



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fairways Care (UK) Ltd.

**Suite 8
Fairways House
Mount Pleasant Road
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0QB**

Lead Inspector
Lynda Mosling

Announced Inspection
3rd July 2006 10:00

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

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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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

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Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Fairways Care (UK) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Carolyn Brown
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 24th October 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Fairways Care (UK) Ltd (formerly Cornerstone Foster Care) is an independent fostering agency based in Southampton. It provides foster care services for young people up to the age of 18 years. The young people are referred by local authorities across the southern counties. At the time of the inspection there were 15 carers registered with the agency.

SUMMARY

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

This report brings together evidence gained from observation of the fostering panel, questionnaire responses from 5 carers, 3 young people, 3 placing social workers and 2 parents and visits to the service.

During the two day visits to the service discussion took place with managers, staff, carers and young people. In addition a workshop for carers was observed and the proposed education unit was visited.

Records, including young people's and carers' files were seen.

The evidence seen demonstrates that the service is very child focused and provides services for young people that raise their self-esteem and provides them with committed adults who are prepared to 'stick with the young people' regardless of the challenges they present.

Young people were positive about their experiences with the agency and were very willing to share their views. This suggests that they are used to being consulted and are confident about 'having their say'.

The only issues requiring action are with regard to the fostering panel regulations and the provision of over-night support from support workers.

Whilst these issues must be addressed in order to be compliant with the legislation there was no evidence that the safety of the young people had been compromised.

What the service does well:

The foster carers have been thoroughly assessed and have been judged to be competent to provide a service to young people. Observation of the fostering panel, discussion with young people and carers demonstrated that carers are made aware of their responsibilities and are committed to the young people they care for.

Matching of carers and young people is a strength and the service will not take on referrals if they do not have the appropriate carers to place with. Records of the matching decisions demonstrate the importance of this process.

The education of young people is seen as a priority and the agency are setting up their own education provision in order to supplement what is already on offer in the local area. Two young people spoken to said they had 'made more

progress' educationally since being with the agency than at any previous time. The service is keen to find the talents and strengths in all of the young people they care for and promote these through activities, education and good care.

Contact with families and friends is promoted. In some cases the agency has advocated for young people to resume contact with families after a period of none being offered. Carers spoke of the efforts they make to ensure contact happens in a meaningful way. This includes the carer taking the young person to the parents' home for visits.

The agency actively promotes life long learning with their carers and their staff. Training is organised on a regular basis and there is support given to any training that will be beneficial to the service. Staff have undertaken post qualifying training and are encouraged to continually look at training opportunities. Many carers have child care qualifications and one said 'there are loads of opportunities for training'.

The support of carers is seen as 'good' to 'excellent' by the carers that responded to the questionnaires. The support is provided by support workers, supervising social workers and management. The support arrangements are made clear in the fostering agreements made prior to the first placement being made. As a small agency everyone is aware of the young people, carers and their needs. This means there is always 'access to advice' and carers said they valued this highly.

The staff and the carers spoken to were proud of the service and the way care is delivered.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The provision of education for young people who would otherwise have very limited input is being created by the parent agency. This is in response to the young people's need to improve their life chances and develop their skills and talents. It will provide an additional option to the educational facilities provided locally. Creative approaches to learning will be on offer, including music and media studies. The education unit is currently awaiting registration with Ofsted.

Carers said that they are now keeping more records, particularly those relating to medication administration. Although many feel this is the less attractive part of their job they recognise the need for accurate records as a way of safeguarding themselves and the young people they care for.

The agency reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the staff and have delegated particular roles to a number of staff. This has recognised particular skills and the desire to develop new ones. This is helpful in the retention of staff and ensuring fresh approaches to such things as recruitment are considered.

There continues to be close working with the residential unit of the parent agency which allows young people's needs to be met in a variety of settings. The services provided by the agency offers placing agencies a range of flexible packages to meet the needs of the young people.

What they could do better:

The only issues requiring action are with regard to the fostering panel and the use of support workers to provide care to young people in the foster home.

The fostering panel membership needs to be reviewed and recorded accurately on the fostering panel minutes in order to meet the requirements.

The agency decision maker must be someone who does not sit on the panel in any role. This is to ensure there is a fresh look at the recommendations made prior to a decision about carer's suitability and is a requirement of the regulations.

The practice of support workers moving into the carer's home to provide care in their absence needs to be reviewed and brought in line with appropriate legislation. This support is acknowledged as being 'vital' to many of the packages of care so ways of continuing such a provision should be considered.

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.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- 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 – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence, including a visit to this service.

The pre-placement assessment identifies the young people's health needs. These are met by the service in partnership with specialist services.

EVIDENCE:

The files seen showed that health is covered in the pre-placement assessment. It identifies the health needs of the young person and how these needs should be met. This information is used when matching the young person to the carers.

There were full health assessments on the young people's files, these were usually undertaken by the Local Authority's Looked After Children's nurse.

Parental consent forms for medical treatment and medication were seen on the young person's files and the foster carer's files. Carers spoken to said they have medication record sheets that they complete whenever medication is given to a young person.

Foster carers are trained in first aid, manual handling etc. prior to them taking any placement. Carers confirmed this and said that they have also had training relevant to the young person's needs i.e. epilepsy awareness and understanding autism.

Young people are registered with the foster carer's GP and attend local dentists, opticians etc. One carer who is looking after a young person with complex health needs said that she has to attend lots of specialist appointments. She was appreciative of the fact that a support worker will accompany her if she requires assistance at these appointments.

Carers spoken to displayed a thorough knowledge of the needs of the young people they are caring for and could describe how those needs are being met.

Young people spoken to, and those that responded to the questionnaires, said that they can access medical services and feel they are supported in this by their carers.

The service has a range of therapeutic links including the Corn Loft therapeutic service which works with individual young people to help them understand their feelings. One young person spoken to said she had attended for 18 months and really benefited from the individual attention and the 'space it gave me' to look at her difficulties. Music therapy is also provided and is a favourite option for some young people. They are involved in writing music and words and have produced CDs that they can take away with them.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for 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, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30.

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The safety of young people is a high priority within the agency. There are thorough recruitment procedures for staff and good assessments of carers. The matching of young people to carers is well considered.

The carers are all aware of their responsibility for young people's safety. The fostering panel includes a range of people with differing skills and is organised efficiently. The panel minutes need to reflect the positions held by each member of the panel to ensure compliance with the regulations.

EVIDENCE:

The manager has many years experience of providing services for Looked After Children. She successfully completed a fit person process prior to registration.

The staff spoke of the 'brilliant support' they receive from the manager. She is actively involved in all aspects of the service and is well known by the young people and the carers.

Foster carers recruited by the service are thoroughly assessed by qualified social workers who then present the application to the fostering panel. The assessments seen were full, covering all of the necessary areas to meet the regulations.

Carers spoken to felt that 'although the assessment sometimes felt intrusive it is necessary to ensure we are suitable'.

The reports demonstrated that the assessing social workers had used a range of skills to look at prospective carers' competences. In some cases carers had spent a while in a residential unit to acquaint themselves with the kind of behaviours they may be called upon to deal with as foster carers. The carers spoken to felt that they had been given a clear idea of the task by the time they went to panel.

The carers' own children are part of the assessment procedure and their needs are considered at the panel. The written reports covered the views of the extended family as well as the referees.

The carers' files contained all of the assessment material, including references, CRB checks etc. The procedure demonstrated the agency's desire to ensure the young people placed will be safe with the carers.

The assessment information includes a health and safety report of the carer's accommodation, including any risks presented by pets. Any issues of concern were raised by the fostering panel prior to a recommendation being made.

The service is very aware of the need to make appropriate matches. The manager and the social workers spoken to demonstrated their knowledge of the research regarding matching.

As an independent fostering agency they are able to only take on the referrals that they believe will match their available carers. The social workers taking the referrals are qualified and experienced. They have a good understanding of the skills the foster carers have and use this to suggest an initial match.

A matching pro-forma is used to record the matches considered. Any identified gaps in matching the young person's needs with the carers are recorded with ideas of how these gaps can be filled. For example, if a young person is very sporty but the carers aren't then the support worker allocated to the young person/carer will be chosen accordingly.

The number of successful long standing placements provide evidence that the matching arrangements work well.

Young people spoken to voiced the view that 'this is the best place I've been cared for' and felt that they were well placed in their current foster homes.

Many young people placed by the agency have been harmed in the past, either from abusive acts or neglect. Information about the young people help carers understand the past experiences of the young people they care for. Carers expressed sadness for, and a desire to protect, the young people they were caring for.

Particular vulnerabilities are shared and thorough risk assessments help the carers to protect the young people from further harm. Keeping themselves and their families safe is also seen as very important and individual safe caring plans are put in place. These, and the risk assessments, were seen on the young people's and carers' files.

Staff and foster carers are trained in child protection issues and the carers' handbook gives clear instructions on what to do in the event of allegations or concerns.

The young people spoken to said they felt 'safe' with their carers. Some, however, choose to put themselves at risk by going missing or involving themselves in risky situations outside of the foster home. They said that the carers and staff try to 'stop this happening' by explaining the risks but sometimes 'I do it anyway'.

Observation of the fostering panel took place prior to the visit. The panel is made up of people with a good mix of skills and backgrounds, including an adult who was fostered as a child.

The panel members were observed to thoroughly consider the prospective carers' applications and to ask appropriate questions of the assessing social worker and the applicants.

The assessments covered all the necessary areas to meet the standards and included a health and safety checklist of the carer's home.

Applicants were invited to the panel and were treated with respect and sensitivity. Other carers spoken with during the visits said that although they found the panel experience 'quite daunting' they were pleased to have been involved in this way and felt it demonstrated how keen the agency is to make the right decisions about prospective carers.

Although the members of the panel are consistent with the requirements of the regulations the minutes seen did not make this clear. Some of the members were described as 'independent members' when they clearly were not. It is a requirement that the minutes accurately describe the position held by all of the

panel members. The agency should therefore review the panel membership in conjunction with the panel regulations and ensure the paperwork explaining the membership of the panel reflects this.

On the carers' files there appears to be an approval agreement with the agency signed by the manager. The regulations clearly state that the panel makes 'recommendations to the agency', who will then make a decision, taking that recommendation into consideration. It further states that 'no member of its fostering panel shall take part in any decision made by the fostering provider' (Reg 28(4)), with regard to panel recommendations. It is therefore a requirement that the agency ensure that the decision maker for the agency is not also a member, or advisor, of the panel.

Although the panel arrangements have not changed since the last inspection (this standard was not a key standard to be assessed at the last inspection), the company name and some personnel has changed since the setting up of the panel. This may explain how the current situation arose.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for 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 – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13 and 31.

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service values diversity and promotes acceptance and celebration of people's differences. The service promotes educational achievement and actively seeks to provide appropriate education provision. The agency does not generally provide short-term placements where the parents remain the main carers.

EVIDENCE:

The service attempts to recruit carers from a range of backgrounds in order to make appropriate matchings. The panel was observed to appreciate different beliefs and experiences in their consideration of prospective carer's applications.

Carers spoken to also showed an understanding of the need to accept and celebrate young people's differences. Examples include: carers who have advocated on behalf of their fostered children where there has been any suggestion of prejudice shown to them: ensuring young people have a sense of where they come from by helping them maintain family contacts: helping young people take pride in their heritage.

Information about religion, culture, gender issues etc. is collected at the time of the referral to help with the matching process.

There are a growing number of placements made where the young person has complex learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. The care plans on the young persons' files demonstrate that the appropriate support, equipment and advice is available to help the young person enjoy the most suitable care.

Education is seen as important by the service. The carers are active in promoting educational achievement. The completed questionnaires from the carers showed that they feel they have a responsibility to advocate for the best possible arrangement for the young people in their care.

Several of the young people spoken to had achieved more educationally than they had ever expected. One explained she was on an 'access to university' course and another had enrolled at the local college. Many of the young people placed are in full time education and the carers see education as a vital part of the package offered to young people.

In response to the growing demand for suitable education provision for the young people placed by the agency they have applied to register a school with Ofsted. This provision was seen as part of the visit. It will offer a valuable resource to young people and form part of the package of care that the agency will have on offer to placing agencies.

The service currently employs a head-teacher and two full time teachers as well as a number of resource workers. Individual learning sessions are provided to the young people. This can include music and drama, art and crafts as well as the usual academic subjects. Some of these sessions are provided in rented offices close to the centre of Southampton. The school is hoping to also offer media studies in the future.

The young people's files contained records of reviews that included information about progress in education. Personal education plans and statements of special educational need were also seen on files.

The agency does not provide specific short-term placements where the parent remains the main carer so Standard 31 does not apply.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for 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 – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service promotes contact with family and friends and carers are actively involved in making contact arrangements. Young people said that their views are listened to and were positive about consultation with the agency.

EVIDENCE:

Contact arrangements form part of the placement plan agreed at referral stage. The questionnaires received from young people showed that the majority of them had some form of contact with their family. Carers explained that they are actively involved in making arrangements to visit parents and in one example given the carer said she takes the young person to the parents' house and stays overnight to give the parent support with the young person.

The files seen included letters from parents thanking carers for meeting with them and making positive comments about the progress their children are making.

Sometimes the contact arrangements are not to the parents' liking and one parent said 'the agency and the social services make it as difficult as possible for me to see my child'. In some cases the contact is decided by the courts and/or the placing agency and the fostering agency then have to abide by those decisions. However, the manager will challenge these decisions when they do not appear to be in the young person's best interests and there is

evidence that some contacts have been reinstated as a result of a review prompted by this action.

Carers said they are made aware during assessment of the integral part contact is likely to play in the young people's lives and are therefore prepared to assist with the arrangements.

Some contacts can cause concern for carers due to the effect it has on the young person's plans and/or hopes. Carers said that they are able to share these concerns with their supervising social workers and the manager. They are also encouraged to liaise with the child's social worker to share these concerns.

Communication and consultation is one of the strengths of the service. Carers said they feel 'very much part of the team' and believe they are given all the information, about the young people, available to the service. They also feel the service appreciates their up-dates on the young people and trusts their views. This helps the lines of communication remain open.

Placing social workers mentioned 'good communication' as a positive about the service and said they feel they are consulted on all important issues.

Young people spoken to said that they felt 'more listened to' by this service than those they had previously been involved in. They were able to talk about the personnel in the office and felt they 'knew everyone'.

When young people were observed visiting the office they were welcomed warmly by everyone and involved in discussion about how things are going. The manager has a good knowledge of all the young people cared for by the service and was equally as pleased to have contact with the young people as the rest of the staff.

The questionnaire feedback from the young people included comments such as, 'my foster carer asks me my views all the time' and 'I can talk to my support worker'.

The agency has just recruited a retired professional with many years experience of acting as an independent reviewing officer as an advocate for the young people in their care. This is something the agency has been working on for a while and was a recommendation at the last inspection. It demonstrates their desire to give young people a voice and support them in doing so.

One parent responded to the questionnaire and felt that 'the agency and the placing social worker both over-rule my views' and went on to comment on decisions made by the placing agency prior to the placement of the child. The questionnaire response was anonymous so further information to put these

comments into prospective is not available. However, it was the only negative comment received about consultation.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

29

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service pays carers the allowance agreed and any additional expenses. The allowances are higher than the Fostering Network's recommended minimum allowances.

EVIDENCE:

Carers spoken to said they receive their allowances regularly and on time. They were made aware of the allowances prior to assessment and felt they were fair.

The allowances are high enough for carers to decide to foster as a chosen career and several of the carers spoken to had given up their jobs to do so. There is a risk associated with this as there are no retainers paid to carers when there are no placements. The agency is aware of this difficulty for carers and can sometimes offer carers with vacancies other work i.e. supporting other placements or working in the residential unit to help them out.

Whilst carers said they would like a retainer paid between placements they also said that the agency is good at managing the vacancies and are flexible about payments when placements are being negotiated. Few carers are therefore without placements and income for long.

The agency has looked into the payment of retainers but as all the services are purchased on a placement by placement basis the financial burden on the agency would be great and would inevitably lead to higher charges to the placing agencies.

Management

The intended outcomes for 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, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 32.

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The staff are well organised and provide a good service. There is a need to clarify the role of the support workers to ensure they work within the regulations. The level of qualified staff is high and all have appropriate experience. The agency promotes continuous learning for its staff and has an

in-house training programme. Staff say they are well supported and supervised. The agency has a clear strategy for supporting carers that is set out in the fostering agreement. Foster carers receive preparation training as part of the assessment process and are offered many in-house training sessions. Case records of young people are comprehensive. The service does not place young people with family or friends.

EVIDENCE:

The evidence seen at the visit showed that the staff are well organised and work efficiently. Five staff members were spoken to individually and others were observed in the office. All were clear about their role within the agency and said they felt the manager made the best use of everyone's skills.

The support workers are currently used to support carers and young people in placement. This support can include taking the young people out, accompanying carers to consultant appointments, sitting for the young people whilst the carers are out and moving into the carer's home to care for the young person whilst they take a break or holiday.

It appears that the support workers are currently acting outside of their role as support workers of a fostering agency and are delivering care more akin to domiciliary care. Whilst their role is a major part of the package offered to the young people and is greatly appreciated by carers and young people it is important to ensure they are acting within the regulations. The agency has asked the Commission for advice regarding this issue. As this has not yet been clarified, the issue will be dealt with outside of this report.

In many of the discussions with placing agencies and carers the support workers were mentioned as the people who made the 'fostering task do-able'. It is therefore important that the service is able to continue to access such support.

The supervising social workers, and some of the support workers, have the DipSW and other relevant qualifications. They are all experienced in working with families and children and display good knowledge of the needs of children living away from home. Staff spoken to said that they had chosen to work for the agency because of the high regard in which the work undertaken by the agency was held.

Carers are recruited through 'word of mouth' and local advertisement. The initial response from the agency is felt to be crucial and an appointment is made with either the manager or a social worker to discuss individual situations. The assessment was seen to be thorough and covers all of the necessary areas.

The responsibility for the training programme has recently been delegated to one of the supervising social workers. This covers the basic training needs, such as manual handling, first aid, food hygiene etc. and will ensure that updates and refresher training is given to foster carers on a regular basis.

In addition, specific training on topics such as autism, epilepsy, challenging behaviour etc. is regularly offered. Carers said that they are supported to go on any related training of their own choosing. The support includes financial, child-care cover and mentoring.

All training offered is open to carers and staff.

During the visit the inspectors observed a workshop that had been set up for carers to hear about the experiences of a Looked After Child who had been through a range of care settings, including foster care. Her views and observations were well received by the carers who displayed sensitivity towards her.

The agency encourages learning for their carers and staff and celebrates all achievement on all levels.

The social workers are supervised by the manager on a regular basis. Supervision sessions are recorded and the staff spoken to said they are helpful and supportive. There are also group supervision sessions provided by an independent psychiatrist. These enable staff to look at the effects of their work on themselves and those they work with. These sessions are felt to be challenging and helpful in clarifying their roles.

The manager receives supervision from the RI and independent consultation, both of which she values.

All staff spoken to said that they feel well supported and supervised. They particularly appreciated the easy access to their supervisors and manager.

The service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. The fostering agreement sets out what the carers can expect from the agency, including the supervision provided. The agreement includes the statement: 'supervising social workers will visit weekly and 'on an urgent basis'.

Carers spoken to were particularly positive about the support they receive and often say that the quality and level of support is the reason they foster for this agency.

The completed questionnaires included comments such as: 'they provide support which can be practical with workers taking the children out so we can have family time with our own children. A regular visit from our own designated social worker for chats' and 'we honestly have received the best support, advice and respite'. There were no responses of a negative nature.

The respite offered by the agency was mentioned as one of the most positive supports to carers. This is usually provided by other carers or support workers. (See standard 16).

Training for carers begins at the point of application to foster. There are preparation training sessions that form part of the approval process. These are reported upon within the assessment information that is presented to panel. From observation of the fostering panel it was clear that many topics are covered, and the competence and potential of each carer is well tested.

Further on-going training is offered to carers on a regular basis. Supervision of carers highlight any training needs, as does the annual review of carers. One carer commented, 'there are loads of training opportunities'. Carers said they are supported with their training needs and some have gained the NVQ3.

The social worker responsible for the training programme is hoping to develop more therapeutic input into training i.e. helping children play, life story work etc.

Case records of young people were seen and contained appropriate information to help with the care of the young people. Information is collected from the referral onwards. A qualified social worker will talk to the referrer and gather as much information from them as possible. Then one of the social workers and/or the manager will generally visit and undertake an assessment and talk to the current carers.

The information gathered includes: likes and dislikes, 'this is me' profile, completed by the young person, or the carers, sleeping/bedtime routines, background details, education, physical, emotional and social needs etc. The agency has become very proficient at chasing information from placing social workers and has recently made a decision not to accept referrals from one local authority due to their continued inability to share information and provide acceptable levels of work with the carers and young people.

The information is easy to access within the file. It details the family contact numbers and other important contacts as well as a copy of the contract agreed with the placing authorities.

Carers keep diaries of their work with the young people and send in regular reports to the agency. Carers spoken to were aware of the need to keep accurate records and also of their responsibility to keep them safe and confidential.

Risk assessments on the young people's files were thorough and covered areas such as: self-harming, bullying, allegations, absconding, aggression towards others, sexualised behaviour towards peers/adults etc. These were seen to be up-dated on a regular basis.

The agency has records of complaints made. These were looked at. One complaint has been made which was dealt with appropriately by the Registered Individual within the timescales set out in the complaints procedure.

As an independent fostering agency Standard 32 is not applicable. Family and friends are not assessed as carers by this service.

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	4
8	4
9	3
15	3
30	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	N/A

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	3

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	X
4	X
5	X
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	4
20	3
21	4
22	X
23	3
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	N/A

No

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.	FS30	Reg 24	The agency must ensure that the minutes of the fostering panel accurately reflects the membership of the panel.	30/10/06
2.	FS30	Reg 28(4)	The agency must ensure that the decision maker for the agency is not also a member or advisor of the fostering panel.	30/10/06

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

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