

inspection report

Fostering Services

Community Foster Care

Twigworth Court

Twigworth

Glos

GL2 9PG

23rd September 2003

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

Community Foster Care

Tel No

01452 541483

Address

Twigworth Court, Twigworth, Glos, GL2 9PG

Fax No

01452 550104

Email Address

mail@communityfostercare.co.uk

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Community Foster Care

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Miss Suzanna Jacoby

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

☐

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		23rd September 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Diana Waters	093866
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 3. Management of the fostering service**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Community Foster Care. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Community Foster Care is a Fostering Agency set up in February 1999 with the express purpose of enabling children and young people to remain in communities similar to their own.

Community Foster Care are committed to social and economic integration in disadvantaged areas of Gloucestershire.

Community Foster Care was set up as a company, is a Registered Charity and not for profit community business.

The Responsible Individual is a member of the management board and is a co-ordinator of one of the local neighbourhood projects.

The Business Manager who has become the Director has been in post since 1999 and qualified as a social worker in 2002. The current social work qualified Operations Manager and supervising social worker have been in post since August 2003. The 3 fostering link workers have had their hours increased from 20 to 30 hours per week to enable extra support to be given to foster carers. The office support team comprise of a Service manager, an administrator and a finance officer.

Seconded staff are brought in, as appropriate, for Foster Care Assessments, to support carers and young people and to train carers.

The 24-hour on call system is accessed via a mobile telephone and the task is shared between the 3 link workers and the 3 social work staff. The link workers on call are backed up by one of the qualified social workers.

The majority of carers are in easy reach of Gloucester city.

In Sept 2003, Community Foster Care had 29 sets of approved carers, with 28 young people in placement, which include at least six sets of siblings 14 young people had been in placement for 17 months or more, and some of these children had been in placement for more than 4 years.

There were 12 sets of carers without placements,
6 sets of carers had completed their initial training and were undergoing assessments.

The majority of the young people placed within Community Foster Care were from Gloucestershire Local Authority but there were several placements from other Local Authorities.

Carers have both localised support groups and a centralised location for regular training; they also regularly meet for social events.

Foster Care Panel is newly established and carers will be transferring approval from the placing authorities panel as soon as practicable.

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.)

- 1 **Statement of Purpose**
1 standard inspected 1 standard nearly met
 The agency has a statement of purpose, which outlines the services provided.
 The frequency and level of supervision offered to carers is not yet consistent with the statement.
 The service user guide needs to be developed into a user-friendly document.

- 2 **Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service**
2 standards inspected 1 standard nearly met 1 standard met
 The manager needs to commence a management-training course.

- 3 **Management of the Fostering service**
2 standards inspected. Standards met
 The fostering service is managed efficiently.

- 4 **Securing and promoting welfare.**
9 standards inspected 5 standards met 4 standards nearly met
 Overall the service promotes and the welfare of the children in placement.
 All carers need Health and safety checks on file.
 Annual Reviews for carers are not yet complete.
 Children with disabilities require a higher profile to promote equality.
 All carers need safe caring guidelines and all carers should participate in training.
 Skills for independent living is an area that needs further development

- 5 **Recruiting, checking managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers.**
9 standards inspected 4 standard met 5 standards nearly met
 The staff who work in the fostering agency are suitable to work with children.
 Approvals and reviews of Foster carers are to be brought to the agency panel.
 Up dated training for staff continues to be planned.
 A new staff structure and newly appointed staff should allow the agency to meet the statement of purpose.

- 6 **Records**
2 standards inspected 2 standards nearly met
 Records were now separated appropriately, but maintenance of the files was required.

- 7 **Fitness of premise for use as a Fostering service.**
1 standard inspected 1 standard met.
 The premises used as offices are suitable for the purpose.

- 8 **Financial requirements**
3 standards inspected 3 standards met.
 The agency appears financially viable and carers were paid promptly.

- 9 **Fostering Panels**

1 standard inspected 1 standard nearly met.

The agency had just established their own Panel the compilation of panel member ship was compliant with the standards and during inspection the panel were undertaking training At the time of the inspection Panel had not met to consider any Panel business.

10 Short Term Breaks

1 standard inspected 1 standard met.

The agency provides short-term respite care to existing carers.

11 Family and friends as carers

Standard not applicable.

(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

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	Reg3(3)	FS1	The Provider must ensure that the Childrens guide to Fostering Services is suitable and is provided to all children and carers	31/05/04
2	Reg 20(3)	FS15 FS3	The provider must ensure that all staff working for the fostering service who have regular contact with children are subject to the same vetting procedures as other staff	30/04/04
3	Reg 35	FS22	Supervisory social workers must meet carers regularly and unannounced visits are made at least annually	31/11/03
4	Reg17(3)	FS24	The Provider must ensure the carer has access to all relevant updated information to enable them to provide appropriate care and if the information is not forthcoming from the placing authority written evidence is kept of the request	31/04/04
5	Reg 24	FS30	The provider must ensure that the fostering Panel becomes fully operational	31/11/03

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	<u>Di Waters</u>	Signature _____
Second Inspector	<u>N/A</u>	Signature _____
Locality Manager	<u>Ian Godfrey</u>	Signature _____
Date	<u>9th March 2004</u>	

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	Reg17(3)	FS24	The Provider must ensure the carer has access to all relevant updated information to enable them to provide appropriate care and if the information is not forthcoming from the placing authority written evidence is kept of the request	31/04/04
2	Reg 24	FS30	The provider must ensure that the fostering Panel becomes fully operational	31/11/03
3	Reg 34(3)	FS22	Foster Care Agreements must be in place for all carers	31/05/04
4	Reg29	FS21FS23	The provider must ensure that all carers are annually reviewed at intervals not less than yearly and all first reviews must be referred to the fostering panel.	30/09/04
			The registered provider must provide a detailed action plan stating how and when requirement No's 1-4 will be met.	

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
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1	FS2	The manager should acquire by 2005 a NVQ level 4 in Management
2	FS6	The provider should ensure there is a written record of assessment r/e the sharing of rooms for children who have been abused or who abuse.
3	FS6	The provider should ensure the carers are given written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.
4	FS6	The provider should ensure that written safe caring guidelines are provided for each foster home.
5	FS9	The provider should ensure that each foster carer has full background information about the foster child and their family to enable them to protect themselves and all children for whom they have responsibility.
6	FS14	The provider should ensure there are clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children for independent living.
7	FS22	The provider should ensure that the carers handbook is updated regularly.
8	FS23	The provider should ensure that each carers annual review includes an appraisal of training and development needs.
9	FS24	The provider should ensure there is a written policy on case recording which clarifies which information is kept on the carers files and what information is kept on the child's files
10	FS24	The provider should ensure the carers are trained and have necessary equipment to record significant life events for the child.
11	FS25	The provider should ensure there is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records and a written policy and procedures for carers young people and their parents to access the records held on them

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B

INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	23/9/03
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	37

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

4 - Standard Exceeded	(Commendable)
3 - Standard Met	(No Shortfalls)
2 - Standard Almost Met	(Minor Shortfalls)
1 - Standard Not Met	(Major Shortfalls)

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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2

The Agency has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose, clearly outlining the services provided.

It has recruited and maintained placements in disadvantaged areas of Gloucestershire but has also started to recruit in other geographical areas.

Policies, procedures and written guidance to employees, carers and Placing Authorities reflect the Statement of Purpose. The agency has developed a service user guide that is provided for both children and carers. It was noted that this should be in a more user-friendly format suitable for young people to understand.

The Provider is reminded that the statement of purpose needs to be reviewed regularly and updated as appropriate to reflect current practise.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Responsible Individual has vast experience in the Voluntary Sector and has co-ordinated the Coney Hill Neighbourhood Project for ten years. The Responsible Individual provides supervision to the Manager on non social work issues.

The Business Manager acquired a Diploma in Social Work in September 2002 and possesses a BSc Psychology degree. She has attended courses in setting up a business, Child Protection, Managing Staff & Team Work, Children's Act; Training of the trainers and Interview Techniques This post has been occupied by the present Post Holder since 1999 and is currently looking at the relevant management training course to commence in the near future.

The Fostering Service is effectively managed.

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

It was evident that from references, interviews with the Business Manager, Operations Manager, staff, carers and children that the Managers were suitable people to run the Agency.

CRB references were now kept together in an easily accessible file.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Evidence provided from both staff and carers demonstrated that roles are clear and line management responsibility understood. There was also evidence of the accessibility of board members when specific advice is requested.

Payments to carers were reported to be regular and accurate, and the financial information provided to both purchasers and carers was clear about the amount charged for the management fees and fees paid to carers.

Conflicts of interest were clearly indicated by the management. There is one agency member of staff who continues to offer placements to the agency.

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

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.

3

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

3

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4) The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Agency has been reorganised to allow the Business manager to develop the future business of the agency and for the Operations Manager to attend to the day to day operations. In the absence of the Operations Manager the Business manager assumes responsibility for the agency, in practise it is currently a shared task with good communication between the 2 Managers.		

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?

2

Children in placement had their own bedrooms or shared with siblings or carers own children of the same gender in the foster family.

The inspector was informed by staff and carers that there are Health & Safety checks on carers homes but these are not evident on all files.

Written guidelines need to be established for Health & Safety responsibilities of carers. And a safe care policy developed for each foster home.

All foster carers were aware of the expectation that they may be visited by the NCSC Reviews on carers were still outstanding and were being scheduled for attention at the newly established Fostering Panel.

Training for carers included Child Protection and Safe Caring.

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

Within this agency there was clear emphasis on placing children in their local communities and where this had happened children were successful at maintaining their local links.

There was evidence from the carers and young people of developing interests and activities, although a lot of these were home based some interests were pursued at after school provision and in the local community.

The agency had some success in engaging carers and social workers in working cooperatively to enhance children's confidence and self worth. Preparation training for carers covered valuing diversity and promoting equality. Carers were clear of their role.

It was not clear that children with disabilities received the full range of services to maximize their potential, whilst it was clear from the files that the agency took this seriously they were hampered by placing authorities and there were unacceptable delays in establishing a protocol for a child who has a life threatening condition, and the provision of appropriate specialist support in caring for her. The agency provided evidence that they were continuing to strive for the necessary help and assistance for this young person and the carers. It continues to be an area that needs to be proactively pursued with the placing authority.

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?****3**

There was no pressure to place children with carers who were not suitable and evidence was presented that some carers had to wait for the right match. While this causes a level of frustration for some of those carers, the inspector notes the positive effect of this practise in terms of appropriate matching, limiting the possibility of placement breakdowns.

There was evidence from the carers, young people and staff of planned placements that had been well thought out which included the level of support that was available.

There was conflicting evidence in relation to pre placement information. In some cases there was evidence of good written information prior to placement but in others little information had been made available to the carers from the placing authorities despite requests from the agency.

There was evidence that placing authorities were not always comprehensive with furnishing the agency with up to date information on young people in placement or when requesting placements, attempts to obtain this information were evidenced by the Agency.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

Training is provided prior to approval and on an ongoing basis, this has included Child protection training, safe caring, and Managing Challenging Behaviour. Carers are involved in requesting appropriate training and it is given a high profile in the agency, some carers are more active in their participation and all carers need to continue to train on an ongoing basis. and all households need individual safe caring guidelines.

Carers are reviewed annually although some reviews were overdue at the time of the inspection.

CRB checks have been requested for all carers and young people over 16.

There is evidence from records and interviews that no corporal punishment is permitted and carers sign a written undertaking to this effect. Carers were clear about the Agency's expectations re behaviour management.

Carers were aware of bullying issues.

Information about children in placement was variable; this was frequently dependent on the Placing Authorities.

Clear procedures are in place for children who are missing, including a 24-hour helpline for carers. Carers evidenced their understanding of the procedure during discussions with the inspector and staff were generally clear about the procedure when children are absent.

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

Where appropriate carers facilitate and welcome contact between parents/siblings and foster children in their own homes, where it is not appropriate contact is often facilitated at a neutral venue, using sessional workers if appropriate. Each case took into account the needs of the individual child (which include the needs of the foster carers own children in the household) and there was clear evidence that the views and needs of everyone were carefully considered and balanced. Including the need of all the young people to feel safe in their own living environments.

Carers were clear about the importance of contact for the young people placed and there was evidence that they supported those arrangements. The Fostering Agency is clearly providing help to carers about difficult contact issues. Written records contained information about contact and its impact on the young person and evidence of this was discussed with Social Workers

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

Carers are trained to listen to young people and evidence from observation, young people and carers confirmed that children's views are heard and appropriate responses are given.

Fostering support workers frequently see the young people in placement as well as carers and are open to the young people's views.

Children and young people from direct interviews and questionnaires were clear about to whom to address concerns and complaints.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

Health care records (especially for one child with disabilities) were detailed. All young people had registered with GPs and dentists. and carers were aware of their role in facilitating access to the relevant services as necessary.

It was brought to the attention of the inspector that children who need psychological help experienced long delays in accessing these services. Evidence was provided that the agency are able to access play therapy services.

It was noted that the protocol in dealing with one child with disabilities in times of life threatening emergencies was still being addressed The inspector was very concerned that this protocol had not been established prior to or early on in placement. although there was evidence that this was being progressed by the agency this protocol was still not in place.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

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

There was a range of evidence that the Agency were committed to children and young people having their educational needs met. Both young people, their carers and link workers spoke of clear individual plans for young people to maximise their potential of success in education and ensure close home/school liaison.

There was evidence of a high standard of liaison between carers and school to enable individual young people to succeed in mainstream education.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

It was evident from discussion with young people and their carers that suitable opportunities are provided within daily living to develop appropriate skills for adult living.

It is also an area identified by the agency as one that requires more attention, both training for carers and written procedures for young people leaving care are still to be addressed.

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?

2

The Agency staff who hold Social Work qualifications are the Business Manager, Operations Manager and the Supervisory social worker. The fostering support workers are not social work qualified, but are supervised by a qualified Social Worker and have a good level of understanding of the relevant childcare policies and procedures. The 3 link workers have been in post some time and possess a valuable range of experience in the fostering arena. The last two appointees personnel files were inspected and provided job descriptions, conditions of services and contracts. Further work was evidenced since the last inspection in providing "sessional workers" with the appropriate paperwork. however they do need to be subject to the same vetting procedures as other staff and checked in line with Standard 15.3.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

In Jan 2003 the agency restructured, the Manager became the business manager the social work manager became the operations manager and a new supervisory social work post was established. The Foster Care co-ordinator became the service manager.

In the summer of 2003 a replacement operations manager was appointed and the supervisory social workers post was filled in Aug 2003 Both were new in post during this inspection.

There is a clear management structure and lines of accountability, unqualified support workers are managed by suitably qualified people At the time of the inspection the business manager provides supervision to the operations manager and supervisory social worker. The Operations manager supervises the link workers, whilst the supervisory social worker supervises the carers.

Training is provided for both staff and carers, there is a good administrative infrastructure to

support the work of the agency.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

With the new staffing structure in place the business manager will be enabled to concentrate on strategic management, whilst the operations manager concentrates on the day to day operations of the fostering agency in collaboration with the service manager who coordinates the office activity. In the short term the agency still employ qualified sessional staff to undertake foster carer assessments.

Training, supervision and encouragement to pursue studies in a relevant field were appreciated by the staff in the Agency. Flexible working was also highlighted and appreciated by the staff team and enabled some to pursue relevant studies.

The recruitment, selection and assessment process for carers followed a well recognised pattern and assessment reports have until recently been considered by Gloucestershire County Council Foster Panel Community Foster Care. have recently established their own foster care panel. During inspection the agency completed the Foster Panel Training and will shortly be considering approvals and annual reviews.

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

Carers confirmed there is clear out of hours support. The six workers in the agency share the on call rota. The 3 link workers are always backed up by one of the 3 social work staff.

The three link workers are allocated to the role of support to carers, whilst the supervisory social worker provides the supervision to carers.

All staff & carers interviewed were clear about the policy on whistle blowing and the route to take should they have concerns.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

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

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

Staff confirmed they are encouraged to pursue training which meets their individual needs.

Flexible working has been appreciated whereby staff can balance work/study/home responsibilities.

The agency run pre approval training for carers During the last year some carers have attended courses on children who have been sexually abused, Stress management, Behavioural management and First aid.

There is further work being planned by the Agency to meet this Standard.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

There are clear written expectations of the staff of the Agency; they confirmed they receive regular management supervision and annual appraisals.

Staff meetings are held regularly and are recorded.

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**

There are clear strategies for working with carers. Support groups are in existence for carers, out of hours support is clear, supervision and support is clearly understood and respite care is provided when appropriate.

Annual reviews are not yet presented to the foster care panel as Community Foster Care panel has only just been established.

See standard 23 for the shortfall in this standard.

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**

A Foster Care Handbook exists but more work is required to make it into a user friendly, easily understood document.

Foster Care Agreements exist for some carers. These must be in place for all carers in the Agency.

All carers had a named link support worker and supervision from a qualified social worker. Whilst foster carers reported their general satisfaction with supervision by link workers and supervising social workers they confirm there were problems throughout the summer with existing staff vacancies, holiday commitments and individual crises. The agency acknowledge this and are now fully staffed and expect to resume more frequent visiting.

All carers were satisfied generally with the promptness and accuracy of payments.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

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

All carers have received pre approval training from a national fostering consultancy this was not inspected at this inspection. In addition there is a variety of in service training available. Carers have a formal support group network and have opportunities to meet in training groups. *In addition some carers reported receiving informal support from other carers.*

Carers put forward to the Agency specific training requests and this is taken into consideration when training is planned. Carers feel this is an area where their needs are taken seriously and their input is valued.

Annual reviews are held on carers, but these are not currently up to date.

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

During the inspection it was clear that the files had now been separated into individual carers and childrens records.

The childrens records should contain a comprehensive case record detailing the nature and quality of care provided and all the relevant background information on the children placed.

All carers interviewed knew the details of children's legal status, the intended duration of the placement and had a working knowledge of the current situation.

Carers were encouraged to keep written records of the children in placement. The link workers and agency social workers saw most of these records routinely. These records were available if requested by the children's social workers.

There were few copies of the carers recording on case files. This recording needs to be encouraged to contribute towards young peoples understanding of their life events. Carers also need training and assistance in recording life events for and with young people in innovative ways.

The agency should produce a written policy that reflects the national minimum standards on case recording.

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

All records are securely stored at the Agency's base.

As noted in Standard 24 separate records are now kept, a written policy should be implemented in order to maintain and monitor the quality of these records.

The agency should provide a written policy in relation to the keeping and retention of case files and issue guidance for those entitled to access these records.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			29
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			28
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	250	Maximum £	495

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency's office is suitable for the purpose. It is a well-equipped office, which is adequately insured and alarmed. The office is open and accessible during normal office hours and the premises are easily accessible to people with disabilities. There are additional facilities for carers and/or staff to meet for training purposes.

All staff have individual desk space and use of information technology equipment.
A Health and safety policy has been developed for staff.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency submitted their financial accounts and report they have sufficient financial resources to fulfil their obligations.

The finances are monitored regularly in the agency and at board level.

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

Examination of the financial documentation submitted to the inspector indicate they have sufficient financial resources to fulfil their obligations.

The finances are regularly monitored in the agency and at board level.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Agency submitted their accounts. These are audited regularly. The records presented confirm that budgets and expenditure are monitored effectively.

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

Approvals for Community Foster Care carer applications have previously been submitted for consideration and approval to the Gloucestershire County Council Panel and/or the individual authority where the young person(s) originates.

During this inspection plans were finalised for Community Foster Care own fostering panel. The inspector observed Panel training and was impressed by the thorough application to establishing a panel fully compliant with the standards. The first panel is due to sit in November 2003.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Monthly respite care is offered as part of the package of support to carers, this is provided by other carers in Community Foster Care, the support, policies and procedures are the same as for other Short Term foster carers.	
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Efforts are made for the children to access the same carers. Matching and introductions take place, whenever possible.

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?	9
There are no carers in Community Foster Care who are "specific" carers; therefore, this Standard is not applicable.		

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.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on the 23rd September 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

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 Wednesday 7th April 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>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I, Mrs Valerie O'Connor of Community Foster Care confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I, Mrs Valerie O'Connor of Community Foster Care am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

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