



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

The Children`s Family Trust

MKA House

4-6 St Andrews Road

Droitwich

Worcs

WR9 8DN

26th January 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

The Children's Family Trust

Tel No

01905 798229

Address

MKA House, 4-6 St Andrews Road, Droitwich, Worcs,
WR9 8DN

Fax No

01905 798230

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

The Children's Family Trust

Mrs. Lois Highton

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

NA

Date of Inspection Visit		26 th , 27 th , 29 th , 30th January and 2 nd and 3 rd February 2004		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9:00 am		
Name of Inspector	1	Sally Woodget	113975	
Name of Inspector	2	Katherine Ward		
Name of Inspector	3			
Name of Inspector	4			
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. 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				

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of The Children's Family Trust. 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 NCSC 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.

The Children's Family Trust Ltd is a small voluntary organisation, which operates a fostering agency. The Children's Family Trust was established in 1946, in the belief that children in the care system had a right to live "a natural family life" and that this should endure beyond the age when children leave the formal care system.

The organisation is a registered company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Chair to the Trustees is the named 'Responsible Individual' and is responsible for supervising the management of the fostering agency.

Historically, The Children's Family Trust ran a number of small, family run children's homes, as well as being involved in providing foster homes for children and young people. The services have dwindled over the years and it is only recently (September 2003) that the organisation entered into a service level agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. to obtain a qualified, experienced and skilled manager to assist them in meeting the Fostering Services Regulation 2002 and to run the professional social work services for the fostering agency.

The Trust are keen to continue with their philosophy of a "family for life" and the organisation have a successful history of providing permanent homes for foster children placed with them. The organisation are aware however of the need to provide services for short term placements and this will be addressed as new carers join the agency and the service expands and develops.

The agency has four active fostering households and they are currently providing permanent fostering placements for nine children.

The plans are to develop fostering services in the North East where three of the four present carers are based.

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 service has been inspected for the first time against N.M.S. introduced on 1st April 2002. As a result, this report may contain a substantial number of recommendations and requirements. If so, the number should fall significantly at the next inspection when the provider has had time to take account of the new legislation and standards and take action to meet them.

Any breaches in standards which pose a more immediate risk to service users have been highlighted for urgent action.

The Children's Family Trust has applied for this fostering agency to be registered with the N.C.S.C. This inspection was undertaken as part of the registration process.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This Standard was met

The Statement of Purpose was thorough and detailed and met all the matters outlined in this standard. The Children's guide was appropriate and suitable and all the children found it helpful.

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

The Standards were nearly met.

Inspectors identified some training needs for the Responsible Individual to assist in his management of the fostering agency and for the manager to obtain her qualification in management.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)

One of these Standards was not met, one was nearly met.

The agency had not developed a formal monitoring system, which was considered essential for the management of this service due to the Service Level Agreement with a Professional Social Work Consultancy to provide the management and day to day running of the service. Some arrangements need to be developed to prevent any confusion or conflict in accountability and responsibility when the manager is absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

One of these Standards was exceeded, one was met, six were nearly met and one was not met.

The agency's foster carers were providing high standards in relation to environmental factors. The agency's commitment to ensuring high educational achievement and its partnership with the National Teaching Advisory Service was commendable. Other standards required back up with written policy documents, or services were intended but not fully operational. Issues relating to child protection however were concerning and the agency need to amend their policy and ensure prompt adherence to Notifications.

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

One of these standards was not assessed, two were not met, six were nearly met.

Some attention needs to be paid to ensure all the references and checks are carried out for all staff. Carers felt well supported and were pleased with the services they received. It was recognised that training for foster carers had been weak in the past, and the new manager intends to address this and other shortfalls noted in these standards. A number of written policies and procedures need to be addressed. Foster carer agreements need to be altered to meet Regulations.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Neither of these standards were met.

The agency needs to develop strategies, policies and procedures to ensure it meets the regulations and standards in these areas.

Premises (Standard 26)

This standard was nearly met.

The agency needs to ensure the records are in a lockable room. Otherwise the premises are fine. Inspectors did not inspect the Safehouses offices as part of this inspection.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

All these standards were nearly met.

The agency is financially viable due to the large assets owned by the organisation. The foster carers reported that they were satisfied with the payment they receive for the work they undertake. The agency needs to develop written policies and procedures as laid down in these standards.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

This standard was not met.

The agency did not have a Fostering Panel at the time of the inspection, although work was being undertaken to set this up. It is essential that this is operational as expediently as possible.

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?

NA

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 National Care Standards Commission 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 Sally Woodget**Signature** _____**Second Inspector** Katherine Ward**Signature** _____**Regulation** Alan Sholl**Signature** _____**Manager****Draft**26th May 2004

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 and recommendations 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	8.2.b	FS2	The Responsible individual must undertake such training as is appropriate to ensure he has the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency.	To be arranged
2	42.1.a	FS4	The agency must establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 at monthly intervals.	To be arranged
3	42.1.b	FS4	The agency must establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care it provides.	To be arranged
4	13.2.c	FS9.4	The agency must amend the written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster carers and ensure that physical restraint is only used where it is necessary to prevent likely injury to the child or other persons or likely serious damage to property. A system must be established whereby foster carers understand that incidents of restraint must be reported immediately to the agency.	To be arranged
5	12.1 .a and b and 12 2 b	FS9	The agency must amend the written policy on child protection ensuring that the emphasis is the prompt referral to the Area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by them.	To be arranged

6	43 Schedule 8	FS9	The agency must ensure that it's responsibility for notifying events outlined in schedule 8 is included in the Child Protection policy and inform foster carers of their responsibility to let the agency know immediately of any incident which is listed in this schedule.	To be arranged
7	14 and 34 schedule 6	FS10.7	The agency must ensure that it obtains all the information required in the foster placement agreement to clarify the role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements	To be arranged
8	18.6.b	FS11	The agency must ensure no child will be subject to any reprisals for making a complaint or representation. It is advised that this information is added to the children's complaint procedure found in the children's guide.	To be arranged
9	34 Schedule 6 and 17.3 a and b	FS12.3	The agency must ensure it obtains all the information required in the foster placement agreement to provide the carer with as full a description as possible of the health needs of a child and clear procedures governing the consent for the child to receive medical treatment.	To be arranged
10	20 Schedule 1	FS15	The agency must ensure that all the checks and references are obtained as outlined in schedule 1, for all staff whether employed directly or via their service level agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd, including undertaking telephone references to follow up written references.	To be arranged
11	28.5.b schedule 5	FS22	The agency must amend its foster carer agreement to ensure that all the matters outlined in schedule 5 are included.	To be arranged
12	29.11	FS22	The agency must amend its foster carer agreement to ensure that the notice period expected of foster carers complies with this regulation ie; 28 days from the date the notice is received by the fostering service.	To be arranged
13	22.1 Schedule 2. 1	FS24	The agency must address all the issues outlined in Schedule 2 part 1 which includes; the name and address of the foster parent, the child's address prior to the placement and the statutory provision under which he is placed with foster parents.	To be arranged

14	22.1 Schedule 2 2 a-g	FS25	The agency must keep a record in respect of each person working for the fostering service provider the particulars specified in paragraph 2 a-g.	To be arranged
15	24,25,26, 27,28,and 29	FS30	The agency must ensure that all aspects of these regulation are adhered to when establishing its own fostering panel	To be arranged

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	FS2.2	The agency should ensure that the manager achieves a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management by 2005.
2	FS4.4	The agency should ensure that information is provided to purchasers of services that include all the elements of this standard.
3	FS4.5	The agency should develop a conflict of interests policy that includes all carers, staff, sessional workers, therapists, managers and Trustees.
4	FS5.4	The agency should ensure that clear arrangements are in place to identify a person in charge, which will not create confusion of conflict in the lines of accountability and responsibility.
5	FS7.7	The agency should ensure that it provides written information to foster carers regarding their expectations in relation to providing encouragement and opportunities to children placed in relation to their talents, interests and hobbies.
6	FS8.4	The agency should ensure that written foster placement agreements contain specific reference to elements of matching which were taken into consideration in agreeing all placements (including respite placements) and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer.

7	FS8.3	The agency should ensure that matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and his/her family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement.
8	FS9.6	The agency should ensure that procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and to help foster carers to cope with it.
9	FS9.2	The agency should ensure that training includes training in caring for a child who has been abused, in particular in managing behaviour whilst boosting and maintaining the child's self esteem.
10	FS10.4	The agency should ensure that the views of the child are sought and are given weight in determining contact arrangements.
11	FS11.5	The agency should ensure that children and young people can expect prompt feedback on any concern or complaints. It is advised that some time scales be added to the present procedure for children found in the children's guide.
12	FS12.4	The agency should ensure that the carer is provided a written health record for each child, which is updated during the placement and moves with the child. The child should have access to and understand the health record kept by the fostering service depending on his/her age and level of understanding.
13	FS14.2	The agency should ensure that they develop clear written requirements of what is expected of their foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living and being involved in Pathway Plans.
14	FS18	The agency should ensure that they develop a whistle blowing policy, which should then be cascaded to all staff and carers.
15	FS20.2	The agency should ensure that all staff including those undertaking work on behalf on the agency but employed by Safehouses consultancy Ltd have a copy of all the Children's Family Trust policies and procedures as well as the Children's Family Trust's Foster Carers Handbook.
16	FS21.2	The agency should ensure that it develops a clear strategy for working with carers that is documented and understood which includes all the matters outlined in this standard.
17	FS22.10	The agency should ensure that it develops a clear policy framework that is specific about the circumstances in which a carer (whether employed or self employed) should be removed from the foster carer register and when it would consider a referral to the POCA list.

18	FS24.2	The agency should ensure that they develop a clear written policy on case recording, which establishes the purpose, format and content of files, and clarifies what information is kept on the foster carers files and what information is kept on the child's files.
19	FS24.6	The agency should ensure that it gives the foster carer all relevant information to help the child understand and come to terms with past events and that it is proactive in trying to obtain this where the responsible authority are not forthcoming with this information. (Copies of any written requests should be kept on the file).
20	FS24.7	The agency should ensure that the foster carers are trained in and fully understand the importance of recording significant life events for the child including photograph albums.
21	FS25.2	The agency should ensure that separate records are kept for all the matters outlined in this standard.
22	FS25.4.6,7 ,and12	The agency should ensure that there is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff for the keeping and retention of case files ensuring that foster carers, fostered children and their parents know the nature of the records maintained and how to access them and that they are encouraged to access them, make additions and comments and record personal statements including any dissent.
23	FS26.3	The agency should ensure that records are secured in a lockable room.
24	FS27	The agency should ensure that written procedures are developed to outline to staff how to deal with situations of financial crisis.
25	FS28.3	The agency should ensure that a written set of principles and standards governing its' financial management and these are communicated to it's managers and accountants.
26	FS28.4	The agency should ensure that a written set of principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants, directors, trustees and any manager.
27	FS28.7	The agency should ensure that it publishes its charges for each of its services and has a clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses for any additional services it is asked to provide.
28	FS29.2	The agency should ensure that it develops a written policy on fostering allowances that is published and received annually by each carer.
29	FS30	The agency should ensure that it covers all the matters outlined in standard 30 when establishing its new fostering 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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	26/01/04
Time of Inspection	9:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	77

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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

The Children's Family Trust have a thorough and detailed Statement of Purpose that outlines clearly the philosophy, aims and objectives of the organisation and the services and facilities that it offers. It complies with all the matters indicated in Standard 1.4. The children's guide is presented in a useful bound leather filofax style and contains helpful advice, information and leaflets from other organisations, which fulfil Standards and Regulations. It is produced in a child friendly way and the children interviewed as part of the inspection process were pleased with their guides and found them useful.

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 responsible individual had the necessary business and management skills and financial background to manage the agency, however he recognised that he lacked the professional social work knowledge and background and intends to address this.

The organisation has entered into a service level agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. to obtain a strategic manager for their agency as well as other social work staff.

The manager has a relevant social work qualification and many years experience in childcare work and as a manager of a fostering agency. She has not yet achieved an NVQ level 4 in management but is working towards this.

The manager has only been in post part time since October 2003 and it was intended that she become full time in February 2004.

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?

2

The inspectors advised that the Children's Family Trust undertake all the checks and references as outlined in Regulation 5 Schedule 1 in respect of all the Trustees on the Board.

Under the service level agreement, Safehouses Consultancy are delegated the responsibility of carrying out the checks and references in respect of staff they employ for the purposes of carrying out the operation of the Children's family Trust Fostering Agency including the manager. Inspectors looked at the Safehouses staff files and found them to be consistent with this Standard. They do need to ensure however that telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references.

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?

1

At the time of the inspection the responsible individual and the manager had not established clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering agency. Clearly the manager had not been in post long and the service level agreement was in it's early stages, however this was an issue that was in the process of being addressed and all parties were aware of the importance of this issue. It was intended that the manager should attend the Trustee meetings on a regular basis to give them information and updates about the progress being made in the fostering service.

The treasurer reports every two months to the Board of trustees regarding the finances of the organisation.

There was information provided to the purchasers of the services of the charges made for each placement, but the agency needs to provide a breakdown of information covering all the elements of Standard 4.4.

The fostering service needs to develop a written conflict of interest's policy for all staff, managers, carers, sessional workers, therapists and Trustees.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The manager has an extensive and detailed job description, which is supported by the service level agreement between Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. and the Children's Family Trust.

At present there is only one other member of staff supplied by Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. who is a social worker supervising the one existing Children's Family Trust foster carer in Sussex. A fostering services manager at Safehouses Fostering agency in Kent supervises this social worker and the manager from Children's Family Trust intends to develop a system to ensure the levels of delegation and responsibility are clearly defined in this specific instance. The manager is presently advertising to recruit another supervising social worker via Safehouses Consultancy to supervise three existing foster carers in the north East of the country and to undertake assessments of prospective foster carers to expand the Children's Family Trust's services in the area. This social worker will be directly line managed by the manager. At present however the manager is undertaking this social work role.

When the manager is absent, it is intended that her manager within Safehouses Consultancy Ltd will take charge. This arrangement needs to be clarified further as Safehouses Fostering service, who also share the out of hours duty service and training is part of this organisation and there is some concern about the possibility of confusion and conflict in this area.

Consideration should be given to the appointment of a deputy for the manager, which avoids these difficulties.

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?

4

Inspectors were impressed to note that all the foster carers visited as part of the case tracking exercise for the inspection provided a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. The environmental quality of the homes was high. Two of the four carers who presently provide a service to this agency live in properties provided by the Children's Family Trust. The standard of furnishings and decoration is high. All children have their own rooms apart from a young sibling group where it was considered appropriate that they share. Each household has its own safe caring policy, details of which are completed by the foster carer and shared and discussed with the supervising social worker.

Health and safety checks are carried out on a regular basis, and the agency ensures that transport provision is safe and appropriate to the child's needs. There was evidence that the Children's Family Trust had purchased a vehicle for one family who had a sibling group of 4 children placed.

All carers had recently undertaken or were completing the NVQ level 3 in childcare, which had provided training on issues of health and safety.

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?

2

As stated earlier the inspectors found that all the foster carers that they met as part of the inspection process were warm and nurturing, they also impressed the inspectors as being sensitive to the needs of and fully committed to the children placed with them.

Case records revealed that issues relating to race, religion, culture, language and ethnic origin had been well covered during the assessment process. One fostering household had a transracial placement and were caring for two children of dual heritage. Numerous attempts had been made previously to find a culturally appropriate match for these children but these had been unsuccessful. It was evident that a great deal of planning and thought had gone into the matching, introductions and placement of these children. It was also evident that the agency were proactively seeking for some specialist work to be done with these young people to enable them to keep in contact with their cultural heritage.

The foster carer was able to report a number of ways she had assisted these young people to deal with discrimination.

One fostering household had been specifically approved for one young person who had a learning disability and major behaviour difficulties. There was a great deal of evidence to indicate that the agency were actively involved in working together with the placing authority to obtain appropriate specialist help for this young person in placement and other young people in placement.

There was a lot of evidence that foster carers were active in encouraging and assisting

young people placed with them to pursue their interests and activities. The agency does however need to include some information regarding their expectations of foster carers in relation to this area in the foster carer manual, as outlined in Standard 7.7

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

All the children placed by this agency were placed prior to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. At that time there was no formal matching criteria or tool. The agency have introduced a comprehensive and detailed "Full Placement Referral Form", which they intend to use to assist in the matching process in the future. Inspectors noted however that this document did not refer to issues of; race; ethnicity or religion; nor did it take into account whether the child referred would need to be the youngest/oldest/only child in the foster home; or the legal status of the child. It is suggested that these additions could be made to the form. The agency needs to be sure that matches are achieved by means of information sharing with all relevant professionals, the child and the child's family, potential carers, their families and other children in placement.

As stated elsewhere in this report, the agency have historically been involved in providing permanent/long term placements with a philosophy of "a family for life". As a result of this most of the placements have been well planned, with extensive introductions and opportunities for the children and young people to become familiar with their new home before moving in.

Inspection of the case files indicated however a lack of essential information on children, and whilst all the foster carers have had their children in placement for more than two years and are fully aware of their needs, the agency need to be aware that they need to obtain all the information outlined in Schedule 6 in order to be able to match appropriately and meet the child's assessed needs.

The agency does need to ensure that it follows the appropriate procedures when placing children for respite with another carer within the agency. Inspectors noted that two foster households cared for each other's placements whilst the carers took an annual holiday. This action meant that carers had exceeded the number of children allowed in any one foster household and exemptions should have been sought from the local authority social services department. It is strongly advised that all the matching considerations are taken into account, including any risk assessment to identify any areas where the foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match. All the foster children and any birth children's views should also be taken into account before proceeding with a 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?	1
All foster carers have undertaken or are undertaking NVQ Level 3 in Childcare, which covers issues of safe caring and recognising signs of abuse. Each fostering household has recently been involved in writing its own safe caring policy to take into account the needs of all the individuals in the home. The agency have a Care and Control policy which covers issues relating to discipline which is thorough, detailed and sensitive to the reasons why some foster children display difficult and unsociable behaviour. One child interviewed as part of the inspection process, admitted to unsociable behaviour, theft and temper tantrums. He reported being made to stay in his room for long periods and perceived his foster carers as ignoring him. This young man's history had been difficult and he had disclosed incidents of abuse by his previous carers. The agency needs to address issues of discipline with these carers so that they can take into account this young person's self perception and background when managing his behaviour. It was not clear to the agency whether these alleged incidents discussed by the child had been reported to the Area Child Protection Team and this needs to be addressed. The issue of restraint is covered in the above document, however foster carers have not received specific training in the use of restraint. The manager informed inspectors that this training would be made available if a child or young person was identified as needing this sort of intervention. One foster carer reported to the inspectors during a case tracking visit that he had had to restrain the young person placed with him on a number of occasions. The young person concerned had a profound learning disability and had been sexually abused. The agency were unaware of these restraints. It is advised that clear systems are put in place for carers to record any instances of restraint immediately. Training is further indicated for foster carers about what constitutes a restraint and specialist training is required for those foster carers involved in restraining young people for the safety of all concerned. Foster carers must be encouraged to use Incident Sheets to record all instances of bullying and accidents as well as all the other matters outlined in Schedule 8. The agency should develop management systems to record and address instances of bullying as outlined in Standard 9.6. As stated earlier, the children's files lacked essential information. The agency's new manager had recognised this and there was evidence to show that she had been proactive in trying to obtain this information retrospectively. Inspectors were reassured that future placements would not be considered without the essential and appropriate information being forthcoming. The agency's Child Protection Policy needs amending and updating, emphasis needs to be placed on making a referral of an allegation of abuse to the Area Authority Child Protection Team, whose responsibility it is to hold a strategy meeting and organise an investigation under the Children's Act 1989, as outlined in Regulation 12. This procedure also needs to include a reference to the responsibilities of the agency to notify their parties as outlined in Schedule 8 Regulation 43(1).		
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?****2**

The agency has a thorough and detailed policy on contact that is available for foster carers in the foster carer manual. The inspectors saw evidence that foster carers were involved in ensuring contact between the children placed with them and their birth families, and the agency financially supported the families to do so.

Contact issues and the importance of contact was discussed and documented with foster carers during their assessment and covered in the Choosing to Foster Course. This issue has also been addressed in the NVQ Level 3 in Childcare Course, which all the foster carers have undertaken, or presently completing.

A number of children and young people did not have contact with their birth families or previous carers however, and the reasons for this were not clearly articulated in any plan.

As there was an absence of written information in the children's files, it was unclear in some cases what arrangements should be made for contact. One sibling group were clearly confused about their plans with regard to contact and no one had been able to clarify this for them. The views of the child or young person need to be sought more proactively and given weight in determining contact arrangements.

It is essential that the agency gather all the information required in Schedule 6 Regulation 34 from the placing authorities to be able to ensure the assessed needs of children and young people are being fully met in this area and in order to comply with Regulation 14.

The agency requires carers to record the outcomes of contact arrangements, these are recorded in the daily log book and discussed with the supervising social worker on a regular basis. The agency will then arrange for this information to be fed back to the child's social worker.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The children and young people seen as part of the inspection process reported feeling listened to and that their foster carers sought their opinions about everyday decisions and choices. They expressed frustration about the amount of bureaucracy in terms of prompt decision making about issues concerning them by their placing authorities, in particular issues relating to permission required to go on holiday or stay with friends. One child had made a specific request to change his surname, which he felt had been completely lost. The agency staff do need to be proactive in bringing up these matters with the responsible authorities and ensure that their efforts are well documented.

The children's guide provided information about how to make a complaint, but inspectors advised that this information could be improved by naming a 'Complaints Receiving Officer' and by adding time limits so the young people concerned could be assured of a response within a certain time as outlined in Standard 11.5. It is also essential to add that no child will be subject to any reprisals for making a complaint or representation as documented in Regulation 18. (6). (b)

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**

The agency has comprehensive policies on medical and health matters for its foster carers. Policies include information on how to manage drug misuse, smoking and solvent misuse, underage drinking as well as guidance on contraception, pregnancy, abortion, hepatitis and HIV AIDS.

Inspectors saw evidence of foster carers fully ensuring that the health needs of the children and young people placed with them are met, including specialist health care for one child with a disability. There was evidence that the annual medicals were being carried out appropriately. Unfortunately however the case records lacked essential health documentation, including consent forms, though there was evidence that the agency were actively trying to rectify this matter. The agency do need to ensure that all this information is obtained, including clear procedures governing consent for the child to receive medical treatment before a placement begins as outlined in Standard 12.3 and Regulation 34 Schedule 6.

The agency need to ensure that they obtain a written health record for each child placed, as outlined in Standard 12.4 and that the child has access to and understands the health record kept by the fostering service (Cross Ref Standard 25.4, 25.6, 25.7 and 25.12)

Inspectors were informed that each carer has received training in First Aid and Health and Hygiene, but further training is required to ensure emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases. Foster carers regularly provided information about each child's health needs which was fed into the planning and review process.

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**

The agency have recently contracted with The National Teaching and Advisory Service to assess the current educational needs of all children and young people placed by them. The conclusions and recommendations made by this organisation will furnish the agency with information for the review of each child.

The case records of the children indicated that the agency had been proactive and successful in obtaining information from the responsible authorities and most children had a statement of educational needs or personal education plan on their file as appropriate.

There were no children who were not in school at the time of the inspection and the agency are working with N.T.A.S. on a scheme to develop strategies, (to include structured occupation during school hours that is age and ability appropriate) and to ensure services will be available for future placements if they are excluded from school.

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?****2**

This is a particular area of strength for this agency whose philosophy is “a family for life”. The Children’s Family Trust encourage their foster carers to continue to be involved in the lives of the young people they have fostered long after their 18th birthdays. They provide financial help for these young people who were placed by them to ensure stability and some success in their lives. Foster carers working for The Children’s Family Trust are fully signed up to this philosophy and work hard to assist the young people they care for to develop the skills for adult living. A number of the foster carers still care for young people who they had cared for prior to their 18th birthdays. Foster carers have been well prepared for this philosophy and practice during their introduction and assessment with the agency and it is believed that this aspect of the service will continue to be developed as the agency grows. All foster carers have undertaken some training via their NVQ Level 3 in Child Care Courses, which includes assisting young people to develop independent living skills. The agency do however need to develop clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living and being as involved in Pathway Plans as outlined in Standard 14.

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 only member of Staff directly employed by The Children's Family Trust at the time of the inspection was the Administrator. She had been employed for many years and as a result her staff file did not include many of the matters outlined in Regulation 20 Schedule 1. It was noted however that a job description had been recently devised and a CRB enhanced level check had been obtained.

If The Children's Family Trust intend to employ any staff directly they must ensure that they undertake all the necessary checks and references as laid down by Regulation 20 Schedule 1 including undertaking telephone enquiries to follow up written references.

The Children's Family Trust had developed a Service Level Agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. This agreement arranges for Safehouses to provide Children's Family Trust with professionally qualified social workers and a Manager of the Fostering Agency to undertake all the professional duties of the fostering agency. Inspectors saw the personnel/staff files of all those Safehouse's staff who undertake work for The Children's Family Trust. Inspectors found that not all the information required by Schedule 1 had been obtained, in particular positive proof of identity and documentary evidence of qualifications were missing. It is the responsibility of The Children's Family Trust to ensure that any staff working for the purposes of carrying out functions of the fostering agency are fully checked in accordance with Schedule 1.

Inspectors were assured by the manager that any new staff would have experience of foster care and family placement work and would receive training in assessment.

Three of the four foster carers who work for this agency are directly employed by them. The fourth is employed on a self employed basis. Whilst all foster carers will be assessed and approved in accordance with Standard 17.7 and Regulation 27 Schedule 3, if they are directly employed by the agency their records will also have to comply with Schedule 1 Regulation 20.

Total number of staff of the agency:

3

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?****2**

As already stated The Children's Family Trust have drawn up a Service Level Agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd to provide the professional services of a strategic manager and professionally qualified social work staff to carry on the running of the fostering agency. The Service Level Agreement is lengthy and detailed and covers the areas of responsibility and accountability of both parties. This unusual arrangement was negotiated in September 2003 by the Members of The Trust in order to meet the required Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards. This followed the failure of the organisation to obtain a manager with the right qualities and skills to bring about the changes required.

Whilst the Service Level Agreement is new and continues to be a document 'in progress', the inspectors noted a number of areas of ambiguity and has discussed a number of conditions to the registration of this agency to further clarify areas of accountability and responsibility.

The new manager has previous experience of managing a fostering agency and will develop structures and systems to ensure future assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed effectively. Whilst not documented, she states that she has clear systems to monitor and prioritise workloads.

The Children's Family Trust have lacked a comprehensive training programme for staff and foster carers in the past, but the new manager plans to address this.

Administrative back up for social workers who will recruit, assess, supervise and support foster carers will be provided via the Service Level Agreement in the first instance by Safehouse's Consultancy Ltd. All original case records will be held at The Children's Family Trust head office in Droitwich and (Cross Ref. Standard 24 & 25) information regarding enquiries from prospective foster carers will be set up by Safehouses and copied to the CFT office administrator.

The agency have developed relationships to be able to access advice from a range of professional organisations to provide a full service for children and young people and to support carers, such as 'Barnardos' and 'NTAS'.

All staff employed by The Children's Family Trust or via Safehouses Consultancy Ltd. have job descriptions and conditions of service and have copies of grievance procedures, equal opportunity policies and health and safety procedures.

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?****2**

At the time of the inspection the agency was in the early days of redefining itself to meet the Regulations and Standards. The organisation had been in the doldrums for a number of years and had only four active carers. As stated earlier the organisation had recently drawn up a Service Level Agreement to obtain professionally qualified staff to carry on and manage the fostering agency. The Service Level Agreement contains details about how The Children's Family Trust wants to see the agency expand and develop. The new manager is in the process of recruiting carers and staff in the North East to build on the existing group of carers in that area.

The manager is working towards developing links with Local Authorities in this area to

understand the need better to assist in the development of the recruitment policy and strategy.

The new manager intends to use the B.A.A.F. guide on assessment for all prospective carers in the future and will ensure that all the elements of Standard 17.7 and Schedule 3 Regulation 27 are incorporated in this assessment.

As all the present carers were approved prior to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 it is not possible to assess compliance with all the elements of this Standard. All the assessments were inspected and found to be thorough and detailed.

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?

2

The Children's Family Trust employ one member of staff, the administrator and three of its four carers directly and their employment practices were seen to be sound and fair. One carer was self employed. Management systems for carer support, supervision and appraisal were well documented and understood.

The Children's Family Trust are not responsible for the staff provided by Safehouse's Consultancy to work for them in carrying on the fostering agency. Inspectors did not look at Safehouse's employment policies or contracts.

There is currently no whistle blowing policy and one needs to be developed and made available to all staff and carers.

The agency has public liability insurance for all its carers and staff and is in the process of obtaining a professional indemnity insurance policy. They are also presently obtaining an insurance policy that will cover costs arising from any child abuse claims through links with the Fostering Network.

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?

0

The Children's Family Trust has delegated responsibility for staff training to Safehouse's Consultancy Ltd. Via the Service Level Agreement. The inspectors did not inspect the Safehouse's Training and Development Plan.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
All staff at The Children's Family Trust and Safehouse's have written job descriptions, but not all Safehouse's staff have the policies and procedures of The Children's Family Trust fostering service. This needs to be addressed. As staff working for Safehouse's are working with their own fostering services policies and procedures, they need to be fully made aware of the differences in this area between the two organisations and ensure that they are adhering to The Children's Family Trusts policies and procedures when carrying out work on behalf of this fostering agency. The manager will both manage and plan the supervision and appraisals of any social work staff working for The Children's Family Trust or undertaking work for this organisation and there is a detailed policy framework and contract covering this subject. It is intended that when staff are in place there will be 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?	2
Whilst the new manager has set up regular and planned support and supervision for carers, the agency still needs to develop a clear strategy that is <u>documented</u> and understood and covers all the matters outlined in Standard 21.2. The manager plans to develop a number of services, which have not been available to foster carers before, including respite and self help groups. Foster carers reported high levels of support from both past and present staff and valued the commitment and sensitivity of the staff who supported them. Foster carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker and annual reviews had been undertaken and were available to the Local Authorities with whom the foster carer was registered. (The agency does not have a Fostering Panel of its own at the present time). Questionnaires from placing social workers reported a good system of communication between the Responsible Authorities and the agency.		

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?	1
Neither The Children's Family Trust's Contract for Services(for employed carers) nor Foster Care Agreement (for self employed carers) complies presently with Schedule 5 Reg.28.5 (b). In particular the notice period for foster carers does not comply with Regulation 29.11. This needs to be addressed whether or not the foster carers continues to be employees or self employed. Each foster carer is managed by a named and appropriately qualified social worker who has access to professional support. On approval the foster carers are given a "blue book" the foster carers handbook, a number of policies and procedures within this handbook need updating or amending as stated elsewhere in the report. Support and supervision meetings with foster carers have a clear framework, which is well understood by both parties. Unannounced visits have not been undertaken in the past, but the new manager has introduced this concept to carers and one unannounced had been completed at the time of the inspection. It is intended that these visits will be carried out on an annual basis with each foster carer. The agency are presently organising for all their foster carers to have individual membership		

of the Fostering Network to ensure their access to the Helpline.

The agency do have a complaints policy and procedure but inspectors found it to be inadequate and needing further attention, for example; it does need to include details of the N.C.S.C., it does need to identify a complaints officer, and it does need to provide some timescales for dealing with each stage of the process.

The agency also needs to amend the procedures for dealing with investigations into allegations and ensure that their policies include the provision of independent support to the foster carer during an investigation and how this will be provided.

Whilst the agency do have a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register these appear to be only linked to the foster carers who are employees and not those who are self employed. The policy also needs to add the circumstances when it would refer a foster carer to the P.O.C.A. List.

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?	2
This is an area of work that the agency have not been proactive in over recent years. Many of the present foster carers did not complete any pre-approval or induction training, although there is evidence that they were introduced to existing carers for The Children's Family Trust and found this exchange very helpful. The new manager is intending to deliver the new "Skills to Foster" Course to all prospective foster carers in the future. Training will be part of a contractual agreement with prospective foster carers and their approval will depend on their attendance. Venues and times of training will be given thought as it was recognised that this has caused some problems in the past. All present foster carers have either achieved their NVQ Level 3 in Child Care or are about to complete it. It is recognised that more specific training needs to be provided on an ongoing basis to keep carers up to date and address any changes in legislation and child care practice. The new manager intends to develop a training programme for foster carers and pick up existing issues with present foster carers that need addressing via training. It is intended that the annual review of foster carers will also pick up outstanding training needs of foster carers.		

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?	1
---------------------------	---------------	---

The agency must develop a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and content of case files and clarifies what information is to be kept on which files. This is particularly important in the knowledge that there will be a working file held at Safehouse's and an original file held at The Children's Family Trust Office. All Safehouse's personnel working for The Children's Family Trust must be given a copy of this policy to ensure consistency across the agency. The agency must outline what information must be kept or returned to the responsible authority during and at the end of a placement. In each case as agreed with the responsible authority.

All foster carers interviewed as part of the inspection understood the importance of keeping appropriate memorabilia and there was a useful policy for foster carers on helping a child to develop a sense of personal identity. The agency need to provide some additional training for some foster carers,(who were finding it difficult to reconcile the "family for life" philosophy with that of assisting a child to have full understanding of their past culture and heritage),on the importance of life story books and be proactive themselves in obtaining information from the placing authorities to ensure this work can be undertaken. The inspector found evidence that some children had no life story work undertaken and were confused about their past. Another foster carer had kept children's life story books in a locked cabinet. These instances are not conducive to helping a child develop a sense of personal history or identity.

The agency had a helpful and detailed "record keeping" policy for foster carers and the inspector observed foster carers storing information in a confidential and secure manner to support this policy.

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?	1
The agency need to set up a policy for keeping separate records for complaints/allegations, additionally it is suggested that a separate record for events and notifications, one for accidents and one for recording any measures of control, restraint or discipline in respect of children placed in their foster homes is established. Whilst records are stored securely at all times and there is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, there is no clear policy on access to records. This needs to be developed as outlined in Standard 25.4, 25.6, 25.7 and 25.12. It is suggested that information regarding access of records is included in the Children's Guide and foster care handbook. The agency had not received any complaints or allegations in the last two years. Written entries in the records are clear, evaluative, detailed and professional.			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			9
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			0
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			0
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			0
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			0
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?
Inspectors checked the premises of the head office based in Droitwich, however the administrator was the only person at the time of the inspection to work in this office. There is a boardroom, two private offices, a kitchen and bathroom, as well as the administrator's office. Files are stored in the administrator's office and the hall, which is internal. It is advised for added security a lock is fitted to boardroom door so that all internal doors that open into the hall can be then locked. The Children's Files are stored and locked in metal filing cabinets and the foster carer files in a built in lockable wooden cupboard. It is advised that attention is given to obtaining fire proof and waterproof cabinets to ensure the safety of these files for the number of years required by the regulations. Inspectors were told that all the computer systems were 'firewalled', security checked and the administrator made sure that the information was 'backed up' at the end of each day. Building Insurance was seen by the inspectors and found to be satisfactory. Inspectors did not visit the Safehouses Offices in Yorkshire or Kent where there are staff who work for the purposes of this agency.	2

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?

2

The Children's Family Trust has been long established and used to run a number of small children's homes. These have all closed down now apart from one, which is registered by the Care Standards Commission for Wales. This historical aspect makes the company an asset rich organisation and presently, they are using the interest on their capital investments to support their operation of the fostering agency.

As already stated the organisation have arranged a Service Level Agreement with Safehouse's Consultancy Ltd. to provide professional services to develop and expand the agency's fostering service which they hope will become self supporting in the longer term. The agency comply with all the regulations and guidelines imposed on businesses such as PAYE, NI and VAT.

The agency need to develop written procedures to deal with situations of financial crisis as outlined in Standard 27.2 to safeguard the welfare of children receiving services through the agency.

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?

2

The Children's Family Trust's treasurer keeps the accounts and reports to the Board of Trustees bimonthly about the financial state of the organisation. Decisions about financial payments and commitments are made by the Board of Trustees and minuted.

The accounts are audited annually by a registered accountant.

The agency needs to develop a document to show how they manage financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and powers as outlined in Standard 28.3.

They also need to develop a written set of principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants etc. as outlined in Standard 28.4.

The agency do not have a clear written statement available to purchasers, outlining its charging policy for fees, expenses and additional services as outlined by Standard 28.7 and this also needs to be addressed.

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?****2**

Foster carers reported that the agency's system for payment works well and that they receive their allowances promptly and at the agreed time.

The agency does not have a written policy on fostering allowances and the current allowance levels are not published. The agency have historically employed all their carers and also provided housing for a number of their carers. This system is intended to change and one present carer has switched to self employed status. All new carers will be taken on on a self employed basis, however two systems will probably have to operate alongside each other for some time. Arrangements for these two different systems of payment need to be equitable, published and available to all foster carers.

The Finance Section of the Foster Carers Handbook needs to be amended and updated to take into account the changes that have taken place within the organisation and reflect the new self employed status of some carers.

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?

1

This agency does not presently have a panel and are heavily reliant on placing authorities approving their carers at the time of a placement. This does not meet the Fostering Services Standards or Regulations 2002.

A consultant has been contracted to draft the panels Policies and Procedures and organise panel membership and it is intended to be operational by April 2004.

It is essential that the Panel be set up expediently to ensure that all foster carers' approval and registrations rest with The Children's Family Trust rather than with the Placing Authorities as it is at present. The agency also needs to take up its responsibility for annual reviews of foster carers.

The agency must ensure that it sets up the Panel and its policies and procedures in accordance with Regulations 24-29 and Standard 30.

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?
Not applicable	9

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	9

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D**PROVIDER'S RESPONSE****D.1 Responsible Individual's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC 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 14.5.04, 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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Responsible Individual's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Andrew Turner of The Children's Family Trust 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 Andrew Turner of The Children's Family Trust 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.