

inspection report

Fostering Services

SWIIS Foster Care Ltd

Third Floor

33-39 Grey Street

Newcastle Upon Tyne

NE1 6EE

10th January 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

SWIIS Foster Care Ltd

Tel No

0191 230 5283

Address

Third Floor, 33-39 Grey Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE1 6EE

Fax No

Email Address

info@swiis.com

Registered Number of IFA

B530002008

Name of Registered Provider

SWIIS Foster Care Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Sarah Anne Rack

Date of first registration

15th June 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

15th June 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

23/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		10th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Dennis Bradley	074426
Name of Inspector	2	Glynis Gaffney	074449
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		Sarah Rack	

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
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- 3. Management of the fostering service**
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- 8. Financial requirements**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.
SWIIS Foster Care Ltd. is a national independent agency that provides services to local authority social service departments and the children and young people in their care. This inspection focussed on the regional office based in Newcastle upon Tyne that, with its sub office based in Shildon, Durham, provides short and long-term family placements to children and young people in the North East of England. Plans were underway to open an office in Darlington. At the time of the inspection, the Service was providing a family placement service to 71 children and young people. In addition to social work and administrative staff, the Service also employed 2 specialist Health Advisors, a Foster Carer Support Worker, a Principal Education Case Worker, 5 Education Caseworkers and an Education Support Worker.

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 report of an announced inspection.

The purpose of the inspection is:

- a) to assess progress made towards meeting requirements and recommendations (where applicable) from the previous inspection
- b) to assess the service against the National Minimum Standards.

This inspection focussed on key standards in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services along with other standards that were judged to be necessary. This is in line with the current CSCI policy of proportionality. As a result there are a number of standards in the report that have not been assessed.

Standard 1 - Statement of Purpose

This Standard was not assessed. However, it was met at the time of the previous inspection.

Standards 2 and 3 - Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.

1 of these standards was assessed and this was met. Both of these standards were met at the time of the previous inspection.

Criminal Records Bureau checks had been carried out in respect of the Regional Director of Foster Care and the Operational Manager. It was confirmed that arrangements were in place to renew police checks every three years.

Standards 4 and 5 - Management of the Fostering Service

1 of these standards was assessed and this was met. The other was met at the time of the previous inspection.

There was evidence that the arrangements for monitoring the activities of the Agency had improved since the last inspection. A recent re-structuring of the staff team had been carried out to improve management accountability and provide additional support for staff.

Standards 6 to 14 - Securing and Promoting Welfare

8 of these 9 standards were assessed and 7 were met, the other was almost met. The standard that was not assessed had been met at the last inspection.

The assessment process for new foster carers was comprehensive and thorough and included a health and safety check. There was evidence that the specific needs of children and young people were given consideration when foster placements were arranged. The arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people included the carrying out of a 'safer placements risk assessment' at the outset of each placement. Training for carers included courses on Child Protection, Safe Caring and Valuing Diversity. The promotion of young people's health and development was taken seriously by the Agency. Two health advisors were employed to ensure that children's health care needs are identified at the outset of a placement and to liaise with relevant professionals/agencies in order to meet the needs of foster children. SWIIS actively promoted and supported the education and

achievement of children and young people placed with foster carers. The Agency employed six educational caseworkers and an educational support worker. These staff supported children and young people to meet their educational needs and this included the provision of one to one support where appropriate. Foster placement agreements should include details of the elements of matching that were considered when making a placement.

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

7 of these 9 standards were assessed 5 were met and 2 were nearly met. The 2 standards that were not assessed were met at the time of the previous inspection.

The agency recruited a range of foster carers and had an adequate number of experienced and qualified staff. Arrangements had been put in place for police checks to be renewed every three years in respect of all people who work for in or for the Agency. Suitable arrangements were in place for the support of staff and foster carers. Staff had regular team meetings and a formal system of supervision was in place for all staff. A system for the annual appraisal of staff had been implemented. A system was in place to provide regular supervision to foster carers. Each foster carer receives a copy of the Service's Policies and Procedures for Foster carers. All carers are required to attend a course of training prior to their approval and they had access to a programme of ongoing training. A training strategy for 2005 –2007 had been prepared.. This included training pathways for foster carers and staff. Foster carers praised the level of support they received from the Agency's staff - this included an out of hours on-call duty system, prompt payments and paid respite care. Unannounced visits to foster carers' households were being carried out. A protocol and recording format was in place to give these visits a clear structure and purpose. Appropriate arrangements must be put in place to ensure that appropriate checks of staff are always carried. Permanent staff appointments must be subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation.

Standards 24 and 25 - Records

1 of these standards was fully met and the other was nearly met.

There were written policies regarding case recording. Confidential records were securely stored and there had been an improvement in the arrangements for monitoring the quality of records. Foster carers confirmed that they knew why a child is placed with them and the basis for the placement. Children's and Foster Carers' Registers were in place. Staff records did not contain all the required details.

Standard 26 - Fitness of Premises for use as a Fostering Service

This standard was not assessed. However at the time of the previous inspection it was met.

Standards 27 to 29 - Financial Requirements

None of these standards were assessed. However, at the time of the previous inspection the 2 that were assessed were both met.

Standard 30 - Fostering Panels

This standard was nearly met.

The Agency's Fostering Panel was observed to work thoroughly and effectively. The Panel should be provided with the information required to enable it to carry out all of its functions. The training provided to panel members should be reviewed and a training pathway should be developed.

Standard 31 - Short Term Breaks

This standard was met.

Policies and procedures had been prepared to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks. Plans were in place for the Agency to develop the short break and respite service provided to children with disabilities.

Standard 32 - Family and Friends as Carers

This standard was not applicable.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	20, 22 & 31	FS15	Amend the Register of Foster Carers to ensure that it contains all the details specified Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Ensure that a record is maintained in respect of all staff working for the Agency that includes all the details specified in Regulation 22 (Schedule2) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Ensure that staff personnel records contain all the information specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.	30/8/04
2	18	FS25	Ensure that a record is maintained of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation.	30/7/04

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

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

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Dennis Bradley	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	Glynis Gaffney	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Fiona Millns	Signature	_____
Date	_____		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
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1	20, 22 & 31	FS15	1. Ensure that a record is maintained in respect of each person working for the Agency that contains the details specified in Regulation 22 (Schedule 2) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002: • The person's full name, sex, date of birth and home address; • Their qualifications relevant to, and experience of, work involving children; • Whether they are employed by the Agency under a contract of service or a contract for services, or are employed by someone other than the fostering service provider; • Whether they work full time or part-time and if part-time the average number of hours worked per week. 2. All staff personnel records must contain the following information as specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002: • Positive proof of identity including a recent photograph; • Documentary evidence of any relevant qualification. 3. Ensure that telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references. Maintain a record of the outcome of such enquiries. 4. Ensure that, where a person has previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended is obtained. Maintain a record of the outcome of such checks. 5. Ensure that Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out by the Agency prior to new staff commencing work in or for the Fostering Service. 6. Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure that CRB checks, in respect of all people working in or for the Agency, are renewed every three years.	30/5/05
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2	18	FS25	Ensure that a record is maintained of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. Develop the Register of Foster Carers to ensure that it contains the dates of reviews of each carer's approval, as specified in Regulation 31 of the Fostering Services Regulations.	25.4.05
3	21	FS18	The fostering service provider must: 1. Ensure that all permanent appointments of staff are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; 2. Operate a disciplinary procedure that provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse of a child placed with foster parents to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.	30.6.05

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	FS8	Foster Placement Agreements should include reference to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and of any actions required to compensate for identified gaps.

2	FS15	Ensure that the Agency's Recruitment and Selection Policies and Procedures are amended to comply with the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. Schedule 1 to the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 stipulates that the information required in respect of persons seeking to carry on, manage or work for the purposes of a fostering service should include a full employment history, and a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in a person's employment. In order to comply with this, the Agency should ensure that the employment histories of applicants for positions within the Agency specify the month, as well as the year, in which periods of employment began and ended.
3	FS25	Prepare and implement a written policy and procedures in respect of access to confidential information and ensure that foster carers, foster children and their parents know the nature of the records maintained and how to access them.
4	FS30	Consideration should be given to amending the Fostering Panel procedures to include timescales in relation to when carers annual review reports should be submitted to Panel, and when the Panel's recommendations should have received consideration and, where appropriate ratification, by the Agency Decision Maker. In addition, the procedures would benefit from including clear guidance in relation to when carers should be allowed to resign and when they should have to undergo a process of de-registration. Ensure that the Fostering Panel receives all the relevant information regarding the placement needs of children to enable it to carry out its monitoring role, as specified in the Panel's procedures. To ensure consistency of approach in the assessment of prospective foster carers it is recommended that assessing social workers be provided with appropriate training. In consultation with members of the Fostering Panel review the training provided to the Panel. Consideration should be given to carrying out a skills audit of panel members and, where appropriate, developing individual training pathways. The BAAF guidance 'Fostering Panels' refers to the agency decision maker being in a position to make an objective decision and that they must "take account of" the fostering panel's recommendations when deciding whether to approve a person as a foster carer. It is recommended that the practice of the Agency Decision Maker basing their decision, as to whether to approve a person as a foster carer, only on the information contained in the minutes of the relevant panel meeting, be reviewed.

* 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

11

Survey of placing authorities

YES

Foster carer survey

YES

Foster children survey

YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals

YES

- Directors of Social services

NO

- Child protection officer

YES

- Specialist advisor (s)

NO

- Local Foster Care Association

NO

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements

YES

- Interview with children

YES

- Interview with foster carers

YES

- Interview with agency staff

YES

- Contact with parents

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

NO

Interview with panel chair

YES

Observation of foster carer training

YES

Observation of foster panel

YES

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

YES

Date of Inspection

10/1/05

Time of Inspection

9.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

91

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?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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

A Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check was last carried out in respect of the Regional Director of Foster Care in November 2002. A CRB check of the Operational Manager was carried out in July 2003. It was confirmed that arrangements were in place to renew police checks every three years. The Regional Director's personnel file was held centrally at the head office in London and was not checked during this inspection.

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

Both the Regional Director and the Operational Manager demonstrated a clear understanding of the operation of the Service and an awareness of its strengths and areas for development. There were established lines of communication and accountability between management, staff and carers. These included: monthly Foster Carer Support Meetings; regular visits by Supervising Link Workers foster carers' homes; a system of formal staff supervision and regular staff meetings.

The Agency had a written policy regarding the declaration of any possible conflicts of interest by staff and carers and members of the Fostering Panel. Financial procedures were in place. Information provided to purchasers of the Service included details of the charges in the form of an all-inclusive charge and did not include itemised amounts.

There was evidence the arrangements for monitoring the activities of the Agency, including the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, had improved since the last inspection. A recent re-structuring of the staff team had been carried out to improve management accountability and provide additional support for staff. It was confirmed that the Agency was actively considering how best to develop the consultation process with placing authorities and children regarding improving the quality of foster care, as required under Regulation 42. The setting up of an Agency interactive website for children and young people should facilitate this process. A questionnaire had been sent to placing authority managers to obtain feedback about the Service but no responses were received.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

1

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.

7

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

1

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

4

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

3

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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?	0
Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.		

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.

Standard met?	3
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The standard of accommodation in the sample of foster carer homes visited was satisfactory. The Foster Carer Handbook included reference to the Agency's Health and Safety Policy. Health and safety issues, as well as safe caring issues, are covered when foster carers are being assessed and trained. During their assessment the prospective foster carer and the assessing social worker complete a Health and Safety checklist. This covers the foster carer's home and vehicles. The completed checklist is available for examination by members of the Agency's Fostering Panel as well as placing authority social workers. The 'Safer Placement Risk Assessment' that is completed at the outset of a placement is an additional measure that the Agency has introduced, to safeguard children and young people. It is an expectation of the Agency that each foster child will be allocated their own bedroom accommodation unless there are agreed reasons for not doing so.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Agency's 'Equal Opportunities Policy' included a commitment to ensuring that young people, and their families, are provided with services that promote equality and challenge discrimination. The assessment of prospective foster carers covered valuing diversity and whether a family would be able to parent a child whose cultural, religious, ethnic or linguistic needs may be different to their own. The Agency's core post approval training for carers included a two-day course on 'Valuing Diversity'. There was evidence that the specific needs of children, such as their religion and culture, were given consideration when placements were arranged.

There was evidence, in the case tracking of a sample of placements, that foster carers and social workers worked cooperatively to enhance the confidence, self worth and independence of the children and young people. However, it was noted that carers who provided short break care for a child with disabilities had not received training in moving and handling and there had been a delay in an occupational assessment of their home being carried out. Also there continued to be significant delays in one placing authority providing appropriate aids and adaptations for another young person with disabilities. The Agency had liaised closely with the relevant health professionals and the placing authority regarding this matter.

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**

The Agency sought to obtain appropriate information regarding children and young people to enable suitable placements to be made. There was evidence that a high priority was given to making placements with foster carers who could meet the assessed needs of the children and young people referred by placing authorities. Where possible and appropriate, the Agency's health advisor and education caseworkers were consulted regarding specific placements. In addition, the education caseworkers were involved in the assessment of prospective foster carers, and obtained details of the educational provision in the locality. This information was used in the matching process.

Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they were consulted and provided with relevant information by the Agency. However, there was evidence that sometimes the Agency received limited information regarding young people who needed to be placed in an emergency. Where practicable, planned introductions were arranged between the child and foster carer.

The Agency had developed its own placement pack to ensure that appropriate information and documentation was obtained at placement agreement meetings, or as soon as possible after this. The pack, which had only recently been introduced, included a 'safer placement risk assessment' that is completed with the placing social worker. There was no placement agreement in place for one child who had been placed with foster carers prior to the pack being introduced. Some foster placement agreements did not adequately refer to the elements of matching taken into consideration when agreeing the placement and this was not covered in the Agency's own agreement pro-forma.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

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

There was evidence available that the Agency had suitable arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people.

All of the 44 placing authority social workers who completed a questionnaire indicated that they felt the children placed with the Agency were safe; 41 indicated that they thought the foster carer was looking after the child 'very well' and 3 'quite well' – other options were 'ok', 'quite bad' and 'very bad'; 41 indicated they found the carers' control practice acceptable and 3 did not respond to this question.

Preparatory and post approval training for foster carers covered child protection issues and safe caring. Each foster carer is provided with a copy of 'Safe Caring' published by Fostering Network and is required to prepare, in consultation with the assessing social worker, a safe caring policy for their home. These were reviewed regularly by supervising social workers as part of the carer's regular supervision. Arrangements were in place for the Agency's 'safer placements risk assessment' to be completed in respect of all new placements and this was also being completed retrospectively in relation to all other placements.

A requirement to comply with the Agency's policies on corporal punishment, managing behaviour, unauthorised absences and allegations of abuse and complaints was included in the Foster Carer Agreement signed by all foster carers. The foster carers handbook contained guidance on addressing bullying, a procedure for when a foster child is missing from home and, a policy regarding managing behaviour and the use of restraint. Foster carer training included a course on managing behaviour and the use of physical intervention. Arrangements had been put in place to improve the reporting and recording of incidents where physical intervention had been used. It was agreed that where this is used in a planned way, as identified in the Agency's 'safer placements risk assessment', a care plan would be put in place to comply with the guidance issued by the Department of Health.

Arrangements were in place for the Regional Director and Operations Manager to monitor all allegations of abuse or neglect. In one case, the outcome of an allegation needed to be recorded. It was agreed that this matter would be addressed.

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

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

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

The Agency's policy on 'Family Contact' states that the Service is "... committed to the promotion of positive, safe contact between 'Looked After Children' and their birth families". There was evidence that this policy was implemented in practice. Preparatory and post approval training for foster carers covered the importance of supporting children to maintain appropriate contacts with their families and friends.

There was evidence that contact arrangements were considered when placements were being arranged. Foster carers interviewed were clear about the contact arrangements that had been agreed. They confirmed that they received appropriate financial support to facilitate contact. The foster carers maintained records of the outcome of contact arrangements.

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**

Arrangements were in place to ensure that children and young people were consulted about the Service and issues that might affect their daily life and future. These included:

- Providing foster carers with guidance regarding what the Agency expects in respect of listening and responding to children. Post approval training included a course on communicating with children.;
- Providing children with written guidance on how to raise concerns or make a complaint.;
- Supervising social workers making time to see the foster children when they visit foster carers' homes. Children also had the opportunity to see other Agency staff such as resource workers, education case workers and health advisors, on an individual basis;
- Obtaining the views of children about their foster carers and their placement as part of the annual review of foster carers. Older children are asked to complete a brief structured report;
- SWIIS provides an e-mail address to all the children in a foster carer's household to enable them to contact the Agency in private, if there are any issues they want to raise. Plans were underway to provide an interactive area on the Agency's web-site to enable and encourage children and young people to communicate more directly with the Agency;
- Statutory reviews that provide an opportunity for children and their families to be consulted;
- Children also had more informal opportunities to express their views and opinions to Agency staff when, for example, they attend the activities arranged by the Agency during the summer holidays.

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?**

4

The promotion of young people's health and development was taken seriously by the Agency.

The Agency had two health advisors who attend placement agreement meetings and, where appropriate, subsequent reviews, to ensure children's health care needs are identified at the outset of a placement. The health advisors liaise with relevant health care professionals in order to secure appropriate services, such as speech therapy, to meet the needs of the foster children. They also provide advice and information to foster carers and social work staff. All of the foster carers spoken to said they valued the support provided by the health advisors. The Agency's Placement Agreement Meeting Pack included forms that can be used to obtain consent for appropriate health information to be accessed, as well as consent for the use of non-prescribed medicines;

Workshops covering health and hygiene issues / promoting health were included in the preparatory training for prospective foster carers. Foster carers are expected to attend training in first aid during the first year after they have been approved. Foster carers maintain records of the health care needs and treatment of the children placed with them. The Agency had arrangements in place with two agencies that provided a therapy service to children and young people where appropriate. Foster carers could also access this service.

Interviews with foster carers indicated that in general they felt they received adequate information regarding the health care needs of children placed with them. However, there continued to be delays in the Agency obtaining the appropriate 'Looked After Children' documentation from placing authorities. It was evident that the health advisors took an active role in trying to obtain the relevant information about each child's health needs and history.

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?**

4

The Agency actively promoted and supported the education and achievement of children and young people placed with foster carers.

The Agency employed six full-time, qualified and experienced teachers, a full time education support worker as well as sessional education support workers. These staff provided a range of support to placements in order to meet the educational needs of foster children. For example, in the sample of placements case tracked, the education case worker for one young person had advocated on their behalf to obtain an increase in classroom support, another young person had been provided with one to one support in some of their lessons and home tuition had also been provided. Education caseworkers were allocated to each child of school age. In consultation with the carer, child and relevant professionals, they assess the educational needs of each child and develop, coordinate and implement each

child's education plan. The Agency's own statistics indicate that, in December 2004, of the 66 children who were of school age the Education Team had been involved in researching a suitable school placement for 44 children and had provided out of school hours learning support for 46 children. 36 of the children had 100% school attendance and 45 had over 90% attendance. The education caseworkers also prepare reports for children's statutory reviews and the annual reviews of foster carers. A data-base was being developed to enable the collation of information about formal and informal exclusions of children from school.

The Education Team also provided training to foster carers on education issues and how to support the education and achievement of children. Discussion with carers indicated that, in general, they valued the support and training provided by the Education Team. However, some carers said they would like more support for children who are excluded from school for lengthy periods or for children who are not attending school. Some carers also referred to children being informally excluded from school and the impact this had on their education.

Some of the placement agreements examined did not include sufficient information regarding the foster carers role in school contact or financial responsibility for school costs. There was evidence that the Agency continued to face difficulties in obtaining Personal Education Plans for children from some placing authorities.

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?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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

There were clear written recruitment and selection procedures in place for appointing staff. The content and presentation of the staff personnel files had improved. However, appropriate checks were not always being carried out.

There was evidence that permanent staff had appropriate qualifications and experience. Those staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of foster care. Staff personnel records, including those for sessional staff, did not contain all of the information specified in Schedules 1 and 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. In particular, some written references had not been followed up by telephone enquiries and there was no recorded evidence that, where a person had previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, verification of the reason why the employment ended had been obtained.

The application forms completed by 3 people only detailed their previous employment history in years. This makes identifying any gaps in employment, and obtaining a satisfactory written explanation of them, more difficult. An application form / employment history was not in place for one person. All staff had had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. However, in some instances this had been carried out in their previous employment. A fresh CRB disclosure application must be made for all new staff recruited. One person had only had a standard level Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The personnel files for some sessional staff did not contain documentary evidence of their qualifications. Arrangements were in place to renew police checks on staff and carers every 3 years.

Total number of staff of the agency:

20

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

0

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?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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**

In order to provide an effective service the Agency recruited a range of foster carers and had suitable arrangements in place to ensure that it had an adequate number of experienced and qualified staff.

There was evidence that, as the Service developed and grew, additional staff were recruited as workloads increased. The Regional Director and Operations Manager were concerned to ensure that planning for staff recruitment was carried out in good time to match the predicted needs of the Service. During the previous 12 months the Social Work and Education Teams had increased in size. An additional Health Advisor had also been appointed. Supervising link workers generally supported a maximum of ten to twelve carers. Sessional staff were also employed by the Agency to carry out assessments of prospective foster carers. There were also sessional support workers and education support workers. Although the administrative team had also been increased consideration was being given to employing additional staff to better meet the needs of the Service.

It was evident that arrangements were in place to encourage the retention of salaried staff and foster carers. No fulltime staff had left during the previous 12 months.

The Agency had 70 foster carers who provided a range of placements that included short-term task centred, long term and parent/child placements. The Agency aims to recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service. An independent management consultant had been employed to analyse referrals to the Agency to improve the targeting of the recruitment of new carers. Targets for 2005 included the recruitment of carers to provide a shared care scheme for the families of children with disabilities. Another priority was to recruit carers who are able to offer placements for older young people presenting high risk or challenging behaviour. A policy and related procedures were in place regarding the assessment of carers.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

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

The Agency provided an out of hours 'on call' service. Foster carers valued this service and said that their own link workers were also usually contactable outside office hours. Systems were in place for the regular supervision appraisal and support of carers. Public and employers liability insurance cover was in place as well as professional indemnity insurance.

Staff in substantive posts had an employment contract, a statement of terms and conditions and a job description as well as copies of the Agency's disciplinary and grievance policies. A contract was also in place for use with self-employed staff. However, the appointment of staff to permanent positions in the Agency was not subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation. The Agency's Staff Disciplinary Procedure must be amended to comply with Regulation 21(2)(b) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7) There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Agency supported staff to access training for their personal and professional development. It was noted that: • A more structured induction process for new staff had been introduced; • Staff supervision sessions and appraisals were used to identify individual training needs. SWIIS had a training coordinator who had devised a two-year training strategy for the Agency. This included training pathways for staff and foster carers. The staff pathway included a programme of post qualifying and in-service training. Staff interviewed confirmed that they were supported to access relevant training; • Carers and staff jointly participated in some training events; • Monthly team meetings were used to keep staff informed regarding changes in relevant legislation and guidance.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
The Agency had a clear strategy in place for working with, and supporting, carers. There was evidence that: • Supervising social workers and carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker; • Annual reviews of carers were being carried out, although some delays were noted; • Arrangements were in place to provide foster carers with up to 10 days respite care a year; • Foster carer support groups were held regularly in each of the sub-offices of the Agency; • Those individual carers who were interviewed were satisfied with the support they received from the Agency. This was also reflected in most of the feedback received at the Carers Support Group meetings, although two carers said that the level of support provided by link workers varied and that the support worker was sometimes overstretched.		

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?****3**

There was evidence that foster carers received appropriate support from their supervising social workers and other professional staff within the Agency.

Supervising social workers visited foster carers on a regular basis usually twice a month when children were in placement. Arrangements had been put in place to ensure unannounced visits to foster carer households were carried out. A format had been prepared that gave a clear structure and purpose to unannounced visits – including the completion of a health and safety check of the premises. Practical support for carers included: prompt payment; 'out of office hours' support and insurance cover.

Foster carers received written guidance on 'Complaints/Representations' and 'Allegations Against Carers'. Where there is an allegation made against a carer they have access to independent support, although two carers said that they would have liked more support. Those carers who were interviewed as part of the case tracking spoke very highly of the support they received from the Agency.

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?****0**

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency had a written policy regarding the maintenance of records in respect of children, foster carers and staff. The policy included returning all relevant records to the placing authority when a child leaves a placement. There was evidence that this was followed in practice. Case records were in place for each child and these were stored securely. A standard format was in use and this was consistently applied in all the children's files examined. Although the necessary Looked After Children (LAC) documentation was not in place in all of the files examined, there was recorded evidence that action had been taken to address this matter. However, the Agency should be more active in its attempts to acquire the relevant documentation.

Carers were encouraged, where appropriate, to keep 'memory boxes' for each child. Post approval training for carers included a course on 'Life Storey Work'. The Agency provides lockable boxes for carers to store information regarding the children in their care.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Separate records were maintained in respect of staff, carers and children. Central records were being maintained of complaints and allegations. Arrangements had recently been put in place to ensure that records of complaints included the relevant information. The record of a previous complaint was incomplete. In addition, there was no record in relation to an allegation concerning one child either on their file or the central record. There was evidence that this matter was being investigated and action was taken to put in place a suitable record. To aid with monitoring, consideration should be given to maintaining a separate record of allegations.

Confidential records were securely stored and arrangements were also in place to ensure that information held on computers was also secure. Children and Foster Carer Registers were in place. The latter must include the dates of reviews of approval. There was evidence that a more suitable system was being developed for monitoring the quality and adequacy of records. This will be reviewed at the next inspection. A policy regarding access to confidential records had been prepared and implemented. Staff records did not include all of the required details.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			71
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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?

0

Not assessed.

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?

0

Not assessed. However, this standard was met at the time of the previous inspection.

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?

0

Not assessed. However, the Agency was commended in relation to this standard at the time of the previous inspection.

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 had clear policies and procedures regarding the functions of the Fostering Panel. Each panel member had been subject to relevant police and authority checks. The Fostering Panel had access to a Medical Advisor. Arrangements were being made to ensure that the Panel had access to appropriate medical expertise as required. One of the independent members of the Panel had expertise in education.

The Inspectors observed a meeting of the Fostering Panel and the Chair of the Panel was interviewed. There was evidence that the Panel addresses its quality assurance function in relation to the assessment of foster carers and the annual review of carers. However, it was noted that there was sometimes a lack of consistency in the assessment reports presented to the Panel. Operational Manager said that this matter was being addressed by: arranging for the Agency's own staff to carry out more assessments; having a core group of sessional social workers to do assessments and, providing training on assessment. The Chair of the Panel advised that it did not receive all the relevant information regarding the placement needs of children to carry out its monitoring role as specified in the Panel's procedures. She also said that, in addition to increasing training for the Panel, a skills audit of panel members should be carried out.

The Responsible Individual for SWIIS was the agency decision maker. It was noted that there had been significant improvements in the timescales in which the recommendations made by the Panel, regarding the approval and re-approval of carers, were being ratified by the Agency Decision Maker. However, it was noted that, following the most recent panel meeting, a child had already been placed with one carer prior to the Agency having received written confirmation that the Agency Decision Maker agreed with the Panel's recommendation to approve the carer. The Agency Decision Maker based their decision on whether to ratify the recommendations of the Panel concerning the approval of prospective foster carers, only on the information contained in the minutes of the panel meeting.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Agency provided short break placements. Plans were in place to develop this service by recruiting carers who will provide short break placements and respite placements for children with disabilities. Policies and procedures had been developed in order to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.	
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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
This standard was not applicable.		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 10th January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

YES

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

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 20th May 2005 , which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

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 Mr Gurdev Singh Dadral of SWIIS Foster Care Limited 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 _____

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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