



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Banya Family Placement Agency

**286A - 288 Croxted Road
Croxted Mews
London
SE24 9DA**

Lead Inspector
Rossella Volpi

Announced Inspection
July / October 2006

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Banya Family Placement Agency
Address	286A - 288 Croxted Road Croxted Mews London SE24 9DA
Telephone number	020 8678 5330
Fax number	020 8678 5343
Email address	elspeth.devlin@banyanet.com
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Banya Family Placement Agency
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Elspeth Devlin
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 20 July 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Banya Family Placement Agency (Banya) is an independent fostering agency, established about nine years ago. The primary role of the agency is to recruit, approve and support foster carers, from diverse backgrounds and skills, for looked after children needing substitute family care.

Its stated aim is to provide high standards of care for children and young people, including young parent and baby placements and sibling groups. Banya endeavours to ensure that everybody who comes into contact with the fostered child or young person promotes their welfare and safeguards their interests. The agency aims to work closely with the child or young person's family and placing authority.

Banya is a private limited company with two directors. One of them is the social work director and the designated decision maker. The other director has a lead role in administration and finance and represents the agency as the designated responsible individual. The day-to-day management of the service is delegated to the fostering manager. The premises are offices, located in a commercial estate.

At March 2006, there were 52 approved fostering households and 82 children placed. The fees charged to placing authorities started from approximately £763 per week.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection activities were conducted mainly during the week of 31 July to 4 August 2006. Due to cancellation of a previous panel and the need for reminders to carers and young people about questionnaires to be returned, the inspection concluded at the end of October 2006. At this time a panel session was observed, a discussion was held with the chair and legal advisor of the panel and a final discussion was held with the manager and directors of the agency.

The inspection included several previous discussions with the manager and directors as well as interviews with members of the staff team. Questionnaires were sent to children, carers and placing social workers; the responses have informed this report. Case tracking was conducted for the 3 carers and children in placement where a visit had been arranged and also on other cases. Extracts from files and other documents, including statutory care plan reviews, were looked at.

One carers' training session was observed and a discussion then held with some of the carers.

Visits to three carers had been arranged, but only one could be concluded. Attempts to contact a carer by telephone were unsuccessful also. As the inspection had already been protracted, no new visits were then arranged. This decision took account that feedback from a significant number of children (20) and carers (11) was obtained through questionnaires and also face to face with some carers at Banya's office. Also eight carers had been visited at the previous inspection and the results of those visits had been positive.

To inform the inspection, the directors prepared written information about the service and the manager prepared the annual quality assurance assessment.

What the service does well:

The service endeavoured to:

- Work towards meeting children's cultural and racial needs.
- Encourage children to achieve at school and helped them to keep healthy.
- Seek children's opinions

Children commented, overall, that they felt well cared for in their foster homes. For example they said about their carers:

"She is very good and she is very kind to me".

"I like my home and my foster family."

Some illustrations about why they felt well cared for included:

"Because mum and dad love me"

“Because I am getting a pony”
“Because I have a nice room”
“Because I get to go on holiday”

Children said that their opinions counted and they knew whom to speak to if they were unhappy or had a personal problem. For example children said:

“I can speak to my social worker, my foster brother, mum and sister”

“My social worker listens to me and if I give my opinions she tries to find a solution and usually she gets a solution for me”.

Children considered that they got help with education and support about keeping healthy; for example:

“I am doing good at school”

“We each have our own school, which is best for us”

“I always have healthy meals and drinks, milk, juices, no fizzy drinks”.

Carers echoed the above. Generally they valued the support and the training received and said that the agency was committed to equality; for example:

“Banya is a caring agency”

“Training, advice, support and link work is very good”

“Being predominantly a black agency, they are very pro issues such as equality and diversity, culture and ethnicity”.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The manager illustrated improvements on a number of areas including:

- The reporting system on the health and education children’s profiles.
- More clarity of management functions and roles.
- Strengthening of the panel process, including the appointment of a legal advisor and a professional minute-taker.
- Procedure relating to notifiable events.
- Introduction of new monitoring systems.

Supervising social workers said that they had been receiving better support and guidance from management.

An outreach worker had been employed, part time, to support carers by working directly with children.

What they could do better:

There were a few, but significant matters for the agency to address to make protection of children and its management more robust. These related to: assessment, matching, terms of approval of carers and the recruitment of staff.

Although the agency was managed with the aim to deliver a good foster care service, this had been undermined by lack of consistently effective quality assurance, which had resulted in weaknesses in safeguarding.

Some carers said that they had not received adequate information about the children before placement began and this affected their ability to look after the child well. (This had been a recurrent issue).

Although the agency promoted contact and valued diversity, the ability of carers to do so needed to be more consistently evidenced in relation to the terms of approval. Also, regarding diversity, by clear policies about transracial or transcultural placements.

The agency needed to ensure that carers and supervising social workers would be clear about the components of the carers' allowances.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Banya continued to make a good contribution to the promotion of the health and development of children placed with its foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Children and young people mostly said that they received advice about being healthy. For example:

"I get support about being healthy, as I had many appointments in hospital and medical centres"

"...(My carer) wants me to be healthy"

"I eat a healthy diet at home, plenty of drinks, e.g. milk, Ribena and juices".

The children's files looked at and discussion with carers and staff at Banya, gave examples of how health care had been promoted in the individual cases considered. Children were registered with a general practitioner. The agency checked that carers took the children to statutory medical reviews, dentist, optician and hospital appointments when needed. Contact with specialist health services would be maintained or instigated when necessary.

Written information (from the provider to CSCI) indicated that all the children had received an annual health check in the last twelve months.

The manager gave examples of courses attended by carers in the last two years or of other activities initiated by the agency to promote health. This included, also, specialist sessions for particular carers to help them support individual children. The manager said that all carers had received basic training

on health and hygiene and first aid and that all carers would receive a written health record for each child placed with them, which would be updated during the placement and move with the child.

It was understood, from the manager, that instances where medical information had not been supplied by a placing authority had diminished since last inspection; it was also understood that the agency had been active in liaising with the authorities involved about this.

The responsibilities of carers to promote healthy and active lifestyles, encourage sports and support children in considering matters such as sexual health or the risks associated with drugs or alcohol consumption, were made clear during assessment. Supervising social workers monitored carers' effectiveness. For example a carer confirmed this by saying:

"During visits there is discussion around being healthy, diets and also training in safer caring"

The manager intended to place more focus in the following year on issues around smoking, both in relation to foster carers and children in placement. She also intended to raise awareness with carers and staff of the impact on a foster carer household of particular medical conditions affecting a child to be placed, prior to the placement being made.

One placing social worker considered that the child/ren placed were not receiving sufficient support about promoting a healthy diet. (See recommendation).

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

Quality in this area was adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency took steps to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect. Some issues identified (about the assessment, matching, terms of approval of carers and recruitment of staff), made aspects of safeguarding not robust enough.

EVIDENCE:

Comments received from children such as:

"They take care of me".

"They are there for me"

"I get help and support from my foster mum and at school"

indicated that mostly they felt that they were well cared for.

The provider and the registered manager were assessed as suitable for the position as part of the registration process.

There were strengths in the panel. This was a joint panel with another independent fostering agency. It benefited from an independent chair, from a range of members with differing backgrounds and from a legal advisor. Previous requirements had been acted upon, (these were regarding minute taking and separation of roles to enable objectivity in assessments).

During the session observed it was noted that the panel carefully went through the cases presented and discussed the issues where more explanation was needed or where there appeared to be gaps in the assessments. The chair facilitated the panel's debate well.

The issues discussed with the directors about terms of approval for carers, while mainly a management issue, also pointed to the need for the panel to give more emphasis to this. (See recommendation).

The weaknesses discussed below have direct implications for the ability of the agency to provide suitable carers, matching and protecting children. The reason why the area of safeguarding has been considered adequate nonetheless, is because the agency started to take remedial action during the inspection, as soon as the issues were pointed out.

Additional evidence noted of safeguards in place in the shorter term (to mitigate the risks to children posed by the fact that some important aspects of protection were not robust enough) was:

- That there was a stable group of qualified supervising social workers offering support valued by carers.
- That the social work director and the manager were open and cooperative.
- That the social work director gave assurances, at the end of the inspection, that terms of approval would be carefully assessed in the future.
- That the area of safeguarding and management were considered satisfactory at the previous inspection and there has been no change in senior management. This gave reassurance that there was potential for the weaknesses below to be addressed promptly.

The agency assessed the suitability of their staff to work with children, but the vetting procedure needed to be made more robust. Already at the previous inspection shortfalls in the assessments had been identified and a requirement imposed. Nonetheless it was noted on this occasion that a member of staff, appointed since the previous inspection, commenced work as a senior practitioner before all checks to assess suitability had been completed. (See requirement).

There had been three allegations against carers in the last year. One additional allegation happened during the inspection and another soon after. The circumstances of the allegations were discussed with the agency. They had been appropriately notified to the designated authorities and investigated by the lead agencies, under the child protection procedure. The most recent one was still being investigated.

The investigations had not found the carers to be unsuitable, but there were some learning lessons from some of the findings. The file of one of the above carers was inspected. It was apparent that there had been some serious omissions in the assessment and monitoring of the carer. It was of concern also that Banya had not subsequently picked these up even though the child had remained in placement till November 2005 and an annual review of the carer had been conducted.

It was positive that Banya, after the investigation was concluded, asked an independent consultant to conduct a review. The review was thorough and identified a number of issues that the agency had to consider and act upon.

Extracts of another assessment for recently approved carers were looked at. Two reviews coming to panel were read and also the circumstances why 5 children (not all of whom were siblings in respect to each other) had been placed with a carer were discussed with the manager and the social work director. In the cases looked at there were some gaps in assessment and in particular there was insufficient evidence of how the terms of approvals had been arrived at.

This was an issue as in one case the terms of approval for new carers, with no previous fostering experience, not envisaging significant help from others and with their own young children, had been wide (3 children aged 0 to 18). Furthermore there was no evident exploration of the needs of the birth children in relation to the number and ages of the children to be fostered.

In another case the current placement was outside the terms of approval (this was then picked up at the panel session observed and rectified). It was noted also that there was insufficient evidence, in the review presented to panel, about the carer's capability to foster children of such a wide range of categories. It was positive though that this was picked up by the panel who explored this area with the carer and supervising social workers. The panel dealt with the situation well and sensitively. However the panel would have been put in a difficult position, as their role is that of quality assurance of the assessments, not to fill gaps in them.

The panel found a significant gap in assessment in the other review presented.

There were other unclarities or omissions in the files looked at, examples included:

The questions asked of the referees for the carer did not enable a proper assessment.

The need for a criminal record check for a member of the foster carer's family.

The need for a protection of children act check for a carer.

Lack of evidence that the exemptions sought to the usual fostering limit were legal and in the best interest of the child to be placed.

The sleeping arrangement for the foster children.

The above were discussed with the decision maker, manager and responsible individual. (See requirement). It was also raised with management during the inspection that variation of approvals by chair of panel action should be done only in exceptional circumstances that can be justified to be in the best interest of the child to be placed with that particular carer.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

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

7, 13

Quality in this area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The supervising social workers supported carers to offer children a service that would meet their cultural and racial needs and that would be anti-discriminatory. Their work needed to be better supported by the provider's policies.

The service placed emphasis on promoting education. This would encourage children to achieve to the best of their abilities.

EVIDENCE:

The previous inspection found that the agency ensured attention to children's individual needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture and disability. However some carers spoke of taking referrals of young people for whom there was little initial information. This would therefore have implications for how well needs could be identified and met. Comments from carers on this occasion showed that lack of information had still been an issue, although the agency said that it was improving.

Discussion with the supervising social workers gave evidence of the attention and priority they gave to the area of diversity. Carers generally confirmed this, for example one said: "*There are various foster carers from different cultures,*

background, race and religion and there are a number of children with disabilities, each person is treated as an individual."

There had not been significant formal guidance from the provider to support such work. An example also of where the recommended terms of approval of a carer (to look after children of any religion or culture) had not been backed by significant evidence, was discussed with the manager during the inspection. (See requirement).

Children considered that they received help and support from their carers with education. For example they said:

"She (the carer) encourages me, helps me to do homework and studying"

"At school we talk about education, about subjects you wanna do for the future".

Information from the manager, discussion with carers, social workers and also children's reviews gave more evidence that educational needs were supported. Foster carers were clear that they were expected to support education and their effectiveness in doing so was assessed periodically by the agency.

Banya's social workers also played an active role in supporting children's education, for example by attending meetings at school with the carers. Banya had organised specific training on aspects of learning disability, to enable those carers concerned to better support the children in education.

The directors considered that the agency had improved their systems for collating information about children's educational progress; they said that all children of school age were in school or college, although two had received fixed term exclusion in the past twelve months.

There was one instance noted, in one of the cases tracked, where the school arrangements for a child recently placed with a carer had been disrupted because of the distance between the carer and the school. It was positive that Banya, the school and the placing authority liaised to resolve this. It was unclear, however, whether this had been fully considered as part of the matching process.

Supervising social workers said that it would be useful if Banya would develop additional links with education liaison officers in local authorities. They said that they found that sometimes working with education professionals was difficult. The links would help in keeping the team informed on changes in education. This was related to the directors.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

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

10, 11

Quality in this area was good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service promoted appropriate contact arrangements, to ensure that children would maintain relationships. Efforts had been made to seek children's opinions and those of significant others.

EVIDENCE:

Children mostly said that they could talk to their foster carer, that carers and their social workers listened to them and took notice of their opinion. They said that they knew how to make a complaint and that they were helped to think about their future. For example they said:

"I can talk to my social worker and to the child's helpline".

"Like if I am unhappy or worried..I tell my foster carer or my friend ...I speak to her (the carer) for my worries, she listens to me and after she encourages me.

"If I am worried about my future I ask a teacher or my tutor and I always get what I want to know".

The manager gave evidence that Banya's carers received training and support on contact and consultation issues. She stated that the agency emphasised that contact issues and consultation were a major part of the fostering task. Carers confirmed that they supported contact, for example:

"We ensure birth family contact regularly, they each (the children) have a wide group of friends and are involved in all sorts of external activities"

Children's case records and discussion with staff continued to show that Banya supported appropriate arrangements made for each young person to have contact with family and friends. These decisions would be based on information contained in looked after children documents from the placing authority, which the agency attempted to obtain before (or as soon as possible after) placement. Records also showed that contact arrangements were considered in review meetings.

The capacity of carers to support contact arrangements would need to be clearly evidenced as part of their terms of approval. (See recommendation).

Banya endeavoured to obtain the views of children placed on all matters affecting them. Carers received training on listening to children's views. Where feasible and age appropriate, children and young people discussed the planning of reviews and other meetings.

Supervising social workers tried to meet with every child on a regular basis. It was noted, though, that the record of supervising sessions with carers did not note whether the child had been seen. (See recommendation).

The deputy discussed some recent projects (fun days for children) that had been successful in starting to involve children, giving them a sense of who Banya was and encouraging interaction between them and the supervising social workers in a less formal setting. These were in addition to the children's forum for children in placement, organised periodically by Banya with independent facilitators.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

29

Quality in this area was adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Carers' allowances were paid on time and reviewed annually. There continued to be some indication that more clarity was needed regarding what the allowances covered, particularly regarding expenses to support children.

EVIDENCE:

The agency carried out an annual review of allowances paid to carers. Carers said that they received their allowances regularly.

Some carers suggested that Banya should give more support, financial or otherwise, to the promotion of activities for children after school and during the summer holidays, as well as to breaks for carers:

"Need more finance for extra learning where necessary after-school"

"Although they provide days out, there is still a shortfall in the summer holidays and they could provide us with a week or two where the children can be looked after, while we are offered a break, instead of us paying for holiday schemes".

Some issues raised by carers (about financing leisure and activities), indicated that more clarity about the components of the allowances was needed. It was understood that some carers were providing out of the allowances received what others thought that it was not included.

Carers also suggested that the agency should give foster children gifts on birthdays and also give them to carers' birth children. When this was discussed with management, they said that this was already being done.

Supervising social workers were not fully aware of what the allowances to carers entailed; this meant that they were not able to assess whether financing certain activities for the children should be expected of the carers.

Clarity about carers' allowances is an issue that has been raised in previous reports, although about different aspects of this area. It is now important that the agency ensures clarity, for example by giving carers and staff guidance and a breakdown of the components of the allowance. This would better support children to benefit from consistent financing of what the agency expects the carers to pay for. Children and carers would be clearer of whether the expectations are realistic and the allowances adequate. Supervising social workers would be on a better position to negotiate with carers or to make recommendations regarding individual children (for example about toiletries, clothing, etc.). (See requirement)

Supervising social workers said that they would find it helpful to have a separate budget for minor expenses that they could authorise, such as some training for carers, activities for children, etc.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

2, 4, 5, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26

Quality in this area was adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The agency was managed with the aim to deliver a good quality foster care service. This had been undermined by lack of consistently effective quality assurance, which had resulted in areas of safeguarding not being robust enough.

There was potential and capacity for the service to address the shortfalls promptly because of a well qualified and experienced manager and social work team.

EVIDENCE:

Social work management and the supervising social workers' team were appropriately qualified and had relevant experience in working with children and fostering. Additionally the fostering manager and the social work director held an appropriate management qualification.

The recruitment and training programme of carers aimed to enable the agency to meet the needs of the children referred or of potential referrals.

There was a strategy clear to all staff interviewed regarding management and support of carers, which included frequency of visits, arrangements for reviews, out of hours support and training. Each approved carer was supervised by a named, qualified social worker.

Carers said that the support received was good. They confirmed that they received regular visits and telephone contact and more intensive support when required. For example they commented:

" My support worker attends education review meetings and generally takes on outstanding issues by contacting the relevant agencies, schools, etc".

"The agency is very supportive, in particular my support worker who makes regular home visits and contacts via telephone".

"They provide a good service and are supportive both to the children and us as carers"

It was noted that, in response to previous requirements, there had been a redefinition and clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all senior staff and a clearer understanding of the lines of accountability within the service. The administrative and finance director had introduced new monitoring

systems to improve efficiency in recording, ability of staff to cross-reference linked areas of work and performance indicators.

Individual case records for children were kept. These and other records were held securely and with due regard for confidentiality by an administration team who showed much commitment to their work.

The premises were offices, equipped to be used as a fostering agency and included a suitable unit used for training and meeting purposes.

The reason why the outcome for the standard regarding monitoring and controlling (standard 4) is considered not met and for the ones regarding effective management are considered to have some minor shortfalls, is because of the weaknesses discussed under the area "staying safe". Such weaknesses impinge directly on management. They indicate that the agency had lacked the necessary quality assurance mechanisms to ensure consistently proper assessment and approval of carers and a robust recruitment system for staff.

The reasons why it was assessed that there was potential and capacity for addressing the shortfalls was because of the assurances, backed by evidence of resources available and changes implemented, that the directors and the manager gave during the inspection. They also incorporated these in their quality assessment, which was received while the inspection was progressing and soon after the shortfalls were pointed out.

This agency has repeatedly cooperated with the inspection process and has been open and ready to improve. Furthermore the manager assured that since recently she has had more authority to stop assessments that she considered unsatisfactory. The recent appointment of a deputy and of an administrator would also enable the manager to concentrate on her managerial role.

However the agency would now need to demonstrate that they address the shortfalls identified without delay and put sound quality assurance systems in place to maintain the improvements started.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	2
8	2
9	2
15	1
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
13	3
31	N/A

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

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS15	20	<p>The registered provider must ensure that any people working in or for the fostering service, including panel members and other external staff, are suitable people to work with children.</p> <p>To this end the provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Review the recruitment policy ii) Ensure that no staff are appointed until all statutory checks to assess suitability, (as specified in the regulations and the standard) are completed by the provider. iii) Review all existing staff files to ensure that all checks have been conducted. 	01/02/07
2.	FS6 FS8 FS9FS4 FS2 FS5 FS19	8 (1) 11 (a) 28 (3) (5) 29 (4) (6)	<p>The registered provider must develop a strategy to make safeguarding and its management robust enough to adequately protect children and to support appropriate matching of needs to skills.</p> <p>To this end it must be ensured that the strategy includes:</p>	01/03/07

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective quality assurance mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service. - Staff training - Feedback to staff regarding the expectations of panel. - Management gate-keeping of assessments and reviews. - Adequate information to be available to enable proper matching. - Terms of approval of carers to take account of the expectations of the fostering tasks, the qualities of the carers and their households. - Placements to be consistent with terms of approvals. - Changes to terms of approvals by chair action, if sought, to be properly justified in terms of best interest of the child. - Exemptions to the usual fostering limit, if sought, to be legal and justified. - Correct terminology and content in notifications to carers about approvals, so that they can be clear about what they have been approved for and of their right of appeal. - The register of carers and other documents to show the correct date of approval. 	
3.	FS7	11	<p>The registered provider must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear policies about trans-racial and trans-cultural placements. - Clear expectations about how equality would be promoted in such fostering households, which must be consistently demonstrated in the assessment and reviews of carers. 	01/02/07
4.	FS29	44	<p>The registered provider must ensure that carers and supervising social workers are clear about what the carers' allowances include.</p>	01/02/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS12	That Banya liaises with placing authorities' social workers to identify and address any specific issues about diets for children.
2.	FS30	That the panel, when considering or reviewing suitability of carers, puts equal emphasis to consideration of the appropriateness of the terms of approval of carers. That such consideration is also given by the chair when asked to vary terms of approval by chair action.
3.	FS10	That the capacity of carers to support contact arrangements is clearly evidenced as part of their terms of approval, particularly regarding number and ages of children.
4.	FS11	That the agency clearly states how often children in placement should be seen by the supervising social workers visiting the carers and that the record of the visit notes if the child is seen or not.
5.	FS4	That, to enable effective audits, carers' files include clear information prominently displayed about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- All checks conducted.- Terms of approval- Children in placement- Previous placements, with start and end dates.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

SE London Area Office

Ground Floor

46 Loman Street

Southwark

SE1 0EH

National Enquiry Line

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI