

inspection report

Final Report Fostering Services

The Children`s Family Trust

MKA House

4-6 St Andrews Road

Droitwich

Worcs

WR9 8DN

28th February 2005 – 4th March 2005

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

E520002038

Name of Registered Provider

The Children`s Family Trust

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mrs Lois Penelope Highton

Date of first registration

2nd June 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

2nd June 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

YES

Date of last inspection

26th
January
2004

Date of Inspection Visit		28th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sally Woodget	113975
Name of Inspector	2	Jacqueline Dunster	
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		Lois Highton	

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 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 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 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.

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 has recently appointed the chief executive to take over the role of 'Responsible Individual' and this individual is now 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 had dwindled over the years and in September 2003 that the organisation entered into a service level agreement with another independent fostering agency 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. This arrangement has now ceased; the organisation now employs all its own staff in order to undertake the work of the fostering agency.

The Trust is 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 is the second inspection against a national minimum standards introduced on the first of April 2002. The last inspection report reflected the organisation struggling to reach the Standards and Regulations and requiring a great deal of changes to be made in its infrastructure and operations. This inspection report reflects number of improvements that have been made over the last year, with huge changes having been achieved. The organisation now employs all of its own staff (apart from one service level agreement with another independent fostering agency to provide support and supervision to one foster carer who lives in the southeast). The organisation now organises all its own training services, manages its own recruitment of staff and carers and has developed its own fostering panel. These are no small achievements and the agency should be commended on the hard work and commitment in trying to address all the requirements and recommendations made in the last report.

Whilst there are still a number of improvements to be made the number of requirements and recommendations has fallen significantly since the last report.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1).

This Standard was nearly met.

The Statement of Purpose was and detailed and met all matters outlined in this standard, however further additions need to be made in order to reflect the changes in the organisation during last year.

Fitness to Provide or Manage the Fostering Service (Standards2-3).

One of the standards was met one was not met.

Both the responsible individual designate and the registered manager have the relevant experience, qualifications and skills to run a fostering service, however the manager still needs to obtain an NVQ level 4 in management.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4-5).

One of these standards was nearly met and one was met.

The agency has now developed a formal monitoring system of scrutinising the activities of the fostering service. Clear arrangements are in place which identify the accountability and responsibility of staff and levels of delegation. Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that placing authorities are aware of the fee structures and amounts to be paid for other services.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14).

One of these standards was exceeded, three of these standards were met, four were nearly met and one was not met.

The agency's foster carers were providing high standards in relation to environmental factors and the care of the children placed with them. The agency remain committed to ensuring high educational achievement and are presently purchasing services as required from a number of educational providers. Good practice is now backed up by the relevant policy documents which were required following the last inspection. Child protection issues remain concerning however and the agency are required to improve their responses to allegations and to follow the procedures in making referrals and notifications.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers (Standards 15 to 23).

Two of these standards were not met, four were nearly met, two were met and one was exceeded.

Some attention needs to be paid to ensure that all references and checks are carried out for all staff including panel members and those employed on a sessional or contractual basis. Training opportunities for both carers and staff had improved considerably over the past year and a rolling programme of training had been arranged for the coming year and further courses identified for 2006. Further improvements had been made in ensuring that written policies and procedures had been developed to strengthen practice.

Records (Standards 24 to 25).

Both of these standards were nearly met.

A number of improvements have been made and policies and procedures developed to ensure the safe storage of files. However a few amendments and additions still need to be made; separate files for complaints and allegations need to be put together and used as a monitoring tool by the managers. Further work needs to take place on the auditing of case files.

Premises (Standard 26).

This Standard was met.

The head office premises were inspected and improvements had been made in securing the records in a room since the last inspection.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27 to 29).

Two of these standards were met, one was nearly met.

The agency is financially viable due to large assets owned by the organisation. Foster carers reported that they were satisfied with the payments they received. Since the last inspection the agency has developed written policies and procedures governing the organisations financial management. The agency still need to develop a written policy on fostering allowances.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30).

This Standard was nearly met.

The agency has only recently developed its own fostering panel, and policies and procedures for the panel. Inspectors did not observe the panel meeting during this inspection. Some minor amendments need to be made to the written documentation and to the panel membership to fully comply with the standards and regulations.

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

NO

NO

NO

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Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

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	YES
The Registered Manager of the fostering agency will be an employee of the Children's Family Trust, or contracted full-time to the agency, and accountable for the management of the fostering service to the Responsible Individual.		
Comments The service level agreement with Safe Houses Consultancy Ltd. Has now been terminated. The registered manager of the fostering agency is now contracted full-time by Children's Family Trust.		

Condition	Compliance	YES
The Children's Family Trust will satisfy itself as to the credentials and suitability of the person appointed to be the Registered Manager.		
Comments As above		

Condition	Compliance	YES
The Children's Family Trust will review any Service Level Agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd, initially within 1 month of registration, thereafter at least annually, to ensure that the Trust can comply fully with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.		
Comments This condition is no longer applicable as the Children's Family Trust has now terminated their service level agreement with Safe Houses Consultancy Limited.		

Condition	Compliance	YES
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The Children's Family Trust will notify the Commission of any breach of terms in the Service Level Agreement with Safehouses Consultancy Ltd, of any change to this Agreement not already disclosed or referred to, or of the proposed termination of any Agreement.

Comments

As Above

Condition	Compliance	YES
The Responsible Individual will be a Trustee of the Children's Family Trust. At any point, a suitably qualified person may take this role as an employee.		
Comments The Responsible Individual at the time of the first inspection was the Chairman of the Trust. As part of the planned organisational changes a Chief Executive has been appointed and this person has been appointed as the Responsible Individual.		

Lead Inspector	S Woodget	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	J Dunster	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Alan Sholl	Signature	_____
Date	27 June 2005		

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	Regulation 8 (3)		The agency must ensure that the manager obtains the qualification at level 4 NVQ in management by the end of 2005 in order to ensure that she has the necessary experience and skills for managing the fostering agency.	Immediate
2	Regulation 12	FS9	The agency must ensure that the Child Protection Policies and Procedures are fully compliant with the regulations on arrangements for the protection of children.	Immediate
3	Regulation 34.3.	FS12	The agency must ensure that the recently developed foster placement agreements which comply with Schedule 6 completed on all children placed with the organisation.	End of May 2005
4	Regulation 20.	FS15	The agency must ensure that all persons working for the purposes of the fostering service are interviewed as part of the selection process and records are kept of the outcome of this.	End of May 2005

5	Regulation 20.	FS15	The agency must ensure that all persons working for the purposes of the fostering service have references and checks undertaken which fully comply with Schedule 1 and that these are undertaken retrospectively for all staff employed in the last year, including telephone references to follow up written references. This requirement is repeated from last year's inspection.	End of June 2005
6	Regulation 20	FS15	The agency must ensure that all persons working for the purposes of the fostering service have an enhanced CRB check carried out.	End of June 2005
7	Regulation 27 and 28. Schedule 3.	FS17.7	The agency must ensure that all those providing overnight care for children, including respite arrangements, are fully assessed and approved by the agency.	End of July 2005
8	Regulation 28.5.b schedule 5	FS22.2	The agency must amend its foster carer agreement to ensure that all the matters outlined in schedule 5 are included. This requirement is repeated from last year's inspection.	End of June 2005
9	Regulation 29.11	FS22	The agency must ensure that their carer performance management policy and procedure fully complies with the requirements outlined for the termination of approval of foster carers.	End of June 2005
10	Regulation 24 .2.		The agency must appoint a person to be vice chair of the panel who is either; a senior member of staff of the fostering service provider who is not responsible for the day-to-day management of any persons carrying out assessments, or any other such person not being an employee, member, partner or director of the fostering service provider, who has the skills and experience necessary for chairing a fostering panel.	End of June 2005
11	Regulation 25.	FS30	The agency must amend the fostering panel policies and procedures to ensure accurate information on quoracy.	End of May 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	FS1	The fostering services should ensure that the numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff and the number of complaints and their outcomes, are added to the Statement of Purpose.
2	FS4.4	The agency should ensure that information is provided to purchasers of services that include all the elements of this standard. This is a repeated recommendation from last year's inspection.
3	FS8	The fostering service should ensure that the "exemptions" policy and procedure includes reference to the Children Act 1989 and the need to obtain permission from the area authority where the fostering household reside.
4	FS9	The fostering service should develop a risk assessment model in conjunction with local and placing authorities to ensure plans involving the use of physical restraint for any child who may be danger to himself or others is fully understood and agreed.
5	FS10	The fostering service should ensure that contact arrangements are clearly articulated within the foster placement agreement.
6	FS12	The fostering service should ensure that a full written health record is provided for each child placed in my care and this is updated during the placement and moved with the child. This document should be accessible to the child depending on the age and understanding. This recommendation is repeated from last year's inspection.
7	FS12	The fostering service should ensure the foster placement agreement are completed for existing as well as new children placed with the agency.
8	FS12	The fostering service should develop good links with health agencies in the area where it plans to expand and develop its service operation, to ensure it is able to help the carer to secure services for the child when necessary.
9	FS13	The fostering service should develop information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of children and young people in placement and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.
10	FS13	The fostering service should develop arrangements which include structured occupation during school hours for any child placed with them who is not in school.

11	FS15	The fostering service should develop the policy and procedure document to provide information on how to deal with decision-making in the event of positive CRB disclosures in relation to staff, foster carers, panel members and trustees. This needs to include the provision of an independent person to assist in decision-making whether may be very conflicts of interest.
12	FS16	The fostering service should develop job descriptions and conditions of service for all sessional employees.
13	FS16	The fostering service should develop a range of advice to provide a full service for children and young people as well as their carers, that is available locally in the area where their foster carers live and children are placed.
14	FS17.6	The fostering service need to develop the clearly set out assessment process for carers which defines elements contained in this Standard.
15	FS17.7	The fostering service should ensure that assessing social workers fully explore all the areas set out in this Standard to ensure a thorough understanding of the qualities, competences and aptitudes of the prospective foster carers and that evidence and analysis is provided in the report.
16		The organisation should ensure at all staff working for the purposes of the fostering service (including staff employed to provide training) are provided with written details of their duties and responsibilities, job descriptions and employment contracts, together with the policies and procedures of the organisation.
17	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 (with a particular emphasis on the provision and management of respite care arrangements). This is a repeated recommendation from last year's inspection.
18	FS24.3	The fostering service should include within the policy and procedure document, the arrangements for the retention of documents and records in relation to any child when the placement with the agency ends, in agreement with the placing authority.
19	FS25.13	The fostering service should keep separate records for allegations and ensure the allegations are kept on relevant files for staff, carers and children - including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken. This recommendation is repeated from last year's inspection.
20	FS25.3	The fostering service should ensure that clear responsibility for the system devised to monitor the quality and adequacy of records is established, and that this is undertaken on a regular basis.

21	FS25.12	The fostering service should ensure that foster carers understand that children placed with them should be encouraged to have access to their personal records including information recorded by foster carers in the child's daily log. Information about access for children needs to be added to the Children's Guide.
22	FS30	The fostering service should cross-reference the fostering panel policy and procedure to the agency's policies and procedures on confidentiality and conflicts of interest.

* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	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	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	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	28/2/05
Time of Inspection	9.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?

2

The Children's Family Trust have a thorough and detailed Statement of Purpose that clearly outlines the philosophy, aims and objectives of the organisation and the services and facilities that it offers. The Statement of Purpose has been updated and formally approved by the board of trustees.

Since last year's inspection the agency have had a number of changes in its organisation and staffing and the numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff now need to be added to the Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose also needs to be updated to include the number of complaints and their outcomes.

The Children's Guide is presented in a useful bound filofax style and contains helpful advice, as well as information and leaflets from other organisations, which fulfils the standards and regulations. Since the last inspection children's views have been sought on the children's guide and further additions, puzzles and games, added in response. A further Children's Guide has recently been produced for much younger children and this is good practice.

Inspectors felt assured the Statement of Purpose accurately reflected the fostering services policies and procedures.

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?

1

There have been considerable changes in the management operation of this agency in the last year following the inspection in 2004. The agency now employs an executive director who has applied to the Commission for approval as the responsible individual. Last year the agency operated their services via a service level agreement with another independent fostering agency, however this agreement has now ceased and the agency now directly employ their own manager (the same manager who had been managing under the service level agreement was successful in her application for this post.)

The responsible individual designate has the necessary business and management skills as well as the necessary professional social work qualifications knowledge and skills to efficiently and effectively manage the work of the fostering agency.

It is disappointing that the registered manager who was working towards her NVQ level 4 in management during last year's inspection, was unable to continue with this course, however she has recently enrolled on NVQ level 4 Management Course which is due to start in April 2005. As this is a requirement under Regulation 8 (3) it is the reason for the low score under this standard.

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

Inspectors checked the personnel files of the registered manager and responsible individual designate and were pleased to see considerable improvements since the last inspection, in undertaking all checks and references required by Regulation 5. Telephone enquiries to follow up written references were evidenced on the files.

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?

2

Inspectors were pleased to see a clear procedures had been established since the last inspection, for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering agency. Inspectors checked evidence of a monitoring process through interviews with responsible individual designate and the registered manager, by reading the trustees reports, the monthly operational reports including a review of all the elements of Schedule 7 and supervision records of staff. The operational reports are now regularly sent to the Commission as required by Regulation 42 (1) (a) and (3).

There are clear roles for managers and staff and well-established lines of communication and accountability.

Inspectors saw the "fees" document dated the 18th January 2005 this did not however fully comply with all the elements of Standard 4.4. Inspectors understood that the agency was in the process of revising their brochure for authorities, and it is recommended that this information is included in this document.

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

1

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.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)		
The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The registered manager and responsible individual designate have extensive and detailed job descriptions. There are clear levels of delegation and responsibility, and lines of accountability. Clear arrangements are in place for the responsible individual designate to take 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?

4

At the time of the inspection the agency had only five approved fostering households and as three of these had been seen during the first inspection, inspectors only visited the other two fostering households. Inspectors were impressed to note that these households provided safe and comfortable environments. All children placed had their own rooms. The newly approved carers had spent some time ensuring that the bedrooms intended for use by any child placed were appropriately furnished and comfortable.

Each household had its own safe caring policy details which were completed jointly with the Foster carer and the supervising social workers.

Health and safety checks are carried out on an annual basis and the agency ensures that transport provision is safe and appropriate to the child's needs. The agency checks on insurance documents and driving licences to ensure the safety of the children and young people placed.

Carers were encouraged to undertake NVQ level three in childcare and the agency were providing support to them in this area.

There was evidence that where concerns had arisen as a result of foster carers behaviour/parenting skills these had been handled appropriately and support and guidance offered.

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

One new carer had been approved since the last inspection and inspectors noted that issues relating to the ethnicity, language, culture and race were not fully explored during the assessment, this will be a recommendation in Standard 17.

There was one fostering household with a transracial placement, these children have been placed long-term and as stated in last year's inspection report there had been a lot of planning, matching and introductions at the time of the placement.

Since last year there was evidence that these carers had undertaken a training course on diversity and cultural issues together with their supervising social worker, which had led to greater understanding and enthusiasm about the children's cultural background. The agency has also secured the services of the specialist worker to undertake some sessional work with these children to assist them in understanding their heritage.

Inspectors were informed that the agency had developed a policy for foster carers to promote equality and explore "valuing diversity" issues. The agency has also recently developed an advocacy policy and procedure which encourages foster carers to seek, where appropriate, confidential and independent information, advice, representation and support for the children placed with them.

One young person with a disability had had some extensive work undertaken with her and within the community to assist her to take part in local activities and leisure pursuits and this is good practice.

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

No matches have taken place since the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. There is now one new approved fostering household awaiting a placement of a sibling group of three children. Inspectors heard evidence of possible matches that had been considered for this family and were pleased to see and hear that there were thorough discussions with all family members about the suitability of these matches. The agency has introduced a comprehensive and detailed "full placement referral form" which they have amended to include race, ethnicity, and religious issues, this also includes a risk assessment document to ensure the safety of all members of the fostering household including the children to be placed.

The agency intends to approach local authorities, respond to advertisements in the BAAF "Be My Parent" magazine and other local journals to try and find the right placement for this fostering household. The agency have historically been involved in providing permanent/long-term placement with a philosophy of "a family for life". As a result of this all of the existing 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. Whilst the agency has extended their aims to provide short-term and respite placements as well, it is hoped that they will continue to plan effectively and appropriately.

Inspectors noted that there was still a lack of appropriate information on children's files but were reassured that the agency had made numerous requests of the local authorities to address this.

The agency have recently developed an "Exemptions" policy and procedure; this document needs to be altered to ensure that it complies with the Children Act 1989 in ensuring that permission is obtained from the area authority in which the foster carers live.

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 household has been involved in writing its own safe caring policy to take into account the needs of all the individuals in the home.

Inspectors were pleased to see that; in one case where a young person had very challenging behaviour which occasionally put herself and others at risk; the agency had provided training in physical restraint for the foster carers. They had also developed a working relationship with the placing agency social worker in order to ensure appropriate supervision and support for both the child and the carer. It is intended that the training received for this carer will be updated annually. Instances of restraint are recorded by the foster carer and reported immediately to both the agency and the placing authority. Inspectors saw the thorough and detailed proforma document that had recently been devised, requesting information about restraints to be sent to the agency on each occasion. Inspectors were concerned however that a risk assessment model of practice was not in use and this needs to be developed.

Inspectors were disappointed that, despite clear guidance in the previous inspection report that the agency should notify the area child protection team about an allegation of abuse made by one of the children placed by them, regarding previous carers, this had not been done within reasonable timescales. It is advised that further training for staff and carers is provided about what to do in the event of an allegation being made, for example, whose responsibility it is to notify the area child protection team, whose responsibility it is to carry out an investigation etc...

The agency have revised and updated the Child Protection Policy and Procedures following the last inspection. These procedures have been sent to the local child protection agency for comments, however have not been sent to the Child protection agencies in the areas where their foster carers live and this is recommended. The agency's own Child Protection Policy and Procedures should provide information for staff about how to manage the placement of the young person who may have made an allegation about their present foster carer or another person residing in the same placement. The agency need to provide guidelines about, for example; the need to contact the placing social workers about the safety of any other children in placement, need to undertake any risk assessments, the possible need to move children to another placement to ensure their safety as outlined in Regulation 12. This is a requirement.

The agency make it clear to foster carers that corporal punishment is not acceptable and behaviour management guidelines are provided for foster carers in the foster carer handbook. The agency has recently developed a new policy in relation to bullying and this is available as guidance for foster carers in the foster carer handbook.

The agency has developed its own system for children placed with them to let them know if they are feeling distressed, unhappy or in difficulties through the use of their SOS system found in the Children's guide.

The agency has recently developed a draft policy and procedure covering the issue of making referral to Protection of Children Act list.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has a thorough and detailed policy on contact that is available for foster carers in the foster carer handbook. The inspectors saw evidence that foster carers were involved in ensuring contact between children placed with them and their birth families and that the agency financially supported the families to do so. There was evidence that children had letterbox contact several times a year and face-to-face contact supported by their foster carers.

Contact issues and importance of contact was discussed 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 foster carers are undertaking or have undertaken.

In one case the agency had noticed that the contact plans for one child had drifted, and had been proactive in discussing arrangements with the local authority to try and remedy the situation.

The agency should ensure that their proposed Foster Placement Agreement is in place for every child placed with them and that this agreement includes the role of the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements and any arrangements for supervision of contact. Inspectors were informed that continuing arrangements for contact were planned to have a bigger profile within the context of each child's annual review in the future and this is good practice.

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 children and young people seen as part of the inspection process and those who responded to questionnaires reported that they were happy with their placement and that they felt listened to. The children's guide provides information about how to make a complaint, the new addition of the SOS document in this guide for children to use in the event of their being distressed or unhappy and this is good practice. Inspectors were able to observe that this document had been used by a young person in placement and that the response by the agency was swift and supportive.

Inspectors were informed that the agency planned to develop a children's support group in the future and that one of the reasons for this was to provide an opportunity for young people to comment on the agency.

Inspectors noted that children were encouraged by the foster carers to join in and attend their annual reviews and where they were reluctant, alternatives were discussed to ensure

that children's views were heard.

In one case the inspectors noted that the agency were advocating for children placed with them to have an independent visitor and this is good practice.

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
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The agency has comprehensive policies on medical and health matters for its 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. Foster carers have also recently attended a seminar provided by the agency on "Promoting Health".

The new "full placement children's referral form" has a section dedicated to the health issues of children to ensure that the child's health needs are fully addressed as part of the matching process.

Last year inspectors saw evidence of foster carers fully ensuring that the health needs of the children and young people placed with them were met, including specialist health care for one child with a disability. This year's inspection undertook a case tracking visit with only one foster carer with children in placement and two telephone interviews and it was evident again that foster carers were fully carrying out their duties and responsibilities in meeting the health care needs of children placed with them.

Much improvement had been made in obtaining the relevant health information on each child placed with the agency and there was evidence that the agency was continuing to request information where this had not been forthcoming.

The agency have devised their own Foster Placement Agreement which was not yet in operation, this will significantly improve the situation of obtaining vital information about children placed with the agency. It is advised that these agreements are used with existing placements as well as new placements to ensure the agency are fully compliant with the regulations.

The agency still need to ensure that they keep 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. This should be updated during the placement and move with the child. Inspectors saw a pro forma document had been developed and were informed that this is intended in the near future.

Inspectors were informed that each carer has received training in first aid and health and

hygiene and that these courses cover issues to do with health promotion and communicable diseases.

The manager informed inspectors that the agency has developed links with the CAMHS service in Darlington however inspectors were concerned that the agency had not developed good enough links with local health agencies at a strategic level in the North East of the country where they plan to expand their operation. This is advised.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Over the last year the agency contracted with the National Teaching and Advisory Service in order to assess the current education needs of all children and young people placed by them. The outcome of these assessments has led to a couple of children receiving private educational support financed by their placing authority.

The agency is presently researching how they might continue to provide a proactive and responsive service for the educational needs of children placed with them following the termination of the contract with National Teaching and Advisory Service. The agency are however able to spot purchase assessments and support for children on an individual basis from this organisation.

Inspectors noted also that the agency had used the National Teaching and Advisory Service to assess local education services in areas where they were assessing prospective foster carers, and this is good practice.

Inspectors noted that not all children had an up-to-date PEP on the file although there was evidence that one had been completed at some point. The agency need to ensure they make every effort to obtain these documents. The new Foster Placement Agreement needs to refer to the PEP document.

The agency need to develop information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people placed with them and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school, this is a recommendation.

The agency has not yet developed any services to ensure the structured occupation of children and young people if they are excluded from school. They are presently researching the development of a contract with an education agency to provide such arrangements and this is recommended.

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?****4**

This is a particular area of strength for this agency, whose philosophy is "a family for life". The Children's Family Trust encouraged 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 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 adults living.

Inspectors were able to evidence the support provided by the agency social worker to a young man who had recently moved from his foster carers into supported lodgings. The agency had managed to ensure the involvement of a local authority social worker to assist with this vulnerable young man. Foster carers were also still working to provide support for this young man.

Inspectors also heard that the agency was proactive in ensuring a date for a pathway planning meeting for another youngster with a disability. The Executive Director informed inspectors that the agency was also involved in providing financial support to young people who were no longer in the looked after system, who had been placed with them previously.

The manager informed inspectors that future training to support foster carers in providing effective guidance to young people preparing to move to independent living was planned for 2006.

The agency had recently developed clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi independent living as outlined in Standard 14.2.

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

There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff which follow good practice and those personnel responsible for these procedures, are trained in and know how to operate these.

The agency provided a staff register for inspection. However this list did not include staff taken on, on an individual and sessional basis. These staff, recruited to undertake the sessional work for carrying out both training and assessing of prospective foster carers, had not had full references and checks undertaken by the agency as required by Schedule 1 Regulation 20.

Panel members had not been interviewed using the recruitment and selection guidelines nor had references and checks being undertaken as required. All staff who are employed for the purposes of the fostering service, whether to provide training, assessments, therapy or act as a panel member must have such checks undertaken. This is a requirement.

Not all human resources files contained relevant CRB checks and these needs to be carried out in relation to all staff whether sessional or regular employees. It was noted in one case that the agency had to manage a decision about a positive CRB disclosure, however there was no policy guidance on how to deal with such situations and about how or when to include an independent person in the decision-making process. Inspectors advise that the agency's legal adviser is involved in such decisions in order to resolve any conflicts of interest. This is a recommendation.

The Children's Family Trust have a Service Level Agreement with an independent fostering agency called Family Link in West Sussex in order to provide support, supervision, training and other services to one of their foster carers who lives in that area. Family Link provided a support worker who is unqualified but who receives regular supervision from a qualified social worker and assistant manager of the agency. The inspector visited the Family Link office in West Sussex, interviewed the assistant manager and looked at human resources files. These were found to be fully compliant with the regulations.

All social work staff had appropriate qualifications and were fully conversant with current childcare practices and were experienced in working with children. Inspectors evidenced the agency was ensuring that all staff involved in the assessments for approving foster carers

had been or would be provided training in assessment.

Total number of staff of the agency:	6	Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:	0
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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
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Since last year's inspection report Children's Family Trust have changed the way that they organise and manage their service considerably. The Service Level Agreement with Safe Houses Consultancy Ltd has terminated, and apart from the arrangement with Family Link to provide support for one fostering household in Sussex, the agency employed all their own staff. The Children's Family Trust have directly employed an Executive Director who acts as Responsible Individual and they are now directly employing their own manager. One regular and a number of sessional workers are employed in the North East in order to supervise and support existing foster carers and to train and assess prospective foster carers as well as provide other services.

The level of management delegation and responsibility are clearly defined and are appropriate for the skills and qualifications of staff members.

The agency is a small and slowly growing organisation and at the present time, has informal systems undertaken by the manager, to determine, prioritise and monitor that workloads are manageable. The manager informed inspectors that as the organisation grows she will develop a caseload weighting system in order to ensure that staff are properly supported and the work is properly managed.

There are now structures and systems in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed more effectively however, there has been some delay over the last year in progressing assessments in a timely way and this has been partly due to the number of management and organisational changes that have taken place within the organisation. One of the challenges for the agency over the past year has been establishing its own fostering panel, which came together for the first time at the end of 2004. The agency now have planned to bring all their own fostering households to panel by the end of 2005.

There is an adequate administrative backup and office equipment and infrastructure to support staff in undertaking their work in an efficient and effective manner, in fact all staff and foster carers who spoke to inspectors praised the work of the administrative staff at the Head Office in Droitwich.

The Children's Family Trust have access to medical advice from the newly appointed medical adviser, to educational advice via their connections and working agreements with NTAS (National Teaching Advisory Service). The agency also employ their own legal

adviser. The agency have developed some good working relationships with local professional organisations such as Barnardos and CAMHS in relation to specific children placed with them, however the organisation need to develop better working relationships with other professional organisations operating within the areas where they provide fostering services, to develop a network, particularly in the Northeast to offer a wider range of services to their foster carers and children placed with them.

All regular staff employed by the Children's Family Trust have job descriptions and conditions of service, these needs to be provided for all sessional workers as mentioned in Standard 15. Copies of grievance procedures, equal opportunities policies and health and safety procedures are found in the human resources policies and procedures manual and are available for staff on request.

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?

1

The Children's Family Trust have presently an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff employed both permanently and on a sessional basis. The manager informed inspectors that as the service grew, staffing levels would be addressed to meet the needs of foster carers and children placed. The manager intends to employ a number of sessional workers so that in the event of any shortfall in staffing levels or a sudden increase in the number of applicants, the agency will be able to respond appropriately. The staff informed inspectors that they were happy with the conditions of service, that staff policies were fair and training opportunities good.

Inspectors noted that incentive payments were attached to the employment contracts of the manager and the Executive Director and these were directly linked to a number of prospective foster carers approved and the number of children placed. Inspectors were reassured that these incentives would be linked to the professional appraisal system and measured alongside the quality of assessments and thorough matching considerations.

The agency provides a clearly set out assessment process to be followed by social work staff undertaking the assessment of prospective foster carers. A useful welcome pack is provided for prospective foster carers which includes information about The Children's Family Trust and fostering in general, however this does not include information specifically about the assessment process which is outlined in the matters laid out in Standard 17.6.

The agency had only completed one assessment through to approval since last inspection. This assessment did not contain or fully explore a number of elements recommended in Standard 17.7 in particular; caring for a child born to somebody else, contacts between foster children and their families, religion, health and attitudes to disability. The manager needs to ensure that all assessing social workers are fully aware of all the areas they need to assess to determine qualities, competences and aptitudes of prospective foster carers. The assessments need to provide evidence of the applicants qualities, competences and aptitudes and to ensure careful analysis of the information provided.

Inspectors noted that arrangements for the respite care of children placed with them had not been fully understood by staff or foster carers. All those caring for children placed with the

agency must have been fully assessed as required by Regulation 27 and 28, Schedule 3 and Standard 17.7. The agency also need to fully develop a policy and procedure for management of the respite services for children placed with them (see Standard 21.2).

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

Inspectors found that The Children's Family Trust was a fair and competent employer with good support for staff and carers. Inspectors had the opportunity to look at the agency's human resources policies and procedures and found that these were detailed and fair. The agency now operates an out of hours management and support service for foster carers in the Northeast and has set up an agreement with another independent fostering agency to provide support and supervision for their carer in the Southeast. Inspectors were told by foster carers that the agency's responsiveness and support was helpful.

The agency operate an organised system for carers' supervision, appraisal and support which is assisted by management systems set up administratively.

A comprehensive health and safety policy for foster carers children and staff set up by the agency covers all the legal requirements. The Children's Family Trust have a full professional indemnity insurance cover for all its carers and staff which meets the regulations.

The agency has developed a whistleblowing policy and procedure which has now been made known to all foster carers and staff.

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

Since the last inspection and termination of the service level agreement with Safe Houses Consultancy Ltd, the Children's Family Trust have developed their own staff training and development arrangements.

The agency has developed an induction policy and it is intended that a procedure outlining how inductions should be carried out will be developed shortly. All staff interviewed felt that they had had appropriate introductions to the work of the organisation, and it's policies and procedures.

The agency now have regular staff meetings with the staff in the Northeast and this is one way in which staff are kept up-to-date and informed of any changes in legislation or guidance that is relevant to their jobs.

The agency have recently developed a staff appraisal review scheme which will identify individual staff members need for training and development. All staff interviewed informed inspectors they were happy with the level of training provided by the organisation. One staff member felt that the range and amount of training provided was outstanding.

Staff feedback at team meetings their evaluation of any courses that have been undertaken, and are encouraged to write a review of the course. It is planned that the team manager will more formally evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes for staff via supervision. The agency had developed their own training evaluation document for use by foster carers who attend training courses arranged or provided by the agency.

The agency have developed a programme of regular foster carer meetings, which include a range of training events, for the year and all social work staff members are involved in this programme.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Inspectors noted that not all staff employed by the agency for the purposes of the fostering service, (including sessional staff employed to provide training), had written job descriptions and contracts of employment with the organisation nor could they evidence that the staff had received the organisation's staff guidance, policies and procedures.

Those staff carrying out work on behalf of the agency via the service level agreement had all relevant policies and procedures of the organisation. Inspectors were assured that an inspection had taken place of the organisation who were carrying out the work on behalf of Children's Family Trust and all these staff were properly accountable and supported.

The manager supervises all staff who come into contact with foster carers and prospective foster carers on a regular basis. The agency have recently developed a staff supervision policy and procedure and a contract agreement is drawn up between supervisor and supervisee. It is advised that appraisals take place at the end of the probationary period of any new staff member. As already stated elsewhere in the report there are 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

The agency still needs to develop a clear strategy that is documented and understood and covers all matters outlined in Standard 21.2. As mentioned earlier in the report inspectors noted that some foster carers and staff were not aware of the regulations determining the use of respite services to children placed with the agency. Inspectors discovered some children had been provided with respite care by the agency without the knowledge of their placing authority and without the appropriate assessment and approval of the carers. The agency therefore need to develop a thorough and detailed respite policy as part of the strategy for working with carers and that is fully understood by the placing authorities. This respite policy needs to acknowledge the place of care plans for children placed with them.

Foster carers reported high levels of support from both past and present staff and felt that this had improved in the past year and that the organisation had become more professional

and responsive. Foster carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker and clearly valued the commitment and sensitivity of the staff who provided this service.

The manager was in the process of organising the reassessment of existing foster carers to be taken to the Children's Family Trust's Panel for recommendation of approval. Inspectors were also informed that the agency had plans to employ an independent reviewing officer in the future to manage the annual reviews of foster carers, with the aim of providing a further quality assurance check in the system operated by the agency to safeguard the welfare of children placed with them.

Questionnaires from placing social workers reported a good system of communication between the responsible authorities and the fostering service.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The agency has developed a new Foster Carer Agreement document since the last inspection, and is much improved, but this still needs a few additions and amendments to fully comply with Regulation 28 Schedule 5, in particular the document needs to contain the procedure for the review of approval of foster carer and more specific references to the agency's behaviour management, bullying and restraint policies.

Each approved foster carer received regular supervision and inspectors noted that foster carers valued the quality of support and supervision provided by the agency. All foster carers had a copy of the handbook which covers all the agency's policies, procedures, and guidance. This handbook has recently been updated and is given to all foster carers on approval.

Supervision meetings with foster carers have a clear purpose and there is a pro forma document provided by the agency for completion each visit. The agency have developed a pro forma document for recording unannounced visits and there was evidence in files that these were being carried out twice a year.

Information is provided for foster carers on the agency's complaints and representations policies and procedures. Information is provided to foster carers in the handbook relating to the procedures for dealing with investigations into allegations made against them and carers have access to independent help and advice through the individual membership provided by the agency of Fostering Network. The agency has recently developed a policy document which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register. This document however does not fully comply with Regulation 29.7 in regard to the termination of registration for foster carers. Inspectors also advise that this policy document is cross referenced to their new policy document on referrals to the POCA 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?****4**

This is an area of improvement for the agency who had previously not been proactive in providing training for existing carer for number of years. The manager has now developed an annual training programme for foster carers which in 2005 will include a range of relevant topics such as; promoting health, legislation and good practice, managing behaviour, understanding attachment disorders, post-traumatic stress, promoting education, assertiveness, working together, and communicating with young people. As well as training courses foster carers are invited to attend a monthly meeting where other issues relating to policies and procedures of the organisation are fully discussed. The manager together with other social work staff have presented "Skills to Foster" courses for prospective foster carers and it is intended that these will be run on a regular basis throughout the year for new applicants. The manager has already proposed training for existing carers for 2006, the programme includes such topics as; promoting resilience, preparation for independence, valuing heritage, bullying and promoting contact.

Inspectors were pleased to see evidence of training courses being provided for foster carers on individual basis as and when the need arose. In one case a foster carer was provided with culture and diversity training and In another restraint training .This is good practice and reflects the commitment of the agency in providing a responsive service both for foster carers and for children placed with them. Other training needs of foster carers are picked up during supervision and there was evidence that significant work had been undertaken in helping foster carers understand the importance of life story work.

Inspectors were impressed that all members of the foster carers household were included in an age appropriate manner in discussing safe caring issues and in putting together the safe caring policy for the family. This is good practice and foster carers reported feeling well supported through the process.

The manager informed inspectors of her intention to develop services to support the sons and daughters of foster carers as the organisation grew and developed.

The agency have developed a pro forma document for receiving feedback from foster carers on the training that is provided for them by the agency. The manager is responsible for evaluating these documents and taking into account any issues when purchasing or producing the next training session. It is intended that this information will be included in a report to the panel on an annual basis.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The agency have developed a number of policies and procedures since the last inspection to take account of their responsibilities in relation to case records, these include; access to carer and children's files, confidentiality, case recording-children's files, case recording-foster carers files and confidential storage of information. It would be helpful for clarity and understanding, if information relating to the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act were referred to in these policies and procedures and to ensure compliance.

The policy and procedure "access and retention of carer and children's record" needs to contain further details on what information is kept by the agency when the placement of a child with them ends in agreement with the placing authority.

All foster carers interviewed as part of inspection understood the importance of keeping appropriate memorabilia and there was useful policy for foster carers helping child to develop a sense of personal identity. Further training has been provided for foster carers in this area as already stated and improvements have been made in foster carers understanding of the importance of the child's past history and heritage.

Inspectors saw evidence that foster carers were storing confidential information in a secure manner.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The agency still need to develop a system for keeping records about allegations. Records of allegations should be clearly recorded on the relevant files for staff, carers or children including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and the action taken. A separate record also needs to be kept which bring together data on allegations as outlined in Standard 25.2 and 25.13.

Foster carers were maintaining daily logs on children placed with them, but were unclear about whether these should be shared with the children. This issue needs to be addressed in the policy document on access, through supervision with foster carers and during training. Children should be encouraged to access these records, make additions and comments and

record personal statements, including any dissent. The agency still needs to include information on access to files in the children's guide.

Inspectors noted that there was a new pro forma document designed to monitor the quality and adequacy of records and to ensure that remedial action was taken as necessary. This is a useful start, but the agency need to ensure whose responsibility it is to undertake the monitoring task and remedial action in order that it can be used efficiently and effectively.

The agency had received one complaint in the last year, which was subsequently withdrawn. Inspectors noted that details of the investigation were appropriately recorded and that action was taken within appropriate timescales.

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:			1
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			0
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	350

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

Inspectors checked the premises of the head office based in Droitwich. The administrator and her assistant are based here but the Executive director, manager and other social work staff work here only occasionally.

The premises consists of a boardroom, two private offices, a kitchen and bathroom, as well as the administrator's office. Recommendations made following the last inspection had been carried out and all files are stored securely. The inspector advises that a risk assessment is carried out by the fire service to check that the cabinets containing children's and foster carer files are sufficiently fire and waterproof.

The agency now have their own computer server and all staff have their own passwords to ensure for the security of information stored. Only named individuals have access to certain files stored on the computer to ensure the safety of information.

All information on the server is backed up by an independent agency commissioned to provide this service. This organisation have signed a confidentiality agreement with this company to ensure the security of the information stored. CSCI are seeking advice about this arrangement and will comment in due course about compliance with the regulations in this area.

The agency have secured a small office in the Northeast area as a base for their social work staff. Duplicated files are kept here. Inspectors were unable to check these premises of the purposes of this inspection. The storage of duplicated files held by Family Link in southeast was seen by the inspectors, and inspectors of Family Link were satisfied that the arrangements met the regulations.

The agency has properly insured the premises and its contents as required by the regulations.

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 Children's Family Trust has been long established as a fostering agency and as a provider of residential children's homes. Whilst all but one of residential establishments are now closed (and this one is registered by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales), the company remains an asset rich organisation and they continue to use the interest on their capital investments to support the development and operation of the fostering agency.

Since the last inspection The Children's Family Trust have developed policies and procedures to cover the arrangements for the financial management of the organisation, and these comply with the Standards and Regulations. The financial management policy and procedure includes a risk assessment strategy in order to ensure a minimum asset threshold sufficient to maintain operations without further fee income for a period of six months. In the event of financial crisis the organisation would have time to liaise with purchasers regarding the welfare of children placed with them.

The agency comply with all regulations and guidelines imposed on businesses such PAYE, NI and VAT.

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 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 Trustees and minuted. The accounts are audited annually by a registered accountant. The financial management policies and procedures developed by the organisation clearly document the financial arrangements for control and supervision of the organisation's financial affairs and standards governing its financial management. These policies and procedures are available to all Trustees and staff members.

The organisation provided inspectors with copies of their recent profit and loss accounts, balance sheets, budget plans, audited accounts, delegation of authority documents and minutes of the trustee meetings. These documents provided evidence that the organisation were properly maintaining and managing their finances in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

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**

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses which cover the cost of caring for each child placed with them. Foster carers reported that the agency's payments system works well and that they receive their allowances promptly and the agreed time. Allowances and these are reviewed annually.

The agency still needs to develop a written policy on fostering allowances and ensure that this document is well-publicised and provided annually to each carer. The agency also needs to ensure that the scheme on fostering allowances is included in the information provided to the purchasers of their services.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The agency have recently developed their own fostering panel which had its first meeting in October 2004. As there was not another panel meeting until the end of April 2005, the inspectors were unable to observe the panel meeting on this occasion. However inspectors scrutinised the panel's policies and procedures, were able to read the minutes of the first panel meeting, interviewed the panel chair and looked at panel member's files.

As already mentioned in this report the panel member's files did not contain all information required by the regulations (a requirement has already been made). It is also advised that evidence of the recruitment of the panel members and their interview is kept on their files.

The panel chair has appropriate qualifications and experience necessary to carry out his role. The panel minutes indicated that the panel chair was thorough in carrying out the quality assurance function of the panel.

The vice-chair of the panel is also the treasurer of the Board of Trustees. Inspectors felt that her level of independence from the organisation was not sufficient, in the event of having to stand in as chair, nor did this arrangement comply with the regulations. However her experience, background and knowledge of fostering indicated that she was an appropriate panel member.

The manager informed inspectors that it was the agency's intention to develop a leaflet for staff and foster carers about panel members. Inspectors advise that this needs to identify the areas of expertise and experience of each panel member. A feedback pro forma document has been developed for applicants to complete following their attendance at panel, and this is good practice.

The panel policies and procedures provide clear information about the handling of the panel's functions and cover the issue of decision-making when all members of the panel are not in agreement. The fostering panel has access to medical expertise as required.

The panel procedure needs to be amended with regard to the information about quoracy, as this needs to include one of the social work employees of the agency. It is also recommended that the fostering panel policies and procedures are cross-referenced to the agency's confidentiality policy and conflicts of interest policy.

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 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager'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

The Provider's response to the report is available on request.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

YES

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 24 May 2004, 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 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 Lois Penelope Highton 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 Lois Penelope Highton 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.

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