

inspection report

Fostering Services

Rural Foster Care Ltd

Arlington House
15 Orchard Gardens
Teignmouth
Devon
TQ14 8DS

7th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 20th, 21st, 22nd,
23rd, 27th September and 16th October
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

Rural Foster Care Ltd

Tel No

01626 776702

Address

Arlington House, 15 Orchard Gardens, Teignmouth,
Devon TQ14 8DS

Fax No

01626 977118

Email Address

rfc.arlington@btconnect.com

Registered Number of IFA

D070000770

Name of Registered Provider

Rural Foster Care Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mr Keith A Smith

Date of first registration

18th October 2002

Date of latest registration certificate

18th October 2002

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

09/07/03

Date of Inspection Visit		7th September 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Jennifer Reed	142803
Name of Inspector	2	Alison White	
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		David Patterson, Keith Smith, Sonia Grute	

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**
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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 Rural Foster Care Ltd. 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.

Rural FosterCare Limited is an Independent Fostering Agency, registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2002. The agency recruits, trains and supports carers predominantly from the rural community, although not exclusively so. The agency provides placements across the South West of England, believing in developing 'clusters' of carers and support workers in geographical areas. At the start of the inspection, the agency provided 21 carers and 13 children were in placements.

This fostering service offers emergency, short term, medium term and long term placements; taking sibling groups; providing preparation for independent living placements; and mother and baby placements, including supervision and assessments for the local authority and/or Court.

Carers follow a competency based assessment process and are offered internal and externally provided training programmes. Support workers visit carers' homes on a fortnightly frequency, and the agency operates a 24 hours 'on-call' service to carers. Rural FosterCare Limited has established it's own Panel that meets on a regular basis, to consider the applications and registration of new carers, and to make recommendations regarding approval, review and terminations of approval.

Rural FosterCare Limited has recently moved premises within South Devon, moving from Heathfield to Teignmouth. Their office is based in the centre of the town, providing easy access using public transportation. The agency has three Directors, one Director acting as the Registered Person and another as the manager of the agency. All three Directors act as support workers to specific carers, alongside their assigned lead roles within the agency. The agency employs an office manager, two administrators and a full time social worker/support worker. Additional social workers are employed on a sessional basis to undertake the assessments of prospective carers.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This was the second annual inspection of Rural FosterCare Limited under the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The inspectors found that considerable effort had been made by the agency in the past year with regard to implementing the statutory requirements and good practice recommendations highlighted in the first inspection, and in addressing National Minimum Standards. The agency had made very good progress.

Considerable growth had occurred in the past year and the 'infra structure' of the agency had been further developed. Rural FosterCare Limited had moved premises two working days prior to the commencement of the inspection. Both processes inevitably led to additional pressure on the agency's daily operation, However the inspectors found that the Directors and the staff team demonstrated a very positive and constructive approach and response to the process of inspection. The views expressed by staff were balanced in terms of identifying both areas of good practice and areas where further development was planned or required. Staff presented as optimistic, enthusiastic and committed to providing quality placements for children. Carers expressed their high level of satisfaction in working with the agency. Good outcomes for children with a range of complex needs were achieved.

At the start of the inspection, the agency had 21 Foster carers and 13 children in placement. 16 other children had been placed with Rural FosterCare Limited within the previous 12 month period.

In the course of this inspection, four foster families were visited. The inspectors also met with 7 other carers in a group meeting, and with 3 of these carers and with 8 further carers at a training event. Carers expressed their satisfaction with working with the agency. 3 children were met and spoken with in placement. They were positive about their placements and raised no issues of concern. 1 parent met with an inspector, and 3 other parents expressed their views by telephone. All four parents were very positive about Rural FosterCare Limited and did not identify any welfare concerns.

Questionnaires were sent to placing authority social workers, Foster carers and children as part of the inspection process.

14 responses were received from placing authority social workers, the majority of their responses were positive about the quality of the foster placements and the fostering service. 65% stated that Foster carers looked after the children 'very well'; 20% 'quite well' and 15% 'OK'

11 responses were received from current carers; all were positive about the support given to

them by the agency. 9 responded 'very well'; 1 'quite well' and 1 'OK'.

7 children responded. All 7 children stated that their carers asked them for their opinions and ideas and that they had been given a Children's guide or leaflet telling them about the fostering service. 6 out of the 7 responses indicated that the child had been told how to make a complaint and how to get in touch with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

This report will include recommendations and comments arising from the shortfalls that were indicated in the survey questionnaires and in other inspection activity. The inspectors would emphasise that the proportion of positive responses far outweighed any areas of concern that were brought to the attention of the inspectors.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met

There was a comprehensive statement of purpose, available on request to parents and placing authority social workers. The Children's Guide was in leaflet form, and was given to children at the commencement of their placement. It was user-friendly, colourful and included information on access to independent advocacy and about how to make a complaint. The provision of alternative formats for this information is recommended to meet a range of need of children placed. .

Fitness to provide or manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 –3)

1 standard was met and 1 partially met

Suitable people managed the fostering agency; all held relevant qualifications and had considerable depth of social work experience to do so in a professional manner. The manager is yet to undertake management training, although work has been undertaken to identify a suitable qualification

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

1 standard was met and 1 partially met

Clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service were evidenced. The manager had decreased his working hours to a part-time basis. The inspection identified that management oversight required review, in relation to the arrangements in place to cover the manager's absence and observed fluidity of lines of accountability. Financial procedures were robust; office management was well-organised, ethical considerations and the aim of providing quality placements were integral to the work undertaken. A conflict of interest policy was available.

Securing and promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

4 standards were met; 4 were partially met; 1 was not met

- Foster homes provided safe and nurturing environments; pets were evident within homes.
- The agency had recruited some carers from ethnic cultures.
- Health and safety procedures and checks were in place and reviewed as a part of the carer's annual review.
- Matching processes were found to be very good and had facilitated successful outcomes for most children
- Safe caring training had been provided to carers, but not all carers had attended prior to the placement of children, and not all carers were found to have written a safe caring policy for their home. Placing officers considered that the children were generally safe in their placements. No concerns were raised by either the children or parents.
- Survey responses indicated that 100% of Placing authority social workers believed that the agency looked after the child in accordance with his/her overall care plan.
- There were bullying, unauthorised absences, complaints, child protection and managing behaviour policies in place. Further development in monitoring systems is required to underpin and evaluate the implementation of policy and procedures.
- Carers supported contact appropriately and implemented care plans to the satisfaction of placing authorities. Distance of the foster home from the child's home/school was seen as problematic by one parent. There were opportunities for children to be consulted about their placements in foster care.
- Children were provided with health appointments and services as appropriate. Systems are required to be set up to monitor the administration of medication and any accidents involving children; to ensure that clear arrangements for consent from the placing authority is agreed for out of hours and emergency medical treatment
- Carers were actively involved in promoting children's educational achievements. Systems to monitor attendance at school and attainment are required. Children were encouraged to continue/take up hobbies and activities and a variety of leisure pursuits evidenced.
- One carer was supporting a young person working towards independence. The agency had links to a leaving care project. Policy and training opportunities for preparation for independent living should be provided to enable carers to effectively provide support.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and Foster carers (Standards 15-23)

5 standards were met; 2 partially met; 2 not met

- Not all requirements of recruitment processes had been undertaken by the fostering agency. The recruitment policy required amendment to clarify CRB disclosure within the agency's recruitment processes.
- Staffing levels were satisfactory; carers were very satisfied with the level of support offered. Every carer was allocated a supervising social worker and regular fortnightly visits were recorded. Lines of accountability were clear to staff and carers. Supervision and appraisal systems were in place for staff and carers.
- Staff and carers expressed satisfaction with the agency's employment practices
- Carers emphasised the high quality of support provided to them by the agency's 'on call' system and the fortnightly supervisory visits to their homes.
- A number of assessments of carers were read and the majority evidenced good

practice. The panel offered robust monitoring of the assessment process

- Training opportunities were provided within an equal opportunities framework. Carers' training needs were identified within their annual reviews. The quality of training was evaluated by both the carers and the agency. Carers expressed their satisfaction with the training provided.
- The geographical 'spread' of placements caused some difficulties in the attendance of carers at training events. Not all carers had undertaken safe care training, and when two adults within the household were joint carers, both had not always completed all training.
- Respite care was provided where appropriate; every carer is to receive 14 days respite per year as part of their contract
- Pre-approval and induction training was evidenced. It is recommended that the agency progress it's consideration of approved carers undertaking the NVQ 3 in 'Caring for young people and Children' training award

Records (Standards 24-25)

2 standards were partially met

Separate records were kept for children, carers and staff. These were congruent with the LAC system and the keeping of relevant information for the administration of a fostering service. Separate records are required in the recording of complaints and allegations. Foster Placement agreements were not evidenced on children's files. A more robust systematic file management system is required that ensures the monitoring of the consistency and quality of records and ensuring that placing authorities are aware of the agency's complaints procedures.

Fitness of premises for use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

This standard was met

The fostering service had just moved to new premises, two days, prior to the commencement of the inspection. There were clear indications that the premises would be 'fit' for the purposes of operating a fostering service on the completion of the alterations in hand.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

3 standards were met

Procedures to deal with financial crisis were in place. Policies and procedures for financial regulation provided principles and standards governing financial management, and were known to staff and directors. Systems were in place to provide current financial information; the directors were regularly updated at Board meetings. Carers were generally satisfied with the fees and allowances paid to them. Payments to carers were received promptly.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

This standard was partially met

The fostering panel did not have written policies and procedures about the handling of its functions. The inspector observations of a panel meeting evidenced robust questioning by panel members and clear direction and leadership offered by the panel chair. The approval of foster carers was made in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in placement. Alternative arrangements are required to identify a 'decision-maker' on behalf of the fostering service who is not the registered provider.

Short-term Breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was not assessed

The service did not have 'short-break' arrangements in place that recognised that the parents remained as the main carers for the child, as defined by this standard.

The fostering service provided 'respite' short breaks within the agency for their foster carers. It was indicated that the agency was intending to increase the numbers of 'respite' carers.

Family and Friends as Carers (Standard 32)

This standard was not applicable to the agency

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report that indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	11, 34	FS8	Each child in placement, must have a written placement agreement and a copy of this must be placed on the child's file	31/12/04
2	11,12	FS9	The registered person must ensure that <u>all</u> foster homes have safe caring guidelines, based on written policy.	30/11/04
3	16 (2)(a)	FS13	The registered person must ensure that systems are in place to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children/young people placed, and the numbers excluded from school.	31/12/04
4	17	FS14	Written guidance of what is required of carers, in terms of preparing young people for adulthood, must be provided by the registered person.	31/12/04
			Carers must receive training to help them provide effective support	31/03/05

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	Jennifer Reed	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Emmy Tomsett	Signature	_____
Date	_____		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements 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	5,7,20 (3)(d)	FS15	The fostering service must have full and satisfactory information in relation to all persons employed. Thus must include each of the matters specified in Schedule 1	30/11/04
2	42 (1) (a)(b)	FS25	The Registered Person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 at appropriate intervals	31/12/04
3	28(3)(4)	FS30	No member of the fostering panel must take part in any decision made by a fostering service provider in deciding whether to approve a person as a foster carer and as to the terms of any approval, taking into account the recommendation of the fostering panel.	31/12/04

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	The children's guide should be made available in alternative formats to meet the needs of different groups of children and young people
2	FS1	The children's guide should be updated to include the new address of the agency's premises and the new Commission for Social Care Inspection.
3	FS2	The manager should have an appropriate management qualification
4	FS5	The Registered Person should progress the review of the viability of the manager's post being worked on a part-time basis
5	FS9	The Registered Person should consider whether or not there is a need to review policy guidelines with regard to the definition of a restraint. A management system should be put in place to monitor any restraints as required by Schedule 7
6	FS9	A management system should be put in place to monitor unauthorised absences as required by Schedule 7
7	FS12	A management system should be put in place to monitor the administration of medication and first aid given to children in placement
8	FS12	The Registered Person should ensure that adequate information and written agreement is provided by the placing authority in relation to the giving of medical consent for fostered children, in and out of office hours
9	FS14	Carers who work with young people moving towards independence should have specific training in the Pathway Planning process
10	FS15	The Registered Person should follow up all written references with telephone enquiries, the outcome of which should be documented; and notes taken at interviews should be kept on file.
11	FS16	The directors should consider further, the implementation of a robust supervision process for themselves, in relation to their undertaking of the 'supervising social worker role' with carers
12	FS19	A documented training programme for social work staff is required and should be routinely evaluated and reviewed, and updated at least annually.
13	FS21	The Registered Person should review the system in place to ensure that when carer's receive written notification of the outcome of the Panel's consideration of their review report, that this notification is placed on their file
14	FS22	It is recommended that the agency identify in written records when an unannounced inspection is undertaken by the supervising social worker.

15	FS22	The foster care agreement should be amended to include arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster parent arising by reason of a placement
16	FS23	The agency should set up a system to ensure that every carer has received the training in 'safe caring' and formulating policies for their home <u>prior</u> to each placement being made.
17	FS23	The Registered Person should progress his consideration of providing more NVQ 3 'Caring for young People and Children' training for carers
18	FS23	Further consideration should be given on how to encourage and facilitate the increased attendance at training events of those carers who live a considerable distance from training venues.
19	FS23	Where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both must successfully complete all 'core' training
20	FS24	The agency should rigorously monitor the quality of the completed LAC documentation provided by the placing authority and ensure that all relevant information has been completed and provided to the agency and its carers
21	FS24	Attention should be given to a more systematic and consistent file management system; written procedural guidance should be provided that includes the identification of what information is kept in the child's file and what information is kept in the carer's file
22	FS25	A system should be put in place to monitor that all placing authorities receive details regarding the agency's complaints procedures
23	FS25	Written policy and procedural guidance is required on the formatting of information for passing to other placements
24	FS25	Separate records should be kept for complaints and allegations
25	FS26	The directors should assure themselves that arrangements for the secure retention of records in a lockable room are in place
26	FS30	The fostering panel should have clear written policies and procedures which are implemented in practice about the handling of its functions They should include written procedures covering decision-making when all members of the panel are not in agreement and terms of reference
27	FS30	The fostering panel should consider establishing a quality assurance system to evaluate the functioning of the panel

* 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**

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

Number of Inspector days spent 13.5

Survey of placing authorities YES

Foster carer survey YES

Foster children survey YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals YES

- Directors of Social services YES

- Child protection officer YES

- 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 YES

- Contact with supervising social workers YES

- Examination of files YES

Individual interview with manager YES

Information from provider YES

Individual interviews with key staff YES

Group discussion with staff NO

Interview with panel chair YES

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 07/09/04

Time of Inspection 10:00AM

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 65

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?

3

A statement of purpose had been produced which met the minimum requirements of this standard. It was clear and informative and provided detailed information of the agency's operation. It had been reviewed and updated in May 2004. The Registered Person indicated that it accurately reflected what the fostering service did. The Registered Person said that the Statement of Purpose was either sent to the placing authority as part of the pre-placement agreement, or available on request, to parents and significant others. Survey responses from placing authority social workers indicated that 55% of workers had been provided with a Statement of Purpose.

The agency has produced a colourful information leaflet for children and young people. It comprehensively summarised the service provision and gave clear guidance to the child/young person on how to complain and how to access NCSC as an independent advocate. The children's survey response showed that all 7 children said they had received the children's guide. This information needs to be updated to include the name of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (rather than NCSC). Also the address of the agency should now be amended following the recent change of premises. It is recommended that the agency consider producing the children's guide in a variety of formats to meet the needs of a range of children placed.

On examination of the agency's policies, procedures and written guidance to staff and carers, it was evidenced that these accurately reflected the statement of purpose.

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?

2

The three Directors of Rural FosterCare have considerable experience of working with children and families, two having worked at a senior level within local authority settings. Each has appropriate professional qualifications relevant to working with children. One Director is appointed to the role of Registered Person, and another as the Manager.

The inspectors found that the current management arrangements worked very well for the supporting of carers and the promotion of welfare for children placed. Carers emphasised their satisfaction with the support and responsiveness of the Directors, and their approachable and open management style. However, the inspectors also found some evidence within operational management functions, of clear leadership and communication being compromised by the unclarity /merging of some management accountabilities in the manager's absence.

The manager has yet to gain a management qualification. The inspectors noted that considerable effort had been made by the agency in the past 12 month, in consultation with the Commission for Social Care Inspection, to identify a relevant management qualification.

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

Rural FosterCare was initially set up by two social workers; both had worked within a local authority setting. Both had held senior positions within Social Services settings, working with children and families and had substantial experience of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The two Directors (Registered Person and manager) indicated that they had not taken up references on each other, as their past experience of working within the local authority and known history assured each of the other's good character and integrity.

The inspection evidenced that both the Registered Person and the manager had current CRB checks at an enhanced level on their personnel files. The Registered Person indicated that CRB checks would be renewed every three years.

This standard is reported as met. However, it should be noted that the Registered Person

and the manager's files held insufficient detailed information regarding the established practice of telephone enquiries being made to follow up on written references and there was no documentary evidence of qualifications gained being retained on file.

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 Directors emphasised the importance that they placed on sharing daily updates and maintaining their awareness of the operation of the service. The inspectors observed daily operational practice within the office setting. The current size of the agency enabled each Director to hold detailed information pertaining to placements and overall knowledge of the agency's operational functioning. Office staff and carers confirmed that Directors were kept up to date with any arising issues, and that quality issues were acted upon in a timely manner. The inspectors noted throughout the inspection that the Directors gave priority to monitoring and controlling the fostering service's activities and the quality of its performance. Completion of the pre-inspection questionnaire and discussion evidenced the directors' clear awareness of the service's strengths and areas for development. The manager identified that the agency would be looking into the development of the collation of service user's views regarding their respective experiences of service delivery, to provide a 'more rounded' perspective of performance.

Discussion and examination of meeting minutes evidenced that the agency held regular Board meetings and Social Work meetings to monitor the activities of the fostering service. Foster carers home visits recorded on file, and confirmed by carers, evidenced that they occurred regularly on a fortnightly basis. Social work and office staff records evidenced regular supervision of practice. Feedback sheets sent to placing authority social workers at the end of each placement were seen on file and provided quality assurance information of placing authority social workers' views.

Financial procedures were in place with clear policy guidance provided. Minutes of Board meetings, records examined and discussion with staff evidenced that the office manager provided the directors with a regular review of current financial status and that financial matters were discussed at Board meetings. Detailed information was provided to purchasers of services, including charges for services. Carers received a comprehensive information sheet outlining allowances and discretionary payments. A policy was in place that addressed conflicts of interest.

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

4

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.

2

Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.		2
		0
Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:		1
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?	2
The policy and procedures for the fostering service included a scheme of delegated roles and responsibilities of the management team and Directors and staff groups. The manager had a clear job description, setting out duties and responsibilities. The manager did not hold a similar job in another organisation. The manager had decreased his working hours in past months and some management tasks had been delegated to the other two Directors. The Directors have indicated to the Commission for Social Care Inspection that they are considering the management role to be taken over by the third Director, in the near future. This Director would be available on a full-time basis. At the time of inspection, the three directors took lead roles in 'finance', 'company development' and 'social work'. Although the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and the lines of accountability were clearly defined, the inspectors found that the Directors 'shared' accountability for the manager's role in his absence had led to a fluidity in interpretation of responsibilities in undertaking the role of the manager. The inspectors heard and found that there had been some inconsistencies inherent in the shared control of the service, but found no evidence to indicate that this had impacted detrimentally on quality service delivery. The questionnaire survey sent by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to placing authority social workers found that 65% believed Rural FosterCare Limited to look after children 'very well'; 20% 'quite well' and 15% 'OK' A part-time office manager had been employed since the last inspection. The inspectors were shown comprehensive office systems and structures, and heard of further I.T. developments planned for the 'new' office base, which should provide increased 'networked' data provision. It is recommended that the service continue the review of the current manager's role and responsibilities to provide an increased consistency in the delivery of these accountabilities.		

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

The inspectors visited four foster homes during the inspection. All were adequately furnished and maintained. Pets were evident within homes. Carers spoken with demonstrated their awareness of the vigilance required in relation to specific health and safety issues arising from the 'rural nature and life style' inherent within some placements. It was confirmed by staff and carers, and by the inspector's observations, that the agency expected each child to be allocated their own bedroom, unless there were agreed reasons for not doing so, e.g. a sibling placement' mother and baby placement. Discussion with carers evidenced their understanding of the need to provide a nurturing environment for children and young people placed with them. Survey responses from children highlighted that they were given advice in relation to healthy eating, exercise and personal hygiene.

File recording and discussion with carers confirmed that the agency undertook an initial comprehensive assessment of health and safety issues/hazards arising within the home and the immediate environment. Files examined showed that the agency used a health and safety checklist as part of the annual foster carer review process. Carers and staff confirmed that health and safety awareness was covered in the assessment training.

The health and safety checklist on carer's files confirmed that the agency had approved the use of carers' cars. Their driving licences were inspected; seat belts examined, and MOT certificate seen.

Each of the carers' spoken with confirmed that they understood that they might be visited as part of the Commission's inspection process. The foster carer agreement highlighted this obligation.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has an equal opportunities and valuing diversity policy. It identifies the agency's commitment to ensuring that children and young people and their families are provided with services that promote equality and meet their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs. The manager indicated that valuing diversity was an integral component to the training courses provided to carers. He believed that the agency could still improve on raising the profile of equal opportunities. The pre-assessment programme included consideration of equal opportunities. Carers confirmed that they had discussed diversity issues and evidenced their understanding of anti-discriminatory practice and challenging oppression. The agency had recruited some carers from minority cultures.

Discussion with children and carers demonstrated that carers helped children develop skills to deal with forms of discrimination. The children's survey produced a number of responses, which indicated that the children felt supported and that their confidence was enhanced by their experience of foster care.

Children spoken with and from information within survey responses, commented that they enjoyed participating in a range of hobbies and activities. Carers confirmed that they encouraged children to develop or pursue their interests.

The Registered Person indicated that the agency had not made any placements to date for children with physical disability. Emergency placements were only made by the agency when they could identify a suitable placement that matched the child's needs.

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?

2

Discussions held with staff and carers and examination of records evidenced that the agency was rigorous in matching children to appropriate placements. The directors were clear that they did not make any placement for a child from a local authority unless they believed that the carers were capable of meeting the child's needs. Records examined evidenced that children were placed with carers who had been approved by the Panel for their age, gender, numbers etc. The Panel Chair confirmed that this was so, but upon the rare occasion when a 'near' match was considered, (e.g. slight age difference) then a director liaised with the Panel Chair regarding his verbal agreement /or not, to this placement being made. If agreed, this decision would then be discussed at the next Panel in detail.

Carers expressed their views that 'matching' was very good. They indicated that they were consulted, that the agency shared all of the relevant information with them that the agency had received, and that their views were listened to. Carer's survey responses indicated that 65% of carers believed that they were adequately informed about children's backgrounds. In discussion with carers, they emphasised that they believed the shortfall tended to be due to the agency being unable to access all relevant information from the placing authority in a timely manner, rather than the agency not sharing relevant information that it held. The survey indicated that 100% of carers believed that the fostering service's staff were good at letting them know about things concerning their foster children.

All parents and children spoken with indicated that the placements made met the needs of the children. One parent noted that given the rural location of the placement, it did mean that her child had to travel a considerable distance by taxi to school each day and for contact visits. However, she believed that the overall benefits and 'match' of the placement in other areas, compensated for this shortfall.

The inspectors found detailed referral information on children's files. Written foster placement agreements containing specific reference to elements of matching were not evidenced, as required by (NMS 8.4), Schedule 6. The Registered Person indicated that the matching process was a verbal process, alongside a comprehensive referral process and the placement meeting discussion. Placement agreements were updated following reviews. Children's files examined, evidenced relevant LAC records from placing authorities, including care plans and recent written assessments. Comments received from the placing officers survey regarding foster placement agreements indicated that 92% were aware of foster placement agreements; 100% said they were consulted about them and 100% responded that they agreed with them. Also they responded 100% that foster placement agreements were kept to by carers. The inspectors noted that during the course of the inspection, the agency formatted a foster placement agreement in line with the requirements of Schedule 6. It is recommended that a written foster placement agreement in line with Schedule 6, signed by both the placing authority and the foster carer is added to the file of each child currently placed with the agency.

Discussion with carers, children placed and recording evidenced that where possible, periods of introductions were arranged prior to placement. Some carers had completed 'welcome books'; others has sent letters and made telephone calls.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There was evidence that prospective carers received some training in child protection issues as part of their preparation and assessment training. Discussion with carers indicated that there was a range of depth of knowledge within the group, dependent upon experience as a foster carer, and whether or not they had also attended the safe caring training provided by the agency. The agency had provided 2 separate training events on 'safe caring and had scheduled 2 training sessions covering 'working with sexually abused children'. The inspectors found that some carers had not attended these training events and that written safe caring policies had not been formulated for these children in placement, in line with the requirements of Standard 9.3.(refer to standard 23). It is recommended that the agency should set up a system to ensure that all carers have received the training in 'safe caring' and formulating policies for their home prior to each placement being made.

The Registered Person and manager indicated that the agency was seeking confirmation of joining up with a local authority to access multi-agency child protection training for their carers.

A management system had not been put in place to collate and evaluate information of the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care, as required by Standard 9.5, Standard 25.2 and Schedule 7. This information (one allegation to date) was evidenced within the individual child's file.

Placing officers responded in the survey that 93% (13) considered the current placements were safe; 100% (14) had no concerns about placing other children with this fostering service and 14% (2) would have concerns placing with specific carers again. The inspectors noted that the agency had satisfactorily investigated these concerns.

Foster carer agreements clearly set out Rural FosterCare Limited's expectations that carers are required to comply with the fostering service's policies on child protection, managing behaviour, unauthorised absences and allegations of abuse and complaints. Discussion with carers evidenced that they were aware of these policies and implemented procedural guidance. Children spoken with confirmed that punishments given were in line with policy guidelines. There were references to 'no TV, getting told off; restriction of an activity; not receiving the full amount of pocket money; early bedtime and being sent to their bedroom for time out'. Two children responded in the survey that they had been restrained. Within neither response was there any indication that they had concerns about being in their current placements. Carers spoken with were clear that restraint measures were not used, confirmed by the Registered Person and the manager. It is recommended in terms of good practice that the agency consider whether or not there is a need to review policy guidelines with regard to the definition of a restraint. A system to monitor any restraints undertaken should be set up in line with Schedule 7.

Survey responses from placing officers indicated that 83.3% found carers control acceptable; and that 71.4% had been made clear of the foster carer's use of measures of control.

A bullying policy was evidenced and carers spoken with demonstrated their awareness and understanding of the issues arising within bullying. A missing persons procedure was evidenced and case recording and discussion evidenced that carers implemented it. It is recommended that a management system be put in place to monitor unauthorised absences, as outlined in Schedule 7.

Carers' Survey responses indicated that 63.6% of carers believed that they were adequately informed about the child's background. Discussion with carers indicated that they believed the agency shared all relevant knowledge that they held, but that placing authorities did not always declare or provides all of the information required to the agency in a timely manner. Survey responses from carers indicated that 100% of carers believed that the fostering service's staff were good at letting them know about things concerning their foster children. Examination of LAC documentation available on children's files evidenced that some relevant information was either missing or very sparse. The fostering service must ensure that they rigorously seek all relevant information from the placing authority so that a foster carer is given such information which is kept up to date, as to enable him/her to provide appropriate care for the child.

The inspectors had evidenced in the course of the past year, that the agency had notified the Commission for Social Care Inspection appropriately and in line with good practice recommendations from "Working Together" in relation to recruitment procedures. The Registered Person indicated that the local social services department were content with the fostering service's child protection policy and procedures. At the time of writing this report, no response had been received from the local child protection co-ordinator to the Commission for Social Care Inspection's enquiries.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied: (Inspector's note: 'not asked in survey this year')	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

Contact issues were covered in the training and assessment of prospective foster carers. Specific contact arrangements were evidenced within the LAC documents supplied by the placing authority social worker. The care plans, and day-to-day arrangements were discussed and updated in reviews. Carers and children confirmed that they were clear about contact arrangements. The Registered Person indicated that the service supported contact in all cases where advised to do so by the placing authority. The inspectors heard examples of good communication between parents, carers and social workers. Carers and children spoken with gave examples of how carers provided transport to facilitate contact arrangements, held sibling contact meetings in their homes, and encouraged telephone and letter contact, where appropriate. Some carers indicated that the geographical location of their homes, frequently led to considerable travel in contact arrangements. The office manager had devised an information sheet for carers, giving detailed information regarding financial arrangements for travel to contact meetings.

Examination of files evidenced that carers reported outcomes of contact arrangements back to the agency. Survey responses evidenced that 93% of placing authority social workers believed that the agency notified them of all significant events affecting the child.

All parents spoken with were satisfied with Rural FosterCare Limited's 'role' in contact arrangements, although identified their dissatisfaction with the decision making by their placing authority social worker regarding such arrangements. Placing authority social workers' survey responses identified that in 42% of placements, children were subject to restrictions on contact or communication. 100% of Placing officers stated that the authority had approved these restrictions and that in 100% of placements made, they were satisfied with the fostering service's management of these restrictions. Placing authority social workers indicated that in 66% of placements, the agency worked 'very well' with children's families; and 'fairly well' in 33% of placements.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

Policies and procedures given to carers were examined and evidenced that the fostering service outlined its' expectations of carers in respect of listening and responding to children. Carers confirmed that the assessment and preparation of prospective carers covered training related to listening and responding to children and families.

The Children's Guide provided children with information on how to make a complaint and how to access independent advocacy. It was written in an encouraging style, to promote open discussion of any concerns that the child may have. The Registered Person indicated that children were encouraged to attend their review meetings; to present their views to the placing authority social worker; supported by carers to do so and an independent worker could be enlisted if requested. Parents were consulted at review meetings and in

conjunction with arrangements made by the placing authority. Support workers consulted with children regularly on home visits to ascertain their views and wishes about the placement.

Children spoken with in foster homes confirmed that carers and support workers sought their views. Survey responses from children and young people (7 received in total) evidenced that:

'Do carers ask you for your opinions and ideas?' – 7 'yes often'

'Have providers asked for your opinion of foster carers?' – 3 'yes' 4 'no'

'Have providers ever asked you for your opinion of foster carers?' – 2 'yes' 5 'no'

'Does your social worker sometimes see you alone to ask you your opinions?' – 1 'often, 5 'sometimes' 1 'never'

'Have you been told how to make a complaint?' – 6 'yes' 1 'no'

'Have you been told how to get in touch with Commission for Social Care Inspection – 6 'yes' 1 'no'

'Have you been given a Children's Guide or leaflet telling you about your fostering service?' 7 'yes'

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?

2

Carers indicated that they were offered First Aid training with local providers in their geographical location. The inspector observed a training event for carers covering 'drug and substance misuse'.

Children identified that they were given advice by their carers in respect of diet, hygiene and the taking of exercise. Discussion and examination of records evidenced that children received specialist services to meet their needs. Carers emphasised the commitment of the fostering agency to identify and access specialist services, in liaison with the placing authority, but had found that this process sometimes led to a time delay and a 'gap' in service provision to the child, when they were placed outside of their placing authority. Carers confirmed and minutes of reviews evidenced that carers contributed health information in respect of the child to review meetings

Examination of case records and review minutes evidenced that children were provided with GP, dental and optical services in accordance with care/placement plans and the directions of the placing authority social worker. LAC documentation on file provided a variable quality of health information. Carers told the inspectors that sometimes there is a lack of information about the health needs of children at the outset of the placement and that this information is sometimes slow in arriving from placing authorities. One carer indicated that obtaining medical consent from the placing authority in a timely manner had been problematic.

Examination of LAC paperwork evidenced that not all placing authorities had clearly signed and indicated the arrangements in place for the giving of medical consent out of office hours. It is recommended that the agency review the adequacy of the provision of medical consent agreements.

Discussion with carers and the Registered Person indicated that the Registered Person had not set up a management system to monitor and record the administration of medication and first aid, or a system to record accidents. Accidents were recorded in carers' weekly reports; medication was discussed between carers and the support workers at the fortnightly home visits and at placement and review meetings. It is recommended that a system is designed so that the Registered Person can monitor the giving of medication and first aid, and the recording of accidents as required by Regulation 42(1), Schedule 7..

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?

2

Discussion with carers confirmed that they were clear about the expectations of the agency with regard to the meeting of the child's educational needs. All expected to attend parent's evenings, school open days and activities and held discussions with teachers. All carers interviewed emphasised their commitment to educational attainment for the child, and evidenced examples of their support to promote educational attainment. Children confirmed that carers attended their schools or contacted teachers on a regular basis. Carers reported that the agency supported them with educational issues and that the supervising social workers were proactive in addressing shortfalls in provision.

Personal education plans were evidenced on some children's files. Care/placement plans included arrangements for educational provision.

The inspectors found that 'day care' had been provided when a child was not in school. All long-term placements had educational provision and the Registered Person indicated that negotiation was underway for educational provision for some short-term placements. Carers were not clear about what arrangements were in place for structured occupation if any child was not in school. Information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of children in the fostering service and the numbers excluded from school were not evidenced.

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?

1

The Registered Person indicated that the agency had had few placements helping young people move into independence. One carer visited was offering such a placement, and links were established with a supportive living scheme. The young person in placement said she was satisfied with the help she received to prepare for independence.

No written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living was evidenced from the agency. Carers did not identify that they had received any training in the provision of effective support for independence skills development, although some basic training had

been prepared in the carers' preparation training. No specific training for carers in the Pathway Planning process was evidenced. It is recommended that the agency review training opportunities and clarify expectations of carers in respect of supporting independent living.

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?

1

The personnel files of the four members of staff who had been recruited in the past year were examined. Information held in files did not evidence the details required in Regulations 5,7 and 20 Schedule 1. Information omitted included photographs and documentary proof of any relevant qualifications. A CRB check has not been undertaken on one member of staff who had provided the agency with a copy of her CRB check from her previous employer. A recruitment policy was evidenced. It required further development to clarify the taking up of CRB checks at enhanced level and the practice of renewing CRB checks every three years. A requirement is made in respect of this standard.

It is recommended in terms of good practice that the agency follow up written references with telephone enquiries, the outcome of which is documented; and that notes taken at interviews are kept on file.

The Registered Person indicated that all social work staff had appropriate qualifications and workers involved in assessment and approval of foster carers were qualified social workers. No students had worked in the service since the previous inspection. No unqualified staff carried out social work functions.

Total number of staff of the agency:

7

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**

Survey responses from placing authority social workers and discussion with carers evidenced that staff were organised in a manner that delivered an effective foster care service. There was a clear management structure, with clear lines of accountability for the company; however, the manager's reduction in working hours had necessarily led to a sharing of his management tasks in his absence. The directors were considering a 'peer supervision' process, as evidenced within Board meeting minutes. At the time of inspection, each director was monitored by the other 2 directors at social work meetings for their casework responsibilities, and also at Board meetings to address the overall fostering service provision and respective management accountabilities. It is recommended that the directors consider further the implementation of a robust supervision process for their individual support work to carers.

Directors supervised the supervising social worker and assessing social workers. The office manager supervised the administrative staff. Supervision notes examined evidenced satisfactory support offered and monitoring of work undertaken

Social work meetings and daily update meetings monitored and prioritised workloads. Reporting formats, supervision and Panel presentation and discussion ensured that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers were managed and implemented effectively.

One director was undertaking further post-qualification training; there was evidence of planned I.T. and administrative training for the office staff. The inspectors noted that there was adequate office equipment and an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support. Personnel files examined evidenced that all staff were provided with written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. Staff had access to copies of grievance and disciplinary procedures, details of the services offered, equal opportunities policy and health and safety procedures.

Carers indicated that they maintained a training portfolio; training records for carers were evidenced on their individual case records and were recorded within the annual review report.

Minutes of meetings evidenced that Panel members offered a range of advice to the fostering service; its members included individuals with childcare, medical, police and educational backgrounds. Discussion with staff and survey responses from placing authority social worker indicated that the supporting social workers and all social work staff understood the role of the children's social workers and that the agency had established good working relationships and liaison with placing authorities. 69% of placing authority social worker indicated that the fostering service worked in partnership with them 'very well'; 23% 'fairly well' and 7% 'average'.

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 over the past year that as the fostering service had grown, additional staff had been recruited to meet the needs of the agency. The Registered Person and manager indicated that a further qualified social worker was to be recruited to undertake supervisory work of the carers in line with their development strategy for the service, and some re-defining of roles and responsibilities within directorship level. In the inspectors' opinion, suitable arrangements were in place to monitor workloads, staffing levels and effective practice. The shortfall in the manager's hours, had been adequately covered by the other two directors and the office manager's flexible working arrangements. All social workers were suitably qualified. Carers confirmed that staffing levels were adequate; survey responses indicated that 100% of carers believed that there were sufficient staff in the fostering service.

A policy for the retention of salaried staff was evidenced; it included supervision arrangements, terms and conditions of service. The manager indicated that a training programme for staff was being developed. Minutes of board meetings evidenced that this process had begun in identifying I.T. training for the administrative staff and the panel members had received training in the past year from a BAAF advisor.

The Registered Person and manager identified that the fostering agency targeted rural communities for their recruitment of carers. The inspectors were shown creative advertising within local rural newspapers. Discussion with prospective carers evidenced that the agency's strategy of asking interested parties to 'open evenings' where they were given 'open and honest' information and able to talk with current carers, had enabled them to clarify their understanding of the role and had encouraged them to proceed with their applications. The manager indicated that the agency was looking to particularly recruit more 'respite' carers. Discussion with prospective carers indicated that this strategy had commenced.

There was a clearly set out assessment process; the agency used the Fostering Network A10 format for the assessment report. The format was found to include the qualities, competencies and aptitudes for fostering required by this standard specified within section 17.7. The assessment reports examined evidenced a satisfactory level of completion with some very good practice noted.

Recommendations and notes on file to the Registered Person from the panel chair indicated that the panel provided a robust monitoring and quality assurance function for the agency in relation to the undertaking of the assessment of carers. Records examined evidenced that the panel chair had written advising the agency of good practice guidelines in relation to an issue arising within a particular assessment process. In discussion, the panel chair reported that in the panel's opinion, the quality of the assessments was generally good.

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**

Policy and procedural guidance examined indicated that the fostering agency provided sound employment practices and was a fair employer to staff and carers. Policies in relation to disciplinary and grievance procedures, health and safety, recruitment, retention, complaints and representations and 'whistle blowing' were evidenced. Staff and carers confirmed that they had access to these policies either within the agency's office setting, or within the foster carer's handbook.

Systems were in place for the regular fortnightly supervision of carers. In discussion and from survey responses, carers in locations from Cornwall to East Dorset, confirmed that their supervising workers provided fortnightly supervision during home visits made at this regular frequency. Also that the 'on call' service offered excellent support; it was always available and the carers said they were appreciative of the depth of knowledge and understanding that all 'on call' staff held regarding their individual placements. Carers gave examples of effective telephone support, 'emergency' visits made by supervising workers and good advice, backed on occasion by practical support. Carers' survey responses indicated that the support they received from the agency was 'high' and that they were very satisfied with it. 81% of carers indicated that they felt 'very well'; supported; 9% 'quite well' and 9% 'OK'. That 81% of carers had been asked their opinion about the way the fostering service was run.

Records examined evidenced regular supervision, yearly appraisals and the identification of carer's training needs. Appraisal systems for staff were in place, and plans were evidenced to commence appraisal for the one member of staff who had been employed for more than a year. The Registered Person and the office manager confirmed that the agency continued to have public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers, including cover of costs arising as a result of child abuse claims against staff and carers. Insurance policies had been examined by an inspector and found to be satisfactory at the previous inspection.

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?****2**

The manager indicated that the service was developing a training programme for staff. Records evidenced that this process had begun for the administrative staff and training had been identified. The agency had provided induction training for a new social worker but a clear, evaluated, training programme for social work staff was not evidenced. One director indicated that she was pursuing her PQ award. The Registered Person indicated that ongoing training opportunities were provided through specialist organisations, such as Fostering Network and local Fostering associations. The Registered Person attended these forums and received information from associated organisations, including the Commission for Social Care Inspection, which provided staff with up to date knowledge of changes in legislation or guidance relevant to foster care provision.

The manager gave examples of joint training arrangements for carers and fostering service staff. A Training programme for social work staff is required and should be routinely evaluated and reviewed and updated at least annually. An appraisal process for staff was

evidenced

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Staff interviewed confirmed that they had received a job description for their respective posts. Job descriptions and person specifications were evidenced in personnel files. Policies and procedures were available in the office and brought to new staff's attention during their induction programme.

The social worker and office staff confirmed that they received regular supervision.

Supervision notes evidenced frequency and satisfactory agendas, monitoring of workloads.

Arrangements for appraisals were in place, backed by a comprehensive format. Minutes of meeting indicated that all staff had the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings.

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**

The fostering agency provided support to carers through regular fortnightly visits, telephone calls and training events. The directors indicated that they held daily update meetings, which ensured that all staff were aware of current issues relating to placements, and assisted in providing an effective 'on call' service. Carers had indicated in their survey responses (refer to standard 18), that they were very satisfied with the support they received. Some carers indicated that respite care provision had been arranged for their foster children; the manager and policy examined confirmed that the agency provided 14 days respite for each carer, to enable them to take a holiday without their foster child, should they so chose to do so. The Registered Person indicated that plans were in place for 'self' help' groups to be formally set up later this year. Carers indicated that some carers had dialogue opportunities with other carers known to them determined by locality, shared training and day care/respite arrangements in place.

Carers confirmed that they were provided with a good range of advice and information, very good support in accessing and dealing with other relevant services, such as health and education and that the 'on call' service was always available and met their expectations. The Director's reported that all their carers were supported with legal advice provided by the subscription paid by the agency to Fostering Network. Carers emphasised the availability of social work staff, their open and honest approach in working in partnership with them, and the regular frequency of supervision and home visits made.

Staff and carers spoken with were clear about their expectations of the role of the supervising social worker. Comprehensive annual review reports were seen in carer's files and minutes of Panel meetings evidenced that these reports were presented to Panel and commented upon, with recommendations made. Copies of panel recommendations were evidenced in carer's files. It was not evident from the examination of files if all carer's received written notification of the outcome of the Panel's consideration of their review report.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The fostering service had a supervising social worker/director allocated to each carer and there was a system evidenced for the recording of each supervisory visit. Foster Care Agreements for the agency were evidenced in each carer's file and included all requirements of this standard, in line with Regulation 28 (5)(b), Schedule 5, with the exception of information regarding the arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster carer arising by reason of a placement. This should be added to the agreement. The Registered Person and manager indicated that carers received assistance with legal liabilities via their membership of Fostering Network. Discussion with carers confirmed that they were aware of this arrangement.

The foster care agreement clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of carers and the fostering service. The carer is required to sign the agreement and also the Carers Information agreement, which lists policies and procedures of the agency, plus information on insurance. Carer's case files evidenced that all carers had signed their agreements and

any updates to it.

Carer's confirmed that they had received a handbook, which included the policies and procedures of the agency. Carers spoken with indicated that their depth of awareness of these policies and guidance was variable. Carers indicated that they met regularly with their supervising social worker. Case files examined evidenced recording of these meetings, identifying the purpose and outcome of each meeting. It was not clear from the case files inspected, if an unannounced inspection was undertaken each year. Discussion with carers indicated that given the length of the journey to some placements that this would not be a practicable measure. It is recommended that the agency identify in written records when an unannounced inspection is undertaken by the supervising social worker.

Carers confirmed that a system of practical support was available to them. It included - out of hours management support; prompt payment, insurance cover; membership of Fostering Network; respite care where appropriate and 14 days respite each year for each carer and access to social work support.

Carers confirmed that they had been sufficient Information about the procedures to deal with investigations into allegations and procedures for dealing with complaints and representations. Survey responses indicated that 100% of carers had been given written details of the complaints procedure.

Records of complaints (2) and allegations made (1) were evidenced on individual files. The Registered Person indicated that he monitored these issues. Records examined and notifications and information received by the Commission for Social Care Inspection during the course of the year, evidenced that the fostering service were clear about under what circumstances a 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?	1
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The fostering agency provided pre-approval training, using the Fostering Network's programme – 'Choosing to Foster'. This was delivered by qualified social workers. All new carers confirmed that they had received induction training and that they had found it very comprehensive.

The inspectors were informed that training was organised within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Most training events had been held at a venue in Newton Abbot, South Devon, although emergency first aid training had been delivered by agencies 'local' to carers' homes. Some carers indicated that attending training events had proved difficult, given the large geographical spread of carers' homes and travel time taken to this venue. The Registered Person confirmed that he was aware of this difficulty and was considering alternatives and the provision of more local training sets.

The inspector attended a training event the Newton Abbot venue, and found it to be a pleasant setting that facilitated learning opportunities. The training observed, evidenced good quality delivery, within an equal opportunities framework. The agency provided travel

expenses to the carers and a very good lunch! Several courses were provided on two separate dates in an attempt to provide convenient dates for carers and maximise attendance. The Registered Person and the manager confirmed that training courses had been provided by both internal and external providers. That they were currently in liaison with a local authority to access places for carers on multi-disciplinary child protection training courses.

All Course participants were asked to complete evaluation sheets of the training events and the directors had considered the evaluation of training delivered and had made some amendments and changes.

Inspection of carer's files and discussion with carers evidenced that not all carers had undertaken the 'core' training modules offered by the agency. Where there were two adults in one household approved as joint carers, it was not confirmed that both adults had completed all training, as required to do so. The annual review process identified carer's developmental needs in partnership with them. Induction training was evidenced to give specific attention to the support and needs of the sons and daughters of carers; carers identified that the agency had also offered discussion opportunities and had provided practical support to ensure that their own children's needs were met in relation to the foster placement.

Training on safe care had been provided twice since the last inspection. Discussion with carers evidenced that not all carers with placements had attended either of these events and were yet to undertake the training. Evidence from the inspection of carer's files was that not all carers had completed a written 'safe caring' policy for their homes for each placement made. This was a requirement made at the previous inspection.

One carer confirmed that he was studying for his NVQ3. The Registered Person and manager confirmed that they were considering how best to provide NVQ training to carers. Two of the social worker staff were identified as taking the Assessor's award to progress this strategy. It is recommended that the provision of this training be progressed as a priority.

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

A case record is maintained for each child in foster care. The requisite LAC paperwork was evidenced on file, although the quality of completion was very variable. It is recommended that the agency monitor the quality of paperwork provided by the placing authority and ensure that all relevant information is available to the agency. Carers provided weekly diary updates to the agency for each child and these records were placed on the child's file.

A system was in place for file management, but no written policy on case recording, which established the purpose, format and contents of files and identified what information was kept on the carer's files and what information is kept on the child's file was evidenced. The inspectors found inconsistencies in filing practice and it is recommended that attention is given to more systematic file management and that written procedural guidance is provided.

Foster placement agreements were not evidenced on file as required by Regulation 34 (3), Schedule 6. The Registered Person confirmed that suitable arrangements were in place for the transference of relevant information regarding a child to the responsible authority as and when required.

Carers spoken with confirmed that they understood the basis of the placement of each child placed with them. Carers indicated that the fostering service provided them with all of the relevant information that they held, and would attempt to access further information from the placing authority if there was insufficient information within the LAC documentation. Carers stated that they had been encouraged in training to understand the importance of recording significant life events and collecting memorabilia. Examples were given of carers assisting with life story work and putting together photo albums for children. Carers indicated that they were aware of the need to securely store information and the homes visited were found to have safe storage arrangements in 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?****2**

Separate records were kept for children, carers and staff. Children's records kept were congruent with the Looking After Children system. Entries in records were legible, non-stigmatising and distinguished between fact, opinion and third party information.

Records of allegations and complaints were kept on individual files, but not also in separate records as required. Examination of one complaint and one allegation received evidenced that the agency had clearly recorded the details of the investigation, the conclusion reached and the action taken.

Front sheet 'checklists' were evidenced on files to monitor recruitment processes for staff and carers, including checks undertaken and references. CRB checks were kept on personnel files. The Directors and support workers monitored the quality of carers weekly reports sent to the agency. No other systems were found that monitored the quality and adequacy of records. The office manager and Registered Person indicated that the networked computer system was being updated to ensure the adequacy of completion of records. It was not clear how the quality of records was to be monitored by the agency. It is required that the Registered Person assures himself that a system is established and maintained to monitor the issues set out in Regulation 42 (1)(a) Schedule 7 and Regulation 42(1)(b).

Survey responses from placing authority social workers indicated that only 57% of workers indicated that they had been given information on the fostering service's complaint procedures. It is recommended that the agency put in place a system that monitors the giving of this information to placing authorities.

Written policy and procedural guidance was required on the formatting of information for passing to other placements. Policy guidance on access to records and retention of records was in place. Children and carers were able to access their records within procedural guidance. Examination of records did not identify that carers or children had made any additional comments or recorded personal statements to case files on access.

The office manager indicated that records would be stored securely in the new building. The panel chair and directors confirmed that procedures for storing and managing confidential information were known to staff and panel members.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

21

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

29

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

9

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

13

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

4

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

250

Maximum £

500

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

This standard is recorded as met. However, it should be noted that the inspectors have reached this decision, given the timing of the inspection in relation to the context of the fostering service. I.e. The agency had moved to 'new' premises two working days prior to inspection. Builders and decorators were present during the inspection, to undertake alterations. From discussion with the office manager, he indicated that the building would meet the requirements of this standard shortly. The inspectors noted how well organised the agency was, given the circumstances, and staff were observed to be able to continue their work efficiently.

The building is a large terraced house, situated in the town centre of Teignmouth. Public transportation –rail and bus links are nearby enabling easy access to the office for carers and purchasers. Limited parking is available outside, but there are several public car parks within close proximity. The building provides adequate facilities for staff and is well equipped. There is ample room to develop the building as planned to provide sufficient office space, reception and a meeting room.

The agency had set up an adequate telephone system and had networked I. T. systems, with each worker having either a laptop computer or access to a computer in the office. I. T. systems were being updated during the inspection to provide a more comprehensive and speedier system to workers. Administrative systems were robust. Records were observed kept in a large cupboard that could be locked. It was unclear at this point in time who/how this was secured at night; keys were available. The office manager indicated that the room would be able to be locked and that appropriate security systems would be in place. It is recommended that the directors review the situation to ensure that facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room are provided.

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 office manager indicated that systems were in place to ensure that the agency had sufficient resources to fulfil its obligations. Minutes of Board meetings confirmed that the directors received regular financial information and a system was in place to safeguard the agency's position in respect of retaining a minimum reserve.

The agency uses TAS books and payroll systems, and follows the guidelines and procedures of this financial package.

The agency uses TAS books and payroll systems and carers are paid weekly by BACS. The agency is VAT exempt.

Procedures to deal with situations of financial crises, such as disclosing information to purchasers and liaising with them to safeguard the welfare of children in placement were evidenced. Procedural guidance indicated that purchasers would receive at least 8 weeks notice in the event of a financial crisis.

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

Very comprehensive financial regulations and arrangements for the agency were evidenced. These provided clear guidelines to all staff and directors on the principles and standards used to govern financial management. The office manager indicated that he provided regular financial information to the directors. The inspectors read minutes of Board Meetings, which confirmed that the directors were regularly updated on financial matters.

The office manager was responsible for the internal audit of the accounts. The Registered Person and manager indicated that the accounts would be externally audited in 2005/6.

A clear policy for charging and additional expenses, available to purchasers was evidenced within the placement contract.

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**

Carers were provided with comprehensive information about the current allowances. The office manager indicated that allowances would be reviewed on an annual basis. Carers were generally satisfied with the allowances given and fees paid. Some carers expressed their irritation with the methodology used by the agency to calculate mileage claims, given the considerable daily mileage they undertook, living within rural locations, as part of their caring responsibilities.

Carers indicated that they appreciated the advice and help provided by the office manager in respect to tax allowances and financial advice. All carers spoken with reported that they received their payments promptly each week.

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?

2

The Panel Chair confirmed that the fostering panel did not have clear written policies and procedures about its functions, including written procedures covering decision-making when all members of the panel are not in agreement. The inspector observed that clarification in relation to terms of reference i.e. definition of 'short-term' was required. It is recommended that these are formulated and implemented as a priority.

Records evidenced that all panel members had satisfactory CRB disclosure checks. The panel had access to a local GP, and records and discussion evidenced that he was approached to clarify and comment on medical matters/references as appropriate. The panel members had been appointed in line with the Fostering Services Regulations requirements and were observed to offer a depth of knowledge and experience to their considerations and decision-making processes. The independent members included individuals with child-care, education, health, and police experience; a foster carer from another fostering service and one member of the panel had been placed in foster care. Meeting minutes evidenced that the panel was well attended and always had at least five members, present. A vice chair was identified at the panel observed by the inspector.

The inspector observed the panel of 16th October 2004. Two assessments and two annual reviews were tabled, alongside other issues arising. Clear directions and good chairing skills were observed; panel members identified relevant issues and engaged in robust questioning. It is recommended that the panel consider an evaluative process to monitor the quality of the panel's functioning on a regular basis.

Records of panel meetings evidenced that the panel provided a robust quality assurance function to the fostering service, in relation to monitoring and reviewing the work of the assessing social workers, providing feedback and identifying problems. A note seen from the panel chair evidenced that the panel challenged the fostering service appropriately and had recommended a change in the assessment process that would improve the quality of assessment.

The chair had devised a workable format for recording the panel meetings, including reasons for its recommendations. Records confirmed that the panel considered applications for approval, recommending whether or not the person is suitable to act as a carer; recommending the terms on which approval is to be given; consideration of the annual review report and recommending suitability to remain as a carer and whether or not the terms of approval remain appropriate. The panel chair indicated that he was contacted by the Registered Person to provide advice and make recommendations on such other matters

or cases as required outside of panel meetings, with regard to any function associated with the role of the panel. The Registered Person confirmed this process was in place. The panel chair could not identify where documentation of these conversations were kept, but did clarify that these matters were then discussed at the next panel.

Conversation with the Registered Person and the panel chair, plus discussion at the observed panel indicated that consideration was being given to the matter of some panel members and the chair approaching the end of their first three year term. A strategy was in place to ensure that the consistency and the effectiveness of the panel are safeguarded as membership changed.

The Registered Person and panel chair indicated that the Registered Person was a member of the panel (as required by Regulation 24 (3)(b) (i)), but was also the decision maker for the fostering service. The Registered Person should note that in line with Regulation 28 (3)(4), 'no member of the fostering panel must take part in any decision made by a fostering service provider in deciding whether to approve a person as a foster carer and as to the terms of any approval, taking into account the recommendation of the fostering panel'. It is recommended that alternative arrangements be put in place to identify a 'decision-maker' who is not the Registered Provider.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The inspectors found that short term breaks had occurred in relation to children being provided with 'holiday short-term breaks', or 'respite' breaks, placed with another foster carer from the service. The placing authority remained central in decision-making processes.

Examination of the agency's register evidenced that other children had been placed as short term placements with the agency, but it was not clear if their parents remained central to the promotion of their health and educational needs.

The manager indicated that the agency was developing respite provision within the agency and carers were being recruited to provide 'short term breaks'.

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?
Not applicable to this agency	9

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 7th September 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We feel that the inspection process and report have reflected the work done at Rural Foster Care in the last twelve months – both in consolidating our position and in reponse to the requirements of the inspection in 2003 and subsequent guidance and advice from our Inspector.

There are issues we would wish to raise – one minor – one less so. The first and lesser issue is in Standard 8, Page 23 – it is suggested it was said that the Placement Agreement was a verbal process whereas this is definitely not the case – we do feel this is meant to indicate that the Matching Process was a largely verbal process.

The second issue refers to the Placement Agreement intself – in 2003 we acknowledged that we had not been diligent enough in getting LA's to return Placement Agreements. We simultaneously improved our Placement Agreement structure but, as no wider discussion took place, we understood the content within our agreement and contract (both within the contact pack) were sufficient. Having discussed this further during this years inspection, we have jointly agreed with our Inspector a consolidated form which is already in use in accordance with Schedule 6.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

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 Rual Foster Care
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 Rural Foster Care
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.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

33 Greycoat Street

London

SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000

Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

www.csci.org.uk

S0000032760.V175364.R01

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