addition to the manager enabling workers to access senior advice at any time. A clear line of responsibility was in place which included area managers as the direct manager of the social workers and senior

administrative staff.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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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.

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. It is recommended that carers of disabled children be provided with moving and handling training.

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
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Through discussion with staff and foster carers and from attendance at the fostering panel and support groups, 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.

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
<p>Through interviews with key staff, discussions with foster carers and inspection of files, the Inspector attempted to track the process of referral and placement of children/young people. Forms were held in a central place and it was difficult to locate those forms which related to the children case tracked. It is recommended that referral forms for children and young people placed be held on a file for the individual young person with all subsequent information regarding that child (refer to standard 25). From discussions with carers and 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. 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.</p> <p>Where possible, a period of introduction is planned for the child/young person to visit the proposed foster carer.</p>		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Through inspection of files and discussion with staff and foster carers the Inspector was able to evidence ongoing work to encourage, maintain and develop family contacts and friendships for children/young people in foster care. Where siblings were placed with different carers within the agency regular contact was arranged between carers to maintain the sibling relationships and where possible they were placed within the same local area and attended the same school. The Inspector was encouraged to see the amount of work done in this area. This is particularly important where children may be placed a long way from home. Carers were clear as to the need to record any issues arising from contact and to notify the placing authority of any concerns.

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. 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 often 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. Children and young people had a variety of contact arrangements and carers were clear as to their roles in supporting these and strategies were observed to be discussed at support groups.

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?**

2

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 manager advised the inspector that the agency had involved the children's rights officer in one placing authority in order to secure appropriate levels of support and were considering this for other young people where it was felt that the placing authority was not supporting the child effectively.

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 when asked if "the fostering service ever asked for their opinions in respect of the service".

From information in feedback questionnaires it was evident that children/young people had

been “told how to make a complaint”. It was a recommendation from the previous inspection that Seafields Fostering consider developing some written information for fostered children on “how to complain” in a format that is user friendly and age appropriate, this remained outstanding.

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

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. Foster carers the inspector was advised receive training in health and hygiene and first aid.

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 their needs were being met by the carers 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. Where appropriate support was not forthcoming from the Placing Authority the agency advised the inspector that they were considering formal representation to the Children’s Rights Officer of that Authority in an attempt to secure that the interests and needs of the child were met.

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

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. One foster carer was in constant contact with the school regarding the degree of support required for the child to the level that the child would be taken out of school for a few hours at the request of the school in order to maintain their placement. 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. Another young person visited was a gifted child who was doing extremely well academically at school. The carer in discussions with the young person was effectively seeking out the best further education option for the young person and providing levels of support which evidenced full partnership and commitment with the young person. The inspector was advised that the carers attended school open days, parents evenings etc in the parental role however that this would be shared with the parent according to levels of contact.

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.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

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 when decisions regarding adult living were beginning to come into play. The young person advised the inspector that they were consulted about their future and actively encouraged to be involved in decision-making and would be involved in the development of the Pathway Plan. The young person was encouraged to develop the practical life skills for independent living from the age of fourteen as a gradual development of skill rather than waiting for the Pathway plan to be implemented.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The records were maintained to a good standard and files were well structured. There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. The inspector was advised by staff that when posts became available all current staff had the opportunity to apply for the vacant post. The fostering service was seen to operate a robust recruitment procedure. All social work staff involved in assessment and approval of foster carers are qualified social workers, with relevant foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment. Students on placement and others who do not meet this requirement carry out such work under the supervision of a suitably qualified social worker, who is accountable for the work undertaken.

From discussion and inspection of documents, files, policies and procedures, there was evidence to demonstrate that the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and that they are recruited, managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care.

Total number of staff of the agency:

28

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

There was a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability and this linked with Standard 5.

There were designated administrative and clerical support services and an infrastructure that ensures all staff receive appropriate levels of support to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. Social workers received monthly supervision and administrative workers bimonthly supervision. The manager was also said to operate an open door policy, which all staff felt free to utilise.

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. Clear systems were in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers were managed effectively.

Professional supervision and consultation were provided for social work staff by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. 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.

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

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 and is in line with the Statement of Purpose. The staff team the inspector was advised was stable with little turnover.

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.

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?

4

All staff and carers spoke highly positively of their experiences of the agency as an employer. Comments included: fair, supportive, committed to the needs of carers and staff, committed to training and most importantly committed to the ethos of protecting and supporting the children and young people in the agency's care. The organisation is accredited with investors in people and received a very positive report regarding staff support. There is an Employee Handbook; a Good Practice Guide for Foster Carers; and Health and Safety Policies.

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 the are always available to help and support". The inspector was satisfied from these comments and other feedback from carers that there was an effective out of hour's management and support service available to foster carers.

Management systems were in place for carer supervision, appraisal and support.

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.

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?	4
<p>Individual staff training records were not viewed as part of this inspection. From viewing policies and procedures and through discussions with both management and staff it was evident that staff were provided with training in order to carry out their roles effectively. The inspector was advised that all Social workers have either completed or were due to undertake the practice teachers award. The manager was undertaking NVQ level 5 in management. The agency was accredited as an NVQ assessment centre in order to provide those courses which were felt relevant to carers including NVQ level 3. The organisation is accredited with investors in people and received a very positive report shortly before the inspection, regarding staff support and training. Staff feedback was that the organisation as a whole was highly committed to training and that staff were free to seek out appropriate training and that this would be supported if it were linked to the role that they performed within the organisation. An annual appraisal system was in place in addition to an initial probationary assessment. Changes in legislation and good practice were said to be discussed in team meetings. Team days were held quarterly and feedback was that these were useful events.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>From viewing staff records, policies and procedures and through discussions with both management and staff it was evident that staff that come into contact with foster carers and children/young people receive supervision. Supervision takes place every 3-4 weeks, is planned in advance and a record is maintained of the content of the supervision. The Inspector found evidence of staff appraisals, which address training and development needs. All staff have written job descriptions and the policies and procedures of the organisation. There are weekly team meetings and regular team development days.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

4

Through discussions with foster carers and staff, and from viewing documentation, for example, policies and procedures and foster carer files it was very evident that the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

The Inspector heard from carers that they feel very well supported by the agency. "If we ever have a problem, someone is always available. "24 hours, 7 days a week, all year".

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 This is reflected in foster carer comments about the support received. In questionnaires completed as part of this inspection all carers who replied to questions about support, commented that they felt very well supported by 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. The role of the supervising social worker was clear to both the worker and the carer. All foster carers were reviewed annually and reports were referred to the fostering panel. The agency operated an effective out of hour's support system.

A number of placing social workers completed questionnaires as part of this inspection. In response to questions about how well the agency works with the placing authority all said that they felt that the agency worked well in partnership with them.

In the past year the fostering agency has experienced foster carers being approached directly by placing authorities to resign from Seafields and become foster carers with that respective authority, if they wish to foster a child or young person long term. No contact has being made with the agency. Seafields Fostering respects the right of choice for all foster carers to choose whom they wish to be a foster care for. Their concerns have been that the process of formally deregistering as foster carers from Seafields and the process of approval of the foster carer for the other agency is conducted appropriately and robustly with the stability, security and best interests of the child/young person. The registered providers have addressed and managed this issue with the local authorities concerned and the Commission, as part of the inspection process in an appropriate and professional manner.

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?**

4

Foster carers had a clear understanding of what their role was. Each carer had a clearly designated linking social worker from the agency. All carers stated that they received extremely good support from the agency and this was the strength of the agency. Each carer had been given a foster carers handbook, which contained the essential policies and guidance for caring for young people. Carers and their social worker met between weekly and three weekly according to their needs. Foster care agreements were in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. All foster carers receive a copy of the organisations handbook "Good Practice Guide for Foster Carers", which is very comprehensive and covers the details as required under Standard 22.5. This handbook is

reviewed and regularly updated.

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.

The Inspector was told that there were systems of practical support for carers and these were provided in a variety of ways. Carers were very positive about this practical support. 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.

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 Inspector attended choosing to foster training for foster carers as part of the inspection. This was experienced as a helpful and informative training where people could discuss and share issues as well as moving through the set training program. Each foster carer has an individual training portfolio and are actively encouraged, supported and financed to undertake NVQ training, as appropriate.

All training is within a framework of equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practice and is organised to facilitate attendance. The agency involves the carers own children by provision of summer activity/ fun days, as part of the assessment and panel process, and Christmas cards were sent to the foster carer's own children as well as the carers and children in placement. The provision of safe caring forms a high priority within Seafields Fostering training programme.

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
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The records for children were not clearly held in separate files but mixed in with the carers it was therefore not possible to comprehensively case track a young person from records held. It is recommended that the agency hold individual case files for each young person and that these contain all the information received from the point of referral to the point where the child ceases to be accommodated by Seafields carers.

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.

Foster carers receive training in how to record information and significant life events for the child/young person. Through discussion with foster carers it was evident that they understood the need to encourage children/young people in their care to reflect on and understand his/her history, and to keep appropriate memorabilia. An example of good practice was shared at the support group attended this was suggestions for the development of a memory box for the young person. This included photographs with information about when and where taken and who was in the photo, baby clothes, favourite toys, and videos of the child. This memory box was intended to follow the child to the next placement and be added to and enable the young person to put into context memories that they have, but will be unable to place.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Through discussion with staff, and viewing case files and policy/procedural guidance the Inspector found evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service's administrative records contained all significant information relevant to the operation of the foster care service and as required by regulation. There is clear guidance for staff on record keeping and managing confidential information. Please refer to standard 24.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			97
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			19
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			6
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	301.35	Maximum £	301.35

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used 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.

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 organisation has a designated Finance Officer who is responsible to the Head of Business Services. There are systems in place to deal with all accounting and financial arrangements. The organisation has a Business and Financial Plan, which is open to Inspection by the CSCI. The Inspector was satisfied that the agency is financially viable and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a written set of principles and standards describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff at all levels; and directors and senior managers of the organisation receive regular information on the financial processes. The agency's accounts are maintained and properly audited by a registered accountant. A clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses is available on request to purchasers and others with a legitimate interest.

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

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.

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?
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The Inspector observed a panel as part of this inspection.

The fostering panel have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice about the handling of their functions.

The panel chair ensured that there was the required quorum for the panel to function.

The Inspector observed robust discussion of issues and appropriate facilitation by the chair. Detailed consideration was given to the Form F assessment, acknowledging strengths and identifying areas in need of development. Form F assessments were noted by the Inspector to be of a very high standard.

There was a presentation by the assessing social worker and then the prospective foster carers were invited to attend the panel. This enhances the decision making process as panel members are able to question the prospective foster carers on points of clarification and affords the foster carers an opportunity to also ask questions.

Panel members have expertise in education, child health and child protection. There are two panel members who are foster carers for local authority fostering service. The panel has access to medical expertise as required. The panel was observed to have a role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. The panel ensures that there is a consistency of approach and standard of assessment across the service and that it is completed in a thorough and rigorous way. The Inspector observed that foster carer annual reviews are brought to the panel.

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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Seafields Fostering Service does not provide short-term placements within the meaning of the Fostering Services Regulation 37.	9
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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?
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This standard is not relevant to Seafields Fostering Service.	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

NO

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 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

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

NO

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ 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.

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