



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Five Rivers Holdings

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

Lead Inspector
Martin Davis

Announced Inspection
20th October 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Five Rivers Holdings
Address	Wellington Mews Wellington Street Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL50 1XY
Telephone number	01242 514194
Fax number	01242 514239
Email address	roger.purton@five-rivers.org
Provider Web address	www.five-rivers.org
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Roger Geoffrey Purton
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 7th March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Five Rivers Family Placement Service is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from six branches across the country and in Ireland. The head office is at Fordingbridge in Hampshire.

The Cheltenham Branch has been operating since May 2000. At the time of inspection the branch provided foster placements for 32 children and young people. The branch covers a wide geographical area. The Registered Manager outlined plans to open a further branch of the Five Rivers Family Placement Service in the Midlands in the near future, as a consequence the Cheltenham Branch will then have a much more compact area to serve, this should lead to improved carer supervision and support.

Five Rivers Family Placement Service places a strong emphasis upon providing sibling placements. The service provides placements for children with a disability and mother and baby assessments.

There is a play therapist and three other therapists contracted to work with children who are fostered.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The inspection of the Cheltenham Branch was combined with an inspection of the Salisbury Branch of the service. This combined inspection was completed in one week. Whilst separate reports are produced elements of these are based upon shared data including staff group interviews and pre-inspection questionnaires returned by children and carers. Two foster carers from the Cheltenham Branch were interviewed and in addition to the Registered Manager four members of staff were interviewed. An inspector had access to carer and young people's files as well as staff personnel files and policy and procedural guidance.

The Commission acknowledges that the inspection report produced following the March 2005 inspection was significantly delayed. The Registered Manager had received a final version of this report only a month prior to this inspection. The Commission would therefore expect to find outstanding requirements and recommendations from the March 2005 report at this inspection.

What the service does well:

On the whole foster carers are well supported by the agency, the needs of the young people are understood and supervising social workers work in partnership with placing social workers to meet young people's needs. The agency supports the principle that children should be supported to maintain contact with their birth family, placing social workers confirm that carers and agency work hard to support contact arrangements

What has improved since the last inspection?

The programmes of training on offer to carers and staff have continued to be developed in the last twelve months. Foster carers are required to attend a minimum amount of training, carers have accepted this responsibility and commented upon the value that they now attach to training.

Health protocols have been reviewed and a new Respite Information Pack developed, these help to ensure that carers are more fully aware of the needs of each young person they look after.

What they could do better:

Greater consistency of staffing is now needed so that the agency can develop the range of services that are provided. The Registered Manager must be supported to fulfil his responsibilities and ensure that appropriate services are offered to all young people. The Registered Manager must take action to rectify the significant and concerning shortfalls identified at this inspection in relation to placement matching, carer assessments and staff supervision and appraisal. A new foster panel must be established to serve this branch of the service

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Recent policy and practice developments help to ensure that young people's health needs are promoted. The agency has access to some private services which further promote well being. However the agency must ensure that it has rigorous management systems in place to monitor health matters if it is to ensure that each young person's health needs are recognised and met.

EVIDENCE:

Five Rivers Family Placement Services had recently developed individual health records for young people placed. One copy is to be placed on the young person's file and a second is held by the foster carer who takes responsibility for updating the record. Supervising social worker's monitor this record through three-weekly supervision with the foster carer. These health records were still being introduced and so their full impact could not be measured at this inspection, however it would be anticipated that these should lead to improved outcomes for children.

In the last twelve months additional policy and guidance has been developed in relation to the administration of medication designed to prevent any incidents of secondary dispensing. A new Respite Information Pack has been designed and circulated to carers; the aim is to ensure that appropriate information is shared between a young person's respite and their main carer; these packs have been well received.

As reported under the Staying Safe heading information provided by the service suggests that there are a significant number of children placed with no, or incomplete Placement and Care Plans. Whilst the inspector was shown evidence to confirm that the Registered Manager has chased this information, at the point of the inspection a significant number of foster carers lacked basic information, on children placed.

Since the last inspection therapeutic services provided by the agency have improved so that a more responsive service is provided.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Five Rivers Family Placement Services takes seriously its responsibility to ensure children and young people are kept safe. However there have been occasions in the past twelve months where procedures have not been followed appropriately, as a result some young people had not been appropriately matched with carers and new employees allowed to work prior to receipt of appropriate checks. Continued staff vacancies resulting in the Registered Manager carrying a caseload contributed to these shortfalls.

EVIDENCE:

The manager of the Cheltenham branch has been in post since May 2003 and was registered by the Commission in December 2004. The manager has a Certificate in Social Services obtained in 1985 and a Certificate in Management Studies obtained 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 British Sign Language.

During a carer's initial assessment a health and safety check of their home is completed, this is updated on an annual basis. Foster carer health and safety responsibilities are set out in the Foster Care Handbook. Home's visited during

the inspection were warm and well maintained. The agency has a policy of no bedroom sharing unless the children are siblings, have been consulted and a risk assessment completed.

Five Rivers has a professional referral manager who processes all family placement referrals. The agency was able to demonstrate that it turns down a considerable number of referrals in its ongoing attempt to ensure the appropriateness of placement matches. However practice in this area is variable. In two cases considered the matching process had not been robust and accepted good practice had not been followed. In one of these cases it is significant that the carer had recently transferred from another independent fostering agency, the cautionary approach to placement matching recommended in the carers' initial assessment had not been acted upon. Almost 20% of children placed had no Placement Plan Part I, almost 40% had no Placement Plan Part II and in 30% of cases the agency did not have a copy of the child's Care Plan.

A rolling programme of foster carer training is in place, this includes workshops on safe care, working with sexual abuse, and working with children and young people on protection. The agency has devised a safer care statement for carers, there is an expectation that this statement is personalised to reflect individual circumstances. Not all carers have completed these policies, in one case tracked, despite significant risk of inappropriate sexualised activity by the young person, no policy had been completed.

Central personnel files were clearly structured and contained evidence of the required personal and professional references for new employees; there is a record of telephone enquiries to follow up written references and a system to ensure that CRB's are renewed on a three yearly basis. Where independent social workers had been recruited locally to cover for gaps in staffing these high standards had not been maintained, in one case a worker commenced employment prior to receipt of references, this situation continued for some considerable time. The majority of staff within the team did not have family placement experience prior to their appointment, whilst BAAF and Fostering Network training has been provided to support professional development attendance has been problematic.

Five Rivers were notified following the September 2004 inspection of the Salisbury branch that their foster panel must not serve more than the permitted three branches. The Commission was informed that Five Rivers would establish a new panel to serve the Cheltenham branch, however in lieu of this the Cheltenham branch has continued to present matters to the Salisbury panel, this contravenes the regulations. The process of establishing a new panel has now commenced. It is noted that the Chair of the Salisbury Panel ensures that quality assurance information is fed back to the agency through the Service Manager Group, any observations he has on the quality of

work presented by the Cheltenham Branch are therefore feedback formally to the Registered Manager.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Staff valued diversity training provided in the past twelve months, the agency is committed to continued practice developments in this area. The agency would benefit from further support from Five Rivers to continue to develop systems to monitor educational achievement.

EVIDENCE:

In the past year the agency had commissioned the Fostering Network to run a two-day valuing diversity workshop for staff, the trainer concluded "*the agency had a personal and professional commitment to promoting anti-discriminatory practice.*" One member of staff from the Cheltenham branch attended this training. In the one case where a trans-racial placement had been made the carers worked in partnership with the birth family to ensure that cultural needs were met. Valuing diversity is not currently offered as a separate training workshop, and whilst it is accepted that such issues are a regular feature of general training the agency may wish to consider the value of holding separate workshops on these issues.

Five Rivers have developed an education record system. In the Salisbury area this has been supported by the secondment of a teacher from the Belmont School which is also run by Five Rivers. This level of support is not available to the Cheltenham branch. Individual educational achievements were celebrated through awards and certificates.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The agency supports and supervises contact arrangements appropriately. It must continue to develop formal consultation systems if it is to meet its responsibility to ensure that young people's views are sought and received on matters affecting them.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers are expected to record their perception of the impact of contact; this information is fed back to the placing social worker through monthly summary sheets. 87% of placing social workers reported in questionnaires that carers worked very well, or well, with members of a child's family. Carers were seen to sensitively encourage contact and had worked hard to establish a positive relationship with birth family members. The rolling training programme includes workshops on promoting and sustaining contact.

Foster carers are expected to seek out and feedback children and young people's opinions, 92% of young people reported through the pre-inspection questionnaire that their foster carer often or sometimes asked them for their opinion or ideas. Young people are consulted at the point of their carer's annual review and the comments or pictures they have drawn are attached to the review. In their regular supervision visits to carer's, supervising social workers consider any issues that arise about each child and they then also provide a link to the placing social worker. The agency has begun to consider how more formal consultation systems might be developed so that children and young people are encouraged to comment upon the quality of service provided by the agency, but more work is required before effective systems are in place.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Foster carer's receive payments promptly.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers reported that allowances are paid on time. The agency has systems in place to ensure that carers are paid promptly even where a local authority may have been slow to make a payment. Carers are able to claim additional expenses including those associated with attending training workshops.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The training programmes provided for staff and carers are commendable, these should support continued practice advances leading to improved outcomes for young people.

The ability of the Registered Manager to fulfil all of his responsibilities was adversely affected by the requirement for him to carry a significant caseload earlier in the year as a result of staff shortages. The systems in place to

monitor service delivery must be improved so that any shortfalls are identified and remedial action taken.

EVIDENCE:

Following recommendations made after the last inspection the manager has attended a one-day child protection training course and has applied for a second two-day course. The manager has limited family placement experience and therefore should prioritise attendance on specialist the BAAF and Fostering Network training that the agency regularly commissions.

Staff confirmed that there are well-established lines of accountability and communication between managers, staff and carers. Appropriate financial information is provided to purchasers and all staff and carers are reminded of their responsibility to declare any potential conflict of interest. The manager had begun to develop systems to monitor the matters listed in Schedules 7 and 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations however these systems were not robust so that accurate information covering all areas was not available and therefore could not be monitored appropriately.

Until recently there had been a significant staff shortage; the Registered Manager had had to carry a large caseload and two independent social workers had needed to be recruited to provide cover. As a consequence the time the Registered Manager's could commit to management and development tasks had been undermined. Carers commented upon this instability, one foster carer had had five changes of support worker in as many years. More recently the branch had successfully recruited permanent staff, one of whom has significant family placement experience, if stability of staffing can be achieved improvements in service provision are likely to follow. In general the quality of carer assessments was appropriate in the small sample considered, however in one a potentially significant health issue had not been followed-up appropriately.

The agency has a Whistle Blowing policy that is understood by carers and staff. Appropriate out-of-hours management systems are in place and the agency has public liability and professional indemnity insurance cover. A number of carers in the Swindon area have been notified that their registration is to be transferred to a new branch that is opening in Newbury. These carers contacted the inspector to raise concerns about this transfer, their concerns regarding lack of consultation are significant and in the inspectors opinion this is a situation that had not been managed well by Five Rivers and potentially undermines its standing as a fair and competent employer.

A training co-ordinator is in post. Along with her counter-part in Salisbury she has developed a training pathway for family placement staff that includes supporting unqualified staff through DIPSW and on-going professional development for experienced social workers. Staff reported that access to

training is good, in the past twelve months this has included BAAF Form F Assessment and Supporting Foster Carer's training, Attachment Style Interview training and Valuing Diversity and Black Children in Care workshops. The foster panel chair in his feedback to the Service Manager Group commented upon the improved quality of assessments possibly as a result of the quality of training offered. The training co-ordinator has produced an evaluation of the training programme for 2004-5 and uses this to inform future training plans. There are no social workers currently enrolled on the Post Qualifying Level II programme, clarification of the support available through 'backfill' would be useful.

Five Rivers provides written details of the duties and responsibilities of individual staff. New policies and procedures have been developed, these are comprehensive but require further proof reading. Serious gaps in the frequency of staff supervision were found; the Registered Manager's annual appraisal was overdue as was the National Fostering Manager's. These gaps had been attributed to the staffing shortages earlier in the year, however they are particularly significant given the relative inexperience in family placement work of some staff.

A foster carer support group has been established in the Gloucester area since November 2004, this has provided carers with an opportunity to meet and receive some informal training. With a full staff team the Registered Manager now intends to develop support groups across the area served by the agency. 77% of carers reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they felt very well, or well supported; no carers said they did not receive enough support. There is an expectation that carers are visited a minimum of once every three weeks, for the carers tracked this had not been the case and whilst they were not concerned with the level of support they received it is a reflection of the impact of the staff shortages on the quality of service provided. In addition whilst these carers had recently had an annual review this had been significantly delayed and the process had not been handled well. The Registered Manager was advised that he should develop a system to remind staff when reviews are due and to monitor completion of reviews. The agency ensures that every third annual review is returned to foster panel for consideration, this is good practice.

A new Foster Carer Agreement has been drafted, a number of carers raised concerns that this had been implemented without consultation and had changed some of their terms. This agreement does now however make explicit a carer's categories of registration. Regular visits to carers were noted in the majority of cases although there were some gaps earlier in the year when the Registered Manager was carrying a significant caseload. A policy should be developed to inform staff of the supervision arrangements for respite carers where they are used infrequently as in some cases respite carers had not been visited for long periods. The complaints procedure needs further revision, it refers to a complaints person when in fact no individual has been nominated

for this role and doesn't set out how complaints against the registered person will be handled.

A foster carer-training pathway has been developed and is supported by a comprehensive monthly workshop programme for carers. Carers reported that they valued training and were provided with practical support to enable them to attend workshops. Carers are expected to attend a minimum of three workshops each year; this is monitored through supervision and annual review. Carers had been able to access specific external training including Pathway to Permanence training. The agency is currently looking at NVQ equivalent training for foster carers but is waiting for agreement from the Commission before committing itself to a particular training provider. The agency has yet to develop a 'Children Who Foster' group but is planning a one off event as an interim measure.

Separate case files are opened for each child placed. Carers are expected to help children to understand their complex histories with the collection of appropriate memorabilia and photograph albums. Carers are expected to write monthly summaries for placing social workers, whilst the quality of these varied, in some cases the summaries were impressive and would aid care planning.

The agency now has a set of procedures to deal with situations of financial crisis including disclosure to placing authorities. An independent auditors report, ratified by the board in April 2005 demonstrates that the agency has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations. The Director and a Chartered Accountant monitor accounts at their monthly meeting.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	2
9	2
15	2
30	1

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	N/A

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	2
4	2
5	X
16	X
17	2
18	2
19	4
20	1
21	2
22	2
23	4
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	3
28	3
32	N/A

Yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS8	33(b)	A child must only be placed with a particular foster parent if this is the most suitable placement having regard to all the circumstances	31/01/06
2	FS8	34(3) 17(3)(a)	Before making a placement a foster placement agreement covering the matters listed in Schedule 6 must be in place	31/01/06
3	FS15	20(3)	The fostering service must not employ a person until they have established that they are fit for the purpose.	31/01/06
4	FS30	24(5)	The fostering panel may be established jointly by any two but not more than three branches.	31/03/06
5	FS2	42	Registered Person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring matters set out in Schedule 7 and improving the quality of foster care provided	31/03/06
6	FS17	27	Ensure that full information specified in Schedule 3(2) is included in assessment reports at the point of approval	31/03/06
7	FS20	21(4)	Ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision	31/03/06

			and appraisal	
8	FS17	19	The service must continue to ensure that there are a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons employed	31/03/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS2	Ensure that all carers have an personalised safer care policy in place
2	FS15	Ensure that social workers who do not have significant family placement experience have access to, and attend, relevant training courses
3	FS11	Continue to develop consultation systems to ensure that the opinions and views of children are sought on all matters affecting them
4	FS18	Ensure that where carers registration may be transferred to a new fostering branch, appropriate consultation has taken place
5	FS22	A policy should be developed to inform staff of the supervision arrangements for respite carers where they are used infrequently
6	FS21	Develop a system to monitor carer annual reviews. Clarify to carers whether they have the right to attend foster panel if their annual review is included in the business of panel
7	FS22	Amend the complaints procedure to clarify who is nominated as the complaints person, and confirm how complaints against the registered person and senior managers will be handled
8	FS21	Develop foster carer support groups across the area served by the agency
9	FS2	The Registered Manager should further his knowledge of family placement issues through attendance on relevant specialist training courses

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Gloucester Local Office

Unit 1210, Lansdowne Court

Gloucester Business Park

Brockworth

Gloucester

GL3 4AB

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI