

inspection report

Fostering Services

Solutions Fostering Agency

Solutions (Ross) Ltd

The Business Centre

Llangarron

Hereford

Herefordshire

HR9 6PG

8th November 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

Solutions Fostering Agency

Tel No

01989 770701

Address

Solutions (Ross) Ltd, The Business Centre, Llangarron,
Hereford, Herefordshire, HR9 6PG

Fax No

01989 770011

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

E020000194

Name of Registered Provider

Solutions

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

vacant

Date of first registration

1st September 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

16th July 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

24/4/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Dawn Taylor	081289
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Solutions Fostering Agency is a project that is part of a larger organisation, Solutions (Ross) Ltd a private company which provides residential child care services with education to young people who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. It's Statement of Purpose states that the agency will provide foster placements for young people aged between 6 and 16 years who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties and who are likely to make considerable demands on those caring for them. These young people may be admitted directly to foster care, others may have progressed from Solutions Residential units where it has been determined that their needs will be best met in a foster care placement. These plans may include either medium or long-term care and in some circumstances rehabilitation to their family home. Education is provided either through Solutions School or in mainstream schools or colleges.

They recruit carers from a wide range of backgrounds. All carers are trained, given a high level of support appropriate to their needs. Solutions recruit carers to undertake a variety of tasks the categories given are; Short term, long term, respite and holiday placements.

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 Inspection is the second annual inspection undertaken of Solutions Foster Agency. One Inspector conducted the inspection over a period of five days, during this time the Inspector reviewed records, observed and met with panel members and interviewed staff and the Manager. The Inspector also met four foster families in their homes, met with the foster children of the families and distributed questionnaires to all carers, children in placement and placing authorities.

The following responses were received:

Placing Authority Questionnaires returned.

'Solutions are an excellent agency with a very good support network'.

The agency and their carers are dedicated, enthusiastic and able to work in partnership'.

Feedback given by Social Workers with regard to changes they felt this Fostering Service should make has been incorporated into the main body of this report.

Foster Carers Questionnaires returned.

What do you think are the Best things about the fostering Service?

'The support, also being able to pick the phone up and there is always a friendly voice at the other end'.

'The staff work very hard, I am pleased with the service they provide for the young person and myself'.

'The training courses offered'.

Feedback given by foster carers with regard to changes they felt this Fostering Service should make has been incorporated into the main body of this report.

Children's Questionnaires returned.

All children had received a copy of the children's guide, and knew how to make a complaint if they were unhappy.

All children confirmed that they were asked their opinion about their foster carers by Solutions Fostering Agency.

The questionnaires were used to inform Requirements and Recommendations set out in this report.

The Manager provided the Inspector with comprehensive and informative pre inspection information. The pre inspection questionnaires demonstrated that the Fostering Service was aware of areas where it met practice and areas where practice needed to be developed.

The Inspector found that where the Managers and staff team, prior to the inspection, had identified shortfalls action plans and processes were already in place to inform change.

The Inspector is confident that where short falls have been identified in this inspection report Solutions Fostering Agency's capacity for improvement will bring the small number of scores from two to three with relatively small input and within short time scales.

Statement of Purpose.

1 of 1 Standard was met.

There was a Statement of Purpose that was known to staff and described practice in line with policies, procedures and staff guidance for staff and foster carers.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service.

2 of 2 Standards were met.

The Manager of the fostering service possessed the necessary business and management skills to manage the work efficiently and effectively. Solutions Fostering Agency had followed clear staff vetting policies and procedures to ensure all checks and references were undertaken and suitable for any persons managing the fostering service.

Management of fostering service.

2 of 2 Standards were met.

In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions Managers, staff and foster carers were able to describe well-established lines of communication and accountability. Effective systems were in place that enabled the Manager to monitor a range of matters that were used to inform practice and improve the quality of foster care provided by the service.

Securing and promoting welfare.

1 of 9 Standards was partially met and 8 were met.

At the time of this inspection the Foster Placement Agreement did not wholly conform to Schedule 6. Foster Placement Agreements should be produced in line with Regulation 34 (3), Schedule 6 and given to all foster carers. Specific shortfalls are referred to in appropriate sections of this report.

In interviews and questionnaires foster carers and children gave positive feedback and examples of good practice with regard to the support they received from Solutions.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers.

1 of 9 Standards was partially met and 8 were met.

The Foster Care Agreement should be developed in line with Regulation 28(5) b, Schedule 5 to include points 4,10, 12 and 13.

Foster carers are managed, trained and supported by a team of staff who are appropriately experienced and qualified. There are systems in place that promote supervision, team meeting and access to corporate and specialist training.

Records.

2 of 2 Standards were met.

All records were maintained in line with the Regulations and Standards.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service.

1 of 1 Standard was met.

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

Financial requirements.

3 of 3 Standards were met.

In interviews and pre inspection questionnaires the Manager was able to describe clear policies and procedures relating to finance.

Fostering panel.

1 of 1 Standard was met.

The Inspector observed a panel meeting. The Panel function in accordance with Regulations 24, 25 and 26 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Short-term breaks.

N/A

Family and friends as carers.

N/A

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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		

Lead Inspector	Dawn Taylor	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Alan McCardle	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	42	FS4	The Review of Quality of Care should be developed and written guidance produced to explain the system to meet Regulation 42(1) (b), (2) and (3) to improve the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. A copy of reports written in respect of any review conducted in relation to matters monitored must be supplied to the Commission and made available to the persons mentioned in Regulation 3(2).	31 st March 2005
2	34(3)	FS13FS12 FS10FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should be produced in line with Regulation 34 (3), Schedule 6 and given to all foster carers. The Foster Placement Agreement should cover the matters detailed under Standard 13.8.	31 st March 2005
3	28(5) (b)	FS22	The Foster Care Agreement should be developed in line with Regulation 28(5) b, Schedule 5 to include points 4,10, 12 and 13.	31 st March 2005

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	FS15FS3	The agency should ensure that all written references are followed up with telephone enquiries.
2	FS11	Solutions Fostering Service should explore a range of communication tools available to develop their welcome booklet in formats that would be appropriate and specific to children with learning and language difficulties.
3	FS13	Solutions Fostering Service should organise training with regard to legislation relating to education and the rights of children in care and ensure that all foster carers are supported to enable young people to access education.
4	FS7	Solutions Fostering Service newly developed policies and procedures include a section on Standard 7, this section would benefit from being expanded to describe the practice observed in line with 7.1 to 7.7.
5	FS13	Solutions Fostering Agency should develop the procedure relating to education to ensure there are clear arrangements in place to support children and foster carers if any child is not in school. These arrangements should include structured occupation during school hours.
6	FS16	Solutions Fostering Agency should ensure the Annual Business Plan identifies at what point administrative support will increase.
7	FS19	The Manager should ensure the effectiveness of training programmes for staff by evaluating events held and reviewing and up dating staff training annually.
8	FS21	The communication systems between the supervising social worker and link worker should be reviewed and monitored to ensure effective communication that will meet the needs of foster carers and children.

* 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

5

Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NA
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• 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	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES

Date of Inspection

5/11/04

Time of Inspection

9.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

40

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?
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Solutions Fostering Service has an up to date and accurate Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide, which set out the aims and objectives of the Service and the facilities it provides. The Statement of Purpose gives an outline of the management and staff structure. The Children's Guide is appropriate to the age range of the children placed. Solutions Fostering Service should consider developing the Children's Guide using symbols, pictures and photos for children with learning difficulties.

The Children's Guide is given to young people when they are placed with a foster carer.

The Statement of Purpose is shared with those working for the fostering service, who are able to discuss its contents at team meetings and give feedback.

The Statement of Purpose is shared with children's parents after the placement meeting, by post or via the placing Social Worker.

Placing and prospective placing authorities are sent a copy of the Statement of Purpose as part of the matching process.

A Foster Carer Handbook is given to all foster carers. At the time of the inspection the agencies policies and procedures had just been reviewed. These will be made available to all staff and foster carers. All the new policies and procedures accurately reflect 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?

3

At the time of the inspection a new manager had been recruited to the service and had been in post for one week. An application for registration was being processed by the CSCI.

The new manager has a professional qualification relevant to working with children, a qualification in management, at least two years' experience of working with children within the past five years and at least one years' experience of working at a senior level.

In interview the manager demonstrated a clear understanding of management theories that can be used to promote effective leadership of staff and operations.

The organisation had implemented an effective and clear strategy for managing the fostering service whilst the previous manager was on maternity leave.

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

Procedures had been followed to ensure the persons carrying on and managing the fostering service are suitable people.

The Inspector sampled the staff file for the newly appointed manager. All checks had been completed in line with Standard 3 and Regulation 7 except for taking telephone references.

The agency should ensure that all written references are followed up with telephone enquiries, these should be recorded.

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 agency has procedures in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service. The Inspector was told that there have been and there will be regular meetings between the acting manager/manager and the provider, which follow the format of schedule 7. The manager provides 3 monthly written reports to the provider.

This system should be developed and written guidance produced to explain the system to meet Regulation 42(1) (b), (2) and (3) to improve the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. A copy of reports written in respect of any review conducted in relation to matters monitored must be supplied to the Commission and made available to the persons mentioned in Regulation 3(2).

In interviews the manager, staff and foster carers described clear roles for the manager and staff and well-established lines of communication and of accountability between the manager, staff and carers.

The fostering service has an information pack, which is sent to all enquiring Local Authorities and purchasers.

In interviews the manager, staff and carers were aware of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.

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

6

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.

1

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.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

4

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

3

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The fostering manager has a clear job description detailing his main duties and responsibilities. At the time of this inspection the person specification was being developed. There is a clear and effective procedure in place that identifies the person in charge when the manager is absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The foster homes visited by the Inspector demonstrated accommodation appropriate to the needs of young people. The homes were well furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Young people accommodated had their own bedroom. In interviews with foster carers and staff the Inspector was informed of annual unannounced visits and annual health and safety visits.

In interviews the Manager and staff described the procedure for the assessment and placement of children who have been abused or have abused other children.

Solutions Training Programme provides induction and training in health and safety matters and first aid. Foster carers are provided with written guidelines regarding their health and safety responsibilities.

In interviews the Manager and staff described procedures for ensuring foster carers transport was safe and appropriate to the needs of the young people placed. This included maintaining copies of appropriate current documents, car insurance, MOT, driving licence, on each foster carers file.

It was clear to the Inspector that foster carer's understood that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Solutions Training Programme provided induction and training in 'Valuing Diversity' and 'Men in Foster Care'.

Solutions newly developed policies and procedures include a section on Standard 7, this section would benefit from being expanded to describe the practice observed in line with 7.1 to 7.7. These policies and procedures will be made available to all staff and foster carers. In interviews foster carers were able to describe appropriate care and practice to meet the individual needs of young people. Foster carers were able to demonstrate positive relationships with schools and clubs to ensure that the individual child's welfare was developed and promoted.

Staff, foster carers and the Manager were able to describe how a child with a disability was assessed and supported to maximise their potential within a foster home. The Manager and staff described how appropriate equipment or adaptations to carers home or vehicle would be provided if required.

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**

Staff and foster carers described the matching process. This process considered the child's assessed needs and written assessments of the child and their family and carers.

Solutions discuss and meet with foster carers prior to a placement.

At the time of this inspection the Foster Placement Agreement did not wholly conform to Schedule 6. Foster Placement Agreements should be produced in line with Regulation 34 (3), Schedule 6 and given to all foster carers. Specific shortfalls are referred to in appropriate sections of this report.

Foster carers confirmed that all information available to Solutions is copied and held by them at the time of placement.

When a young person is referred to Solutions the Local Authority is asked to complete a Referral Document and forward all relevant Looked After (LAC) documentation.

Foster carers and staff described the process of introduction of young people to a foster family.

In interviews foster carers stated that some children did not have the opportunity to visit or meet foster carers prior to placement but this only happened in the case of an emergency placement.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

The agency has sound systems and protocols in place for the protection of children in foster care from abuse as can be evidenced from its policies, procedures, foster care handbook, list of training courses and other guidance.

The agency has established good links with the local child protection office and is working hard to establish good links with the other child protection offices in the areas where their carers live.

Solutions Training Programme provides induction and training for support staff and foster carers in Child Protection, Anti Bullying and Whistle blowing.

All policies and procedures are made available to all staff and foster carers.

The Behaviour Management Policy includes the levels of physical intervention, which is accepted and refers to the Managing Behaviour Positively training given to all members of staff including foster carers.

Management systems are in place to collate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care. Systems to evaluate this information are continuing to be developed by the Manager.

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

X

%

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**

Solutions Fostering Agency has a policy on working with parents and relatives, which positively promotes contact with children's families through personal visits, telephone and letter writing.

Family contact is supported and promoted. At the time of this inspection arrangements for children to have contact with his parents and any other specified persons and details of any court order relating to contact did not form part of the Foster Placement Agreement in line with Regulation 34(3), Schedule 6 (please refer to Standard 8). These details were in the child's LAC documents.

Where necessary, contact visits were supervised by staff. Foster carers stated that they felt supported by Solutions Fostering Agency. Contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child will be monitored in formal supervision sessions.

The views of children and young people are sought at reviews and through statutory social worker visits.

All foster carers' recorded daily events, which included contact.

Financial support is provided to the carer for transport and other costs incurred in ensuring contact takes place.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

The young persons welcome booklet provides children with guidance on how to raise concerns or complaints.

Although there were procedures to ensure children with learning difficulties were supported by foster carers and staff to make complaints, Solutions should explore a range of communication tools available to develop their welcome booklet in formats that would be appropriate and specific to children with learning and language difficulties.

All foster carers received training on communicating with children.

In discussions young people were able to describe how they would make a complaint and whom they would talk to if they were upset.

All young people were consulted about their foster placement prior to reviews, during meetings/sessions with staff and in daily conversations with foster carers.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

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

The agency's policies and procedures provide good evidence that due regard is given to the health needs of children in their care.

The Handbook given to foster carers provides information on health care to meet this Standard.

All foster carers receive first aid training as part of their assessment.

In interviews the foster carers stated that the fostering service makes clear their role in terms of helping to promote the health of a child in their care

Staff and foster carers were able to describe to the Inspector a range of specialist services available within Solutions and the area the young person is placed. These services are taken into consideration when matching a young person to a foster family.

Foster carers are involved in preparing review reports, which included a section on medical needs and health.

The Foster Placement Agreement should include details in line with Schedule 6, 1(c) and 3 (see Standard 8).

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?****3**

This agency states that it can provide education within the broader structure of Solutions (Ross) Ltd. for children placed with foster carers as an alternative to mainstream education.

In interviews foster carers were able to describe positive relationships with Schools.

The Foster Placement Agreement should be developed to meet Regulation 34(3) 1(e) and Standard 13.8 (see Standard 8).

Foster carers are involved in preparing review reports, which includes a section on education.

Foster carers were able to describe how they supported young people to attend school and complete homework.

In interviews the young people confirmed that they had access to computers and/or study materials and that foster carers attended school events and parents evenings. At the time of this inspection Solutions were under going work to ensure computer access for all young people and safe access to the internet.

Solutions Fostering Agency ensures all financial costs are met with regard to education.

A procedure has been established to monitoring educational attainment, progress and school attendance.

Solutions Fostering Agency should develop the procedure relating to education to ensure there are clear arrangements in place to support children and foster carers if any child is not in school. These arrangements should include structured occupation during school hours.

Solutions Fostering Service should organise training with regard to legislation relating to education and the rights of children in care and ensure that all foster carers are supported to enable young people to access education.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The agency has good systems in place to meet most of this standard for example "Leaving care action plans" "Leaving Care checklist" and "All about Me Leaving Care " booklet for the young people.

Staff and foster carers were able to describe how they would work to promote each individual's independence skills in relation to their Placement Plan. Where appropriate, Local Authorities were preparing Pathway Plans.

During discussions young people described differing levels of independence and supervised and unsupervised time. This was appropriate to each individual's needs.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There were clear written procedures for the recruitment and appointment of staff. The agency should ensure that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references for all staff as well as foster carers. Since the last inspection other professional staff have been used on a sessional basis as and when required and have been recruited in accordance with the Children's Homes regulations. All young people have access to professional counsellors who are employed by Solutions. These sessions would be identified in the young person's Placement Plan.

Total number of staff of the agency:

6

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear management structure with appropriate lines of accountability. Those staff interviewed stated that they were properly managed. In interviews and questionnaires staff and the manager were able to describe a range of systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads. Staff had weekly meetings to discuss workloads and prioritise tasks. The manager and staff described the systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively. Professional supervision was provided to all staff. Staff and foster carers undertake on-going training. Solutions maintain carers training portfolios. Administration staff, based at HQ, support Solutions Fostering Agency. The Inspector was informed, in interviews with foster carers and young people, that access was made available to a range of people available to give advice. In interviews with staff and foster carers, the Inspector was informed that they had written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. In interviews with staff and from placing authority questionnaires, it is clear that Solutions staff and children's social workers work effectively together. At the time of the inspection there was an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support, however, it was acknowledged that with the growth of the agency this would need to be increased. Solutions Fostering Agency should ensure the Annual Business Plan

identifies at what point administrative support will increase.
At the time of the inspection person specifications were being developed for the Team Manager and Office Manager.

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

Solutions have a good ratio of qualified staff and encourage and promote the retention of staff through supervision, clear workloads and terms and conditions.

Solutions have a Recruitment Policy, which recruits an appropriate range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people.

There was a clearly set out assessment process for foster carers which includes training and assessment. Solutions use the BAAF form F, which covers matters set out in Standard 17.7

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Solutions Fostering Agency has sound policies and procedures, which result in staff and carers receiving good support training and development. This is a factor, which should contribute to the agencies retention of staff.

An out of hour's management and support service is available presently to foster carers via the residential support team of Solutions (Ross) Ltd. It remains the Agency's intention to develop it's own out of hours support service specifically for foster carers.

Staff and foster carers informed the Inspector that there was a system of regular supervision for foster carers.

Solutions Fostering Service has a health and safety policy for carers, children and staff. The Inspector did not read the policy to ensure it covers all legal requirements.

Solutions Fostering Service has a Whistle Blowing Policy, which is made known to all staff and carers.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has a clear plan for the training and development of all staff.

All new staff are given induction training and have access to in house training.

The agency has it's own training officer and department who maintain training profiles on all its members of staff. Solutions (Ross)Ltd are a registered NVQ centre.

The Manager should ensure the effectiveness of training programmes for staff by evaluating events held and reviewing and up dating staff training annually.

Joint training between staff and foster carers is held on a regular basis.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Staff, foster carers and the Manager informed the Inspector that all staff have access to policies and procedures, which gives them clear written details of the duties and responsibilities expected of them together with the policies and procedures of the organisation. The newly drafted policies and procedures will be shared with all staff and foster carers. The Inspector saw evidence that staff receive support and supervision. A record is kept of the content of the supervision and of progress made. Supervision sessions are planned on a monthly basis. Staff informed the Inspector that all staff are appraised on an annual basis. The Inspector saw evidence of regular team meetings, which are minuted.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The agency has developed a strategy for support and supervision of carers that is well documented. In interviews staff and foster carers were able to describe their knowledge and understanding of this process to the inspector. In questionnaires, interviews and group discussions, staff and foster carers were able to describe a range of support available to foster carers and children. It was clear that both staff and carers understood the role of the supervising social worker and link worker who support the foster carer and child. In interviews a number of foster carers stated that communication between the supervising social worker and link worker could on occasions be more effective. The communication systems between the supervising social worker and link worker should be reviewed and monitored to ensure effective communication that will meet the needs of foster carers and children. The Inspector saw evidence of annual review reports being prepared and made available to the panel. Foster carers, in interview were able to explain the process of annual review. The Inspector saw evidence of good communication and clear roles and boundaries between staff and the young person's social worker. In questionnaires children's social workers stated that Solutions staff were proactive in working in partnership with placing authorities. Staff described how communication was maintained on a weekly basis by telephone and via regular written reports.		

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
Solutions foster carers sign a foster care agreement and contract of employment. They are also given a staff handbook, which sets out terms and conditions of employment. The Foster Care Agreement should be developed in line with Regulation 28(5) b, Schedule 5 to include points 4, 10, 12 and 13. Foster carers informed the Inspector that they were aware of what was expected of them and of the fostering agency. The Inspector saw evidence of completed Foster Care Agreements on files. The foster carers informed the Inspector that on approval they were given a handbook of procedures covering policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details. The Inspector was informed that this is regularly reviewed and updated.		

Supervisory meetings between foster carers and staff take place on a regular basis. The Inspector saw evidence of these meetings recorded in the foster carers files. These records need to be signed and dated. Unannounced visits have been taking place annually. Foster carers described the system of support available to them by Solution, which included an out of hour's support system, and regular respite care. In interviews, foster carers described that they received prompt payment, insurance cover and access to social work support. Foster carers were provided with information regarding the complaints procedures and the procedures dealing with investigations into allegations. Solutions Fostering Service has a system to record and monitor complaints and child protection allegations. Clear policy exists which outlines the circumstances in which 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?

3

There was an on-going programme of training for foster carers, which included pre-approval, induction training and safe caring. Foster carers could also undertake NVQ Level 3 in caring for children. All Solutions staff including foster carers were expected to undertake basic generic training courses in first aid, food hygiene child protection etc. Solutions need to develop an Induction Pack specific for foster carers. All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti- discriminatory practice. Where two adults in a household are approved as joint carers both are expected to complete training. Training was organised to facilitate attendance. Support was provided with regard to childcare for foster children placed if needed. Solutions have a clear policy that it was the responsibility of the foster carer to ensure the safety and well being of their own children.

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?

3

The Inspector was informed that all information and documents are provided to the placing authority on request and when a young person leaves Solutions all relevant records are sent to the responsible authority.

Foster carers described to the Inspector how they are trained in life story work and provided with the necessary information and equipment to help a young person understand and record past significant events. The Inspector heard from foster carers how they encouraged a young person to reflect and understand their history and to keep appropriate memorabilia. Foster carers described how they were expected to complete daily records and monthly review reports for each young person placed with them. These monthly reports formed the basis of the Looked After Children (LAC) review reports.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Solutions keep separate records for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations against carers and staff.

There was a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records. Staff monitor the quality and adequacy of records written by foster carers and the manager monitors the quality and adequacy of staff records during supervision.

The Inspector saw evidence of records being securely stored both at the fostering agency HQ and with foster carers.

Records were in a form, which could be readily passed on if a young person moved to another placement.

The Inspector saw evidence of permanent, secure, and private records for each young person and foster carer, which can be seen by the young person, their parents or foster carers.

The Inspector sampled young people's files and found records legible and non-stigmatising and in keeping with the Looking After Children System.

Records of complaints and allegations were clearly recorded on the relevant files and a system existed for keeping records about allegations and complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely.

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

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The current premises meet all the Standards. The agency has a robust administrative system.

There were identifiable, well-equipped office premises that provided facilities for training, supervision, reviews and administration and to which staff and others had access during normal office hours.

Facilities existed for the secure retention of records, IT systems, and the building was appropriately secured.

The premises and its contents were adequately insured.

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 agency has a business plan and financial statements for the period under inspection.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Inspector was informed that the agency has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing financial management.

The Inspector was informed that the agency's accounts are maintained and audited by a registered accountant.

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

The agency have a written policy detailing the fostering allowances payable and this is contained in the handbook given to all foster carers before a child is placed with them. Staff and foster carers were able to describe this procedure.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The agency operates a joint fostering panel with Nene Valley Fostering Agency based in Peterborough. The Inspector was told that the necessary criminal checks had been undertaken and verified when inspected by Cambridgeshire CSCI.

The panel membership accords with Regulation 24. The Inspector observed a Panel Meeting which operated in accordance with Regulations 24, 25 and 26.

The Panel was chaired in a planned and robust manner. The Inspector was told that the Panel met ten times a year and that each panel member received training. The Chair was aware of a number of potential difficulties that could occur because of the geographical distance between Cambridgeshire and Herefordshire. The Chair explained that regular meetings take place between herself and the director of Solutions (Ross) Ltd. to resolve this problem and keep on top of the issues and in order to maintain the Panel's knowledge of Solutions Fostering Agency.

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?

0

Not applicable.

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?

0

Not applicable.

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 8th November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We are working on the best way to include provider responses in the published report. In the meantime responses received are available on request from the local Hereford office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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 19th January 2005, 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other:

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 Mr A.D. Massey of Solutions Ross Ltd (Solutions Fostering Agency) 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 Mr A.D. Massey of Solutions Ross Ltd (Solutions Fostering Agency) am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

--

Print Name

Signature

Designation

Date

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

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