

inspection report

Fostering Services

Five Rivers Holdings

Wellington Mews

Wellington Street

Cheltenham

Gloucestershire

GL50 1XY

7th March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Five Rivers Holdings

Tel No

01242 514194

Address

Wellington Mews, Wellington Street, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire, GL50 1XY

Fax No

01242 514239

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

D530002126

Name of Registered Provider

Five Rivers Family Placement Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mr Roger Geoffrey Purton

Date of first registration

31st December 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

31st December 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

March
2004

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Diana Waters	093866
Name of Inspector	2	Mike Williams	
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			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Five Rivers Holdings. 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.
Five Rivers is a Fostering Agency established in 1992. The Cheltenham office has been in operation since May 2000. It provides a family placement service for young people aged 0-18 years, who are unable to live at home and as an alternative to residential care. The Head office and registered provider are based in Fordingbridge, there are 6 branches including the Cheltenham office throughout the country. Financial operations are directed from Head office. Five Rivers provide emergency, short term and long term placements to several local authorities. One formal support groups was organised for the carers but no established group for young people. There is a 24-hour on call support service for carers. Foster Care Panel held in Cheltenham was suspended in 2003 and the only current Panel in operation is in Salisbury and has not been inspected as part of this inspection.

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 third inspection of the Cheltenham branch of the Five Rivers family placement service and the second for the current registered manager who has been in post for 12 months.

Since the last inspection two additional family placement workers and one part time family support worker have been recruited, one has taken over the support of the midlands carers from the registered manager, the other workers remit was recruitment and assessment, he left the service in February 2004.

At the time of the inspection there were two unfilled social workers posts, although one appointment had been made and the service was awaiting relevant checks.

The Cheltenham office has a total of 22 carers and 31 young people in placement, of these 15 young people are placed in 10 homes in the midlands.

With the exception of two young people, most of the children and young people had been in placement in excess of 12 months and some for more than 5 years.

Statement of Purpose

1 standard met

There is a statement of purpose that sets out the services provided. This document is in place for the whole organisation with interchangeable information on each office.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service

1 standard met 1 standard nearly met

The inspectors have required the registered manager to undertake formal child protection training.

Management of the fostering service

2 standards met

Audit procedures are in place for monitoring the work of the service. Staff are supervised regularly and staff meetings are held

Securing and promoting welfare

6 standards met, 3 standards nearly met

Whilst overall children were considered to be in safe caring and nurturing environments and Carers were found to understand, value and support contact with birth parents Safe care policies were needed for all carers,. Accurate and comprehensive Background information must be available on young people placed, preferably prior to placement, and the agency should formally consult with young people about the fostering service.

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

6 standards met 3 standards nearly met

When fully staffed in accordance with the statement of purpose, the agency should be sufficiently staffed, personnel procedures were good, however gaps in employment histories need recording and reference letters need clarification.

Carers possess a range of skills and experience and are well supported. Training was available, however this needs to be accessible to all carers and appropriate NVQ assessors employed.

Records

1 standard met 1 standard nearly met.

Separate records are generally maintained in line with this standard and in line with the agencies policies and procedure. Carers should record monthly summaries regularly and the agency should encourage carers and young people to access their records.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service

1 standard met

The office accommodation used by the agency is suitable for the purpose

Financial requirements

2 standards not assessed 1 standard met

Carers informed the inspectors that payments are accurate and on time. The other two standards not assessed at this inspection, refer to the Salisbury inspection in September 2004

Fostering Panels

1 standard not assessed

This standard was not assessed as no Panels are currently held in Cheltenham, refer to the Salisbury inspection report in September 2004

Short term breaks

1 standard not assessed

Family and friends as carers.

1 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	

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	<u>Diana Waters</u>	Signature	<u></u>
Second Inspector	<u>Mike Williams</u>	Signature	<u></u>
Regulation Manager	<u>Ian Godfrey</u>	Signature	<u></u>
Date	<u>04/07/05</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 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	20(3)b	FS2	The registered manager must attend child protection training	30/9/05
2	17.3	FS8	Foster carers must be provided with appropriate background information on children placed to enable them to provide appropriate care.	31/7/05
3	20.3d	FS1515	Full recruitment checks as specified in Schedule 1 must be carried out on all staff including sessional workers. Records must include a full employment history with satisfactory written explanations of any gaps in employment. References must also clearly ask why applicants have left employment with vulnerable adults/children	29/07/05
4	19	FS1717.2	The staffing complement of the fostering agency must be in line with the agencies statement of purpose.	31/08/05

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	FS9	All carers should have safe care policies, shared with the placing social worker and explained to the child in placement.
2	FS11	The service should identify ways to proactively seek the views of young people and their families about the service.
3	FS7	Ongoing training for carers should include valuing diversity and skills to deal with discrimination .
4	FS24 FS10	The service should ensure that up to date carer records(Monthly summary sheets as detailed by the agency) should be completed by all carers including documentation about outcomes of contact arrangements.
5	FS12	The service should ensure carers are provide with comprehensive details of health needs and a written health record for each child placed prior to placement
6	FS23 FS19	Training should be organised to encourage and facilitate attendance by carers at convenient times and venues and arrangements should be made for NVQ assessment.
7	FS21	The fostering service should review and monitor support received by the carers in the Midlands and should consult all carers about appropriate support, availability and structure of support groups.
8	FS25	The fostering service should enable carers and young people to access their records.
9	FS26	The service should be mindful of good health and safety practise for lap top users and provide appropriate office space.

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

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent

10

Survey of placing authorities

YES

Foster carer survey

YES

Foster children survey

YES

Checks with other organisations and Individuals

- 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

YES

- Examination of files

YES

Individual interview with manager

YES

Information from provider

NO

Individual interviews with key staff

YES

Group discussion with staff

YES

Interview with panel chair

NO

Observation of foster carer training

NO

Observation of foster panel

NO

Inspection of policy/practice documents

YES

Inspection of records

YES

Interview with individual child

YES

Date of Inspection

7/3/05

Time of Inspection

9.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

X

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which sets out the services provided for children who are placed by the fostering service. This document is in place for the whole organisation with interchangeable information on staff and support systems for each branch.

There are two Children's Guides that are in different formats, to meet the needs of different groups of children.

The fostering service Policies and Procedures have been updated during the year, as has the Foster Carer handbook work is underway to standardise these throughout the organisation.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The current manager of the Cheltenham branch of Five Rivers has been in post since March 2004, he was successfully interviewed as registered manager by C.S.C.I in December 2004.

The Manager has a Certificate in Social Services obtained in 1985 and a certificate in Management studies attained in 1997. He has a Further Education Adult Teaching certificate, has certified qualifications in health and safety in the workplace and a number of qualifications in sign communication skills. He has undertaken a series of training courses between 1993 and 2000 related to care practise and management. However he has no formal training in relation to child protection and the Inspectors repeat the previous requirement that such training be undertaken. The inspectors under stand the manager is on the waiting list for a 2 day child protection course with Wiltshire Social services Dept and was due to attend a one day course with Glos county council in March 2005

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

Personnel files are held at the head office of the agency in Fordingbridge, however copies are also available in the Cheltenham office.

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

All staff were clear of their accountability, communication is both informal and formal through supervision and staff meetings.

The inspectors found that information is provided to purchasers of services. Financial procedures are also made clear to foster carers in writing. This is reinforced by financial contracts both to purchasers and foster carers.

The organisations head office deals with all the financial transactions of the Cheltenham office, apart from a small petty cash float. The Cheltenham branch have in the last year obtained an office budget for therapy, staff and carers training.

Schedule 8 notifications were discussed at inspection and clarity given to the agency about reporting significant events to CSCI

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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?****3**

The manager has a job description, works 4 days a week and has been in post in Cheltenham for 12 months. He supervises one supervisory social worker, one senior practitioner based in Cheltenham who covers the branches operations in the north midlands, and a newly recruited supervisory social worker who will also work in the north midlands. Currently the agency has one supervisory social worker vacancy.

Meetings for the 5 Rivers company management group are held in Cheltenham and 5 were held and recorded since February 04.

Team meetings for the Cheltenham office are held at least once a month and documented. Supervision documentation inspected showed that supervision was generally monthly for the social work staff and fortnightly for the family support worker.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence from the cases tracked that the agency had either completed, or scheduled for late march 2005, carers annual reviews that were due. Health and safety checklists were in evidence on the initial assessment (form F) for both homes and motor vehicles, and health and safety checks are now part of the annual review. Carers responsibilities are set out in the Foster Care Handbook and they receive some introductory training. The inspectors saw that there was no sharing of rooms except in sibling placements and homes visited were of a good standard.

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 the agency there are two children in placement with profound disabilities. Whilst neither of these was tracked at this inspection, the agency has employed a support worker who predominantly provides practical support to these carers. This is recognised by the inspectors as excellent practise. This worker is supervised by the supporting supervisory social worker for these carers. One mixed heritage young person tracked was placed appropriately. The inspectors observed young people being given encouragement to pursue interests, hobbies and friendships where appropriate. Issues of discrimination and valuing diversity are included in the initial foster care training, but a good practice recommendation is made to include more specific ongoing training on this.

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**

Five Rivers have a referrals officer who is consulted when placements are being sought by local authorities. Only a small number are accepted for a possible match.

Local authorities often request the form F on carers. The agency send out short profiles in the first instance and only a complete form F when a closer match is identified for individual children needing placement.

Evidence was found, through talking to carers and staff, that when placements are made wherever possible the agency take into account the child's care plan and risk assessment.

Information on young people, their care plans, placement plans and other documentation are monitored by the administration system and placing authorities are written to in an attempt to obtain the relevant paper work.

However, in some cases there is little information available and crucial information is not always available to the carers. Whilst the agency do follow this up with written requests, it is essential that correct and accurate information about young people is forwarded prior to placement.

Carers confirmed that verbal information was often available from previous carers or social workers and that this had proved helpful in managing difficult behaviour.

Carers also confirmed the agency takes matching seriously and there was no pressure to accept placements. Indeed some carers complain about having no placements as the agency insist matching is a priority.

Some children and young people in placement confirmed they had introductions to the foster families and all the children interviewed had clear recollections of their admissions, even down to the clothes that had been worn!

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**

The agency had provided training for carers in safe care. While nationally it is the services plan to have family safe care policies and individual safe care policies for children in placement, this is still in the process of being introduced in the Cheltenham branch. Safe caring policies were in evidence on some of the carers files and one policy in relation to the specific child in placement was noted. These were shared with placing social workers. All carers seen were clear about acceptable and unacceptable punishments and have written procedures for unauthorised absences.

Evidence from the questionnaires and from all the carers visited stressed the value of the 24-hour telephone helpline and they spoke highly of the quality of the support and advice given

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**

Two tracked cases demonstrated a high level of commitment by the carers to sensitively encourage contact. Others tracked did not currently require this level of contact but carers confirmed they had received training and showed insight into the importance of valuing birth families.

The fostering agency expects that carers record outcomes of contact including the impact on the child. This information is then fed back via monthly summary sheets to the child's social worker. Not all files contained documentary evidence of these.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

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

Inspectors heard from foster carers that they are encouraged to seek out children's opinions and feed these back to the placing social worker. The inspectors heard that in their regular supervision visits to carers, Fostering Support Workers consider any issues that arise about each child and they then also provide a link to the placing Social Worker.

All young people spoken to were able to identify people to whom they could complain or talk to if worried. The Children's Guide sets out how children can complain.

There is no formal consultation for fostered young people and the agency should therefore, identify ways they can proactively seek the views of these young people and their families.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

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

All young people tracked had been registered with doctors and dentists. All routine healthcare appointments are dealt with by the foster carers who record health care information on their monthly summary sheets. Health care records were monitored by the supervising social worker, but the contents were not found to be comprehensive. Play therapy had been identified for one child but at the time of the inspection no action had been taken.

The placing authority had funded and arranged therapy for one young person tracked

Another placement tracked included a detailed psychological report which was this was available to both the agency staff and the foster carers.

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**

In the majority of placements, children had appropriate educational provision and carers showed a high level of commitment to ensuring young people received education. The agency has introduced to the placing authorities an extra payment for young people at home without an educational placement. Personal educational plans were not evident in all children's files although there was evidence the agency had requested this documentation. Educational reports were found on files. The agency has introduced certificates and awards for young people who achieve in education, either in attainment and/or attendance. The young people visited were justifiably proud of their "certified" achievements.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

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

The inspectors were shown new documentation, which the agency will be using to help prepare young people for adult living, and assess daily living skills. There was evidence from one placing officers questionnaire of the ability of the agency to provide carers who are able to develop young people's skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. This was supported by one case tracked where the young person was living semi independently, and had a pathway plan and leaving care team involvement. There was evidence in other homes visited of carers' awareness of the need to develop young peoples skills in relation to age/developmental stages

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

A sample of personnel files inspected included most but not all of the information required of persons working for a fostering service (schedule one)
Written references obtained were checked by telephone and full employment histories were on record. However there were not satisfactory written explanations of any gaps in employment history and the letter the service sends out to referees does not clearly ask why applicants left previous employment with children or vulnerable adults.

Total number of staff of the agency:

6

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

A clear management structure exists in the agency and is found in their statement of purpose. Supervision documentation inspected showed that supervision was generally monthly for the social work staff and fortnightly for the family support worker. Appraisals were appropriately found on staff files.

Staff meetings were held regularly attended by all staff and minutes are kept.

In the inspectors view personnel files were of a generally good standard, see standard 15
Appropriate CRB checks were in place on all the files inspected.

The office administrator was described as efficient, skilled and committed, both by the social work staff and the carers.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

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

Since the last inspection one member of staff who was employed to recruit carers had left in February 2005

The staffing team at the time of the inspection consisted of an office manager (4days) a full time senior practitioner (covering the north midlands) a supervising social worker, a training/national standards and systems coordinator (with a company wide remit,) a full time administrator and a family support worker. One social work member of staff had just been recruited to cover the north midlands and 1 social work vacancy remains. All staff except the family support worker have been in post for 12 months or more.

When the above levels are fully achieved the office will be adequately staffed.

At the time of the inspection, there were 23 carers with 31 placements. (Out of these 10 carers and 15 placements were in the north midlands) There were an additional 4 carers with no current placements. The midlands foster carers are supported by the one supervising social worker based in the Cheltenham office but operating from a home base in Derbyshire for the majority of his time, a new social worker had been recruited to also operate across this area and the agency are considering setting up an office in the midlands.

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 indicated, in interview and questionnaires that they were appreciative of the support offered to them, both with regular visiting and the out of hours service, some carers reported that they highly valued the input of the supervising social worker

Monitoring systems exist for carer supervision and annual reviews, with appropriate links to foster care panel.

There is public liability and professional indemnity insurance for staff and carers.

There is a whistle blowing policy, which is made known to staff and carers through policy documents and the foster care handbook.

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**

A service wide training /national standards co coordinator post has been established. This co-ordinator takes responsibility for carer training and has produced a Cheltenham foster carer training programme for 2004/5 linked to relevant N.V.Q standards.

Staff interviewed reported that carers are consulted about their training needs and carers take up of training is reported in their annual reviews. Carers attendance at training is facilitated by the service sending a reminder and if necessary providing transport and lunch. Staff-including the administrator told the inspectors about their previous and upcoming training and that they also attend foster carers training.

At the time of the inspection no assessment arrangements were available for NVQ 3 for carers and one carer tracked wished that training was available at time other than 10-2(as stated in the training programme)

Staff appraisals were found on files.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

All staff were aware of the agencies policies and procedures. Supervision, appraisals and meetings are as documented in standard 16

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Questionnaires returned and carers interviewed indicated that carers generally felt well supported.

Completed annual reviews were found on tracked files or scheduled for late in March 2005 and are appropriately presented to panel.

One support group for carers which meets monthly has been running in Gloucester since November 2004 supported by the supervising social worker. This meeting for carers has met with varying responses and attendance and has provided an opportunity for carers to meet and receive some informal training. Other groups have been suggested but as yet have not been established.

Of the 31 placements supported from this office, 15 are in the North Midlands area and the inspector would question the long-term sustainability of this arrangement and the ability of the branch to continue to meet the support and training needs of carers. The service advised they had recently recruited an additional social worker (awaiting checks) to support this area and the viability of a suitable office is being researched. It was suggested at the last inspection, the agency should monitor the service received by the North Midlands carers to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the level of support, supervision and training they receive and this matter should be kept under regular review.

A good practise recommendation is made for the service to fully consult carers about their views on appropriate support, including the availability and structure of groups.

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**

Carers at the time of inspection were supervised by named and appropriately qualified social workers. Visits to tracked carers were recorded since the last inspection as taking place regularly at intervals from fortnightly to six weekly. Carers generally reported feeling well supervised, although in one case the employed foster carer felt marginalised.

Comments from questionnaires included "Supervising social worker works really hard"

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

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

The inspectors did not attend training for foster carers as part of this inspection. The inspectors were able to read the 2004 –2005 training programme for foster carers and interviewed the training co-ordinator.

Introductory training includes a residential weekend, facilitated by both staff and experienced carers.

The training co-ordinator has developed a programme of training for foster carers. Which includes safer care, legislation, child sexual abuse and challenging behaviour. The full programme has yet to run but initial feedback from foster carers has been positive. The training co-ordinator anticipates that the programme will run on a rolling basis with further modules developed as a result of feedback from carers and staff.

Carers interviewed confirmed that the agency provides support to enable them to attend training events, which sometimes includes, children's activities at training venues. However one carer reported a financial incentive to attend training had now been withdrawn.

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

Carers are expected to write a monthly summary on each child in placement and submit it to the agency. These summaries are counter signed by the supervisory social worker. They were found to vary considerably, from regular comprehensive monthly submissions to one every three months. The agency have introduced a payment for each submitted report to encourage returns.

Carers were well informed about the reasons young people were in placement, despite the absence of some paperwork from the placing authorities.

Records held by carers were found to be appropriately stored; some use the metal file box supplied by Five rivers

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Separate records are maintained in line with this standard

- Children's and young people's files are well indexed. It was clear to the inspectors the office had audited their files and knew the deficiencies they contained. Although there are omissions in information in the files, they had appropriately requested these from the placing authorities.
- Staff personnel files are kept at the Head office with copies held in Cheltenham. There are some minor short falls as noted in Standard 15.
- Carers files are fully indexed with an additional folder holding the form F
- There have been notifications to C.S.C.I within the last 12months, these notifications and events listed in Schedule 8 were discussed with the manager at the time of the inspection to clarify and ensure accurate reporting.

There was no evidence that carers or young people had accessed their records in the last 12 months

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			31
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £	X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Cheltenham Five Rivers moved its office base early in 2005. It now provides some car parking facilities. The accommodation provides: cellar, ground floor administrators office, managers office and toilet facilities; and a first floor office for 2 workers, small kitchen facilities and a multi purpose large room used for training, supervised contact, meetings and work shops. The agency have recently made this large room available to carers for "drop in sessions" with access to a P.C and the internet.

There are 4 computer terminals in the office and laptops are issued to some staff. The agency should be mindful of good health and safety practise for those staff working from laptops for extended periods of time and provide appropriate office space when staff are working from the office.

The office is currently open during normal office hours, with a full time administrator based at the office.

There are two telephone lines into the office and the phone is diverted to a member of the social work team when the administrator is elsewhere, All social work staff have mobile telephones.

The I.T. system continues to be backed up daily and all the I.T. discs, along with carers, children's and personnel files are locked in a fireproof cabinet.

The main office entrance door is only accessible by key holders and all doors are locked and the whole building alarmed when the building is empty.

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

The financial situation was not examined in any depth but the manager reported the financial viability of the company was secure. Overall, budgets are dealt with centrally from Head office, and Cheltenham hold a small budget and a petty cash account.

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

The financial processes are operated from head office. They were not scrutinized as part of this inspection. This standard was reported on in the Salisbury Five Rivers inspection report in September 2004 as standard not met.

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

Carers reported that they were clear about the payments expected from the agency, confirmed that they were paid regularly and that they have experienced no difficulties in payments.

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?

0

Foster Care Panel ceased in Cheltenham in May 2003. All panel hearings are currently held in Salisbury; all applications/reviews are heard at this panel. This standard was not inspected as part of this inspection, but was inspected in September 2004 during the Salisbury inspection and reported as standard nearly met.

The reestablishment of a Panel in the Cheltenham office is being considered for later in 2005. It was noted that management meeting minutes contain recommendations of a good practise nature reported to them from the Panel chair.

The statement of purpose says about Panel procedures that "where there is conflict and or disagreement in relation to decision making the ultimate responsibility lies with the chair person". The agency should note the decision maker for the agency makes the decisions and the Panel make recommendations.

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?
Standard not applicable	9

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
Standard 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 7th March 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

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

NO

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

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 5th August 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>

NO

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 Neil Robert Loader of Five Rivers Holdings 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 Neil Robert Loader of Five Rivers Holdings am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

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

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