

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Rural Foster Care Ltd

**Arlington House
15 Orchard Gardens
Teignmouth
TQ14 8DS**

Lead Inspector
**Christine
Freestone**

Announced
5-11,17-19,24th August and 29th October 2005

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Rural Foster Care Ltd
Address	Arlington House, 15 Orchard Gardens, Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 8DS
Telephone number	01626 776702
Fax number	01626 777118
Email address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Rural Foster Care Ltd
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs.Sonya Grute (application in progress)
Type of registration	Fostering Agency
No. of places registered (if applicable)	
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 7-15th, 20 - 23rd August, 27th August and 29th October 2005.

Brief Description of the Service:

Rural Foster Care is an Independent Fostering Agency registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2002. The main focus of recruitment and placements by the agency is largely within the rural community. The agency provides placements in the South West of England and has sought to develop groups of carers who can be supported within distinct geographical areas. At the start of the inspection the agency had 23 carers and 25 young people placed. The agency offers emergency, short term, medium term, long term and sibling group placements. Assessments of parent and child placements are made as part of court proceedings and on behalf of local authorities. Recruitment of carers is geographically based and carers follow a competence based assessment process. Training programmes are offered "in house" and via external training providers. Carers are supported by allocated supervising social workers who visit on a two weekly basis. The team also provides a 24 hour duty on call service. The agency is based within a town house in Teignmouth, S.Devon, which location is easily accessed by carers and staff. The agency is managed by three Directors, one of whom has currently applied to become the Registered Manager for the agency. Administrative and business support is in place, 5 full and/or part-time social workers are in place who are supervised by the Directors. The Directors also hold small caseloads.

SUMMARY

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

The fostering agency has developed considerably in the last year ; a new office is to open in Bridgwater in September 2005. During the course of the inspection four foster families were visited; 2 young people spoke to the Inspector; 20 carers were met at a training /support session; the Directors and staff of the agency were also interviewed.(Parents approached did not respond to the Inspectors' invitation to meet and discuss the provision for their children.) All were happy to discuss what the agency does well and areas to be further developed. The young people were very positive about their placement and this was also reflected in the 9 questionnaires received from young people. Many of the young people commented positively on the level of support offered how they were "listened to " by carers and staff.

7 responses were received from placing authorities all of whom felt that foster carers look after young people very well and quite well.

15 responses were received from foster carers of whom 73% felt "very well supported" by the service,6.7% "quite well" supported and 6.7% "okay." 13.3% felt" not well" supported. (Investigation at the time of the inspection demonstrated that these latter views were reflected in two survey responses which were linked to an ongoing personnel issue.)

92% of carers felt that they were "consulted over decisions ;" 93% "go to reviews" and 91% felt "listened to."

The agency was found to take a positive view to the Announced Inspection process. The practice of the agency is soundly based on the provision of an integrated support model for foster carers and young people .A child centred approach to good outcomes for young people is clearly in place.

The majority of the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection have been completed. Some are in progress or outstanding and will be addressed. Overall , the inspection highlighted good quality provision for the young people placed with Rural Foster Care.

What the service does well:

- * The agency provides an integrated and supportive approach to foster carers and young people.
- * The agency demonstrates a child centred approach.

- * The agency makes well recorded visits to foster carers and young people.
- * Social Worker practice is well managed.
- * The introduction of an IT system in order to streamline all record keeping within the agency.
- * Foster carers generally show an insightful approach to dealing with young people.
- * Foster carers records sampled demonstrate a very good level of detailed recording.
- * Young people feel supported by the carers and workers in the agency.
- * Training for carers is relevant and focussed to their expressed needs.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Placement agreements are now in place on each child's file. The Children's guide now includes details of the CSCI address. The restraint policy has been renewed. Training for social work staff is established. Records are now secured. Separate records are kept of complaints and allegations. File management systems are now more organised. Looked After Children (LAC) documentation paperwork is now monitored. Training in relation to supporting the achievement of NVQ3 caring for Children and Young People is now in place.

What they could do better:

Updated risk assessments should be carried out as appropriate and the evidence held in the children's file. Minutes of review meetings should be given to the young person. Safe Care assessments must be in place prior to admission of the young person to a placement. Supervision for staff must be regular and duly recorded. Annual appraisals should be in place for all staff. A transferable health record should be in place for all young people in placement. Monitoring of the matters in Schedule 7 of the regulations must be routinely carried out by the manager and demonstrated as a clear auditable process. A management system should be put in place to monitor the administration of medication and first aid to children in placement. The registered person should follow up all written references with telephone enquiries, the results of which should be documented. The directors should consider the implementation of an evidenced, robust supervision process for themselves; in relation to their

continuing “supervisor social worker” role with carers. Where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both must successfully complete core training. The fostering panel should have clear written policies and procedures with regard to the handling of its’ functions.

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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12. The health and development of young people placed with the agency is generally well managed.

EVIDENCE:

Feedback from children and young people show that they are well supported in healthy eating , hygiene and access to appropriate health services. All have access to a GP, dentist and opticians as required. Several comment that they are offered advice in "keeping safe and advice about "giving up smoking."

Foster carers interviewed were all supportive , knowledgeable and understanding of the health needs of the young people placed with them. All fed this information into the formal review process.

Links with health services are good, though delays in accessing Child /Adolescent Mental Health Services.(CAMHS) have occurred.

Staff have a good knowledge of the health needs of each child. Records demonstrate that local authority paperwork with regard to health is sometimes "thin", the agency actively seeks further information.

The agency should ensure the creation of a transferable health record for each child.

The agency should ensure that a clear management system is put in place to monitor the administration of medication and first aid to children in placement.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3,6,8,9,15 and 30. Children and young people placed with the agency are well cared for and kept safe.Foster carers are well supported.Management of the company is effective.

EVIDENCE:

The directors of the company are well qualified within the social care and business fields and utilise their skills effectively in the management of the service.

Recruitment of foster carers is carried out utilising a variety of methods. Examination of files indicates that the majority of relevant procedures related to safe recruitment practice are in place. The registered person should make sure that all written references are followed up by telephone enquires , the results of which should be documented and held in the appropriate personnel file.

Examination of CRB checks indicates that at the time of the inspection the IT consultant who monitors and maintains the IT system for the company had not been so checked. Given his access to the main database , this was commenced during the inspection. The agency should ensure that any future such consultant should have the relevant checks carried out.

Matching is undertaken with due care. Foster carers commented on their input into the process of matching via consultation with the agency. The agency is to be commended on the level of support offered to carers and young people.

The panel observed on 29.10.05 was quorate, the vice chair acting as chair on this occasion. All panel members had received satisfactory CRB checks and the panel included two directors from the agency and members with fostering experience, district nursing , teaching, health visiting, nursery nursing and experience of adoption. Three assessments and two addendums/ reviews were presented and the inspector noted that a full and detailed discussion of the presentations was made. Decisions and recommendations to the agency were carefully sought . Feedback to prospective foster carers was courteous and supportive.

Minutes of previous meetings were detailed and clear . Training for panel members is in place.

The fostering panel should develop clear written policies and procedures which are accurately reflected in its' functioning.

The assessments offered to the Panel were comprehensive and well structured reflecting a carefully constructed , competence based process.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 7,13, and 31. Young people are valued and their diverse needs are well catered for . Education is promoted for all young people placed.

EVIDENCE:

Direct observation, visits , file evidence and interviews established that the foster carers and staff of the agency positively promote diversity. "Difference" was clearly acknowledged for young people and their varying needs catered for and included in the matching process.

Training is in place to support equality of opportunity and diversity. Observation of a team meeting , held to focus on social work practice and caseload issues , soundly reflected this ethos of equality. Young people also said that they felt that their needs were recognised and built into their care.

Educational achievement is reflected in foster carer reports / notes. The agency have just adopted a new IT database system which will enable them to evidence more clearly educational attainment for young people and exclusion rates.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s)

10 and 11. Contact arrangements for young people are actively promoted and supported, enabling key relationships to be maintained. Consultation is an active process at all levels within the agency and particularly with young people.

EVIDENCE:

File evidence, interviews, evidence from young people, carers and staff confirmed that a range of contact arrangements are supported as appropriate. Carers were clear with regard to the contact arrangements in place and those spoken to had obviously gone " the extra mile" in supporting sometimes difficult and complex contact arrangements. Social work staff clearly supported the carers in these arrangements. Young people reflected very positively on this level of support.

Consultation was seen by the inspector to be a consistent part of the practice of foster carers. Children and young people were seen to be consulted on day to day issues and on more formal occasions , such as in preparation for a review.

Consultation with foster carers was clearly in place and demonstrated in support social worker notes and during the annual review process.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s)

29. The agency maintains an effective and prompt financial system in respect of payment to carers , ensuring that carers are not financially disadvantaged.

EVIDENCE:

Charges are in place for all elements of foster care provided by the agency. Feedback from carers gained from visits, support, training observation and survey responses, demonstrates that all carers are paid on time and can negotiate confidently with the agency with regard to extra expenses.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s)

2,4,5,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28.The agency is managed in a manner which is child – centred and promotes good outcomes for children and young people. The agency is a fair and competent employer. Training for foster carers is of a high standard and supports their role. The agency is financially viable.

EVIDENCE:

Evidence gathered from records, interviews with the managers , staff and foster carers ,direct observation of practice, observation of a training session ,observation of a fostering panel, meetings and survey responses from carers young people and placing social workers indicates that the agency is managed in such a way as to positively promote good outcomes for children and young people in their care. Foster carers speak positively of the support and quality of training offered by the agency. An excellent training session was observed during the inspection in which all carers took a very positive role. Training records are in place and up to date. The agency should make sure that where two adults are approved as joint carers in one household, both successfully complete all training.

They also reflected wholly positively on the financial structures and support in place in order to support them in undertaking their fostering work . Financial guidance has also been available to those carers who have required it.

Examination of personnel files and records demonstrates that staff are well supported. A strong oral tradition of the exchange of information was observed during the inspection by the team and this supported the practice observed. The agency does , however , need to ensure that staff supervision is regular and duly recorded and that all staff receive an annual planned appraisal. The Directors should consider how they will access a robust supervision process , given that they still function in a supervising social worker role with foster carers. Written references should be followed up by telephone references , the results of which are held on file.

Examination of children's case files demonstrates that files re well organised and easy to use. The agency should make sure that all risk assessments are updated and evidence held in the files and that all children where age appropriate , receive copies of the minutes of their review meetings.

Examination of carers files show well organised files reflecting the high level of support offered. Carers notes are generally detailed , objective and non – stigmatising in their content. The agency should ensure that Safe Care assessments are in place for ALL placements prior to the admission of the young person to the placement.

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	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	4
6	3
8	3
9	2
15	2
30	2

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

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	N/A
29	3

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

YES

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.	FS25	42(1)(a.b)	The Registered Person must establish and maintain a system for the monitoring of the matters set out in Schedule 7 at appropriate intervals and demonstrated as a clear auditable process.	21/12/05

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.	12	The agency should ensure that a transferrable health record is created and maintained by the carers, for each child / young person placed with them.
2.	9	The agency should ensure that any person who could have routine access to confidential information held on their IT systems undergo a Criminal Record Bureau check.
3.	15	The agency should ensure that all written references for staff are followed up by telephone enquiries ,the results of which are documented and held in the appropriate personnel file.
4.	30	The agency should ensure that the fostering panel should have clear written policies and procedures in place which accurately reflect its' functioning.
5.	12	The agency should ensure that a clear system is put in

		place for the monitoring of the administration of medication and first aid to children in placement.
6.	16	The Directors should consider the implementation of an evidenced, robust supervision process for themselves in relation to their continuing roles as supervising social workers with foster carers.
7.	20	The agency should ensure that supervision for staff is regular and duly recorded.
8.	20	The agency should ensure that all staff receive annual , planned appraisals from their line manager.
9.	23	The agency should ensure that where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers , both successfully complete all training.
10.	24	The agency should ensure that updated risk assessments are carried out as appropriate and the evidence held in the children's case file.
11.	24	The agency should ensure copies of minutes of review meetings are given to the young person for their information .(age appropriate)
12.	23	The agency should ensure that Safe Care assessments are in place for ALL placements prior to the admission of the young person to the placement.
13.		
14.		

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