



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Ryancare Fostering Ltd

Oak House

5A Wellington Road

Wanstead

London

E11 2AN

26th January 2004

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

Ryancare Fostering Ltd

Tel No

020 8989 4970

Address

Oak House, 5A Wellington Road, Wanstead, London, E11
2AN

Fax No

020 8989 0854

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

G050000377

Name of Registered Provider

Mr Adrian Paul Ryan

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mr Jonathan Francis James Drury

Date of first registration

1st August 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

1st August 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

25/03/03

Date of Inspection Visit		8th December 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Gwen Lording	073506
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Adrian Ryan	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

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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 National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Ryancare Fostering Limited is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from an office based at Oak House in the London Borough of Redbridge, and has been operational since 2002. The agency provides a range of services including short and long term fostering, including sibling groups, for children between 0-18 years of age. All placements are commissioned by a local authority and Ryancare Fostering subscribes to the PAN London Agreement. The service aims to meet the identified needs of children and young people placed with them and to fully support foster carers within that task.

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 inspection was undertaken over a period from 8th December 2003 to 26th January 2004, this was to enable the Inspector to attend support groups; visit the agency; undertake discussions with the panel chair, foster carers and placing authorities; and to visit foster carers in their homes.

The Inspector received feedback forms from children and young people, foster carers and placing authorities. The comments made about the care and support provided was very positive.

"All the staff are very accessible and easy to talk to". (Foster Carer)

"There's always someone at the end of the phone – 24 hours" (Foster Carer)

"I like to be here because I have a garden and I am happy here" (Child in Foster Care)

"I get fruit and vegetables and lots of food. I go out more often". (Child in Foster care)

"They listen to what I have to say. I have an opinion". (Young Person in Foster Care).

"Ryancare Fostering have provided us with a very adequate foster carer, that meets all the young person's needs" (Placing Social Worker)

The Inspector found that all of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services had been met, except two, which were mostly met.

It should be noted that there are no outstanding requirements from the last inspection.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (STANDARD 1)

This Standard was assessed and mostly met. The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document that provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide. However, the Statement of Purpose contains the written summary of inspection findings from the previous inspection. Reports of inspections can only be reproduced in full and with the permission of the Commission. The registered providers are required to remove this extract. The fostering service may wish to replace this with a reference to the inspection report and details of how it may be accessed in full.

Both the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide are comprehensive documents.

FITNESS TO CARRY ON OR MANAGE A FOSTERING SERVICE (STANDARDS 2-3)

Both standards were assessed and met in full. The registered provider and the registered manager both have a professional qualification relevant to working with children, and extensive experience of working with children/young people and families. The registered manager is currently undertaking a qualification at NVQ level 4.

MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE (STANDARDS 4-5)

Both standards were assessed and met in full. The organisational structure provides clear roles and procedures for managing, monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

SECURING AND PROMOTING WELFARE (STANDARDS 6-14)

All nine standards were assessed. Eight were met in full and one was mostly met. Through discussion with staff, foster carers, the panel chair and from attendance at a support group, there was a lot of evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service ensures that children, young people and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. The agency places a high emphasis on the provision of "safe care" practice and this is reinforced through supervision, training and support groups. There are management systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. The agency must also ensure that the NCSC is notified, without delay, of all other events as listed in Schedule 8, Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

RECRUITING, CHECKING, MANAGING, SUPPORTING AND TRAINING STAFF AND FOSTER CARERS (STANDARDS 15-23)

All nine standards were assessed and met in full. Records were inspected at the offices of the fostering service and staff were interviewed as part of the inspection process. There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. The fostering service operates a robust and thorough recruitment procedure.

There was evidence of a comprehensive and good quality training programme. The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. The Inspector heard from carers that they feel very well supported by the agency.

RECORDS (STANDARDS 24-25)

Both standards were assessed and met in full. From discussions with the registered providers and through viewing case records there was evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service maintains comprehensive and well organised records.

FITNESS OF PREMISES FOR USE AS A FOSTERING SERVICE (STANDARD 26)

This standard was assessed and met in full. The premises are well equipped and maintained with good quality furnishings and fittings. The premises are suitable for the purpose.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS (STANDARDS 27-29)

Both these standards were assessed and met in full. There are systems in place to deal with all accounting and financial arrangements. Foster carers commented that they always receive their payments promptly and at the agreed time.

FOSTERING PANELS (STANDARD 30)

This standard was assessed and met in full. The fostering panel have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions. The panel has a role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process and the Inspector was able to evidence this through discussion with the panel chair.

SHORT-TERM BREAKS (STANDARD 31)

Ryancare Fostering Service does not provide short-term placements within the meaning of the Fostering Services Regulation 37.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS CARERS (STANDARD 32)

This standard is not relevant to Ryancare Fostering Service.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

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 National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3	FS1	The written "Summary of Inspection Findings" from the previous inspection report must be removed from the fostering services Statement of Purpose.	31/05/04
2	43 Schedule 8	FS9	The registered providers must ensure compliance with Regulation 43, Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, and inform the National Care Standards Commission of all notifiable events, without delay.	30/04/04

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action

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

Number of Inspector days spent	6
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	8/12/03
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	20

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document that provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide. However, the Statement of Purpose contains the written "Summary of Inspection Findings" from the previous report. There is a statement on the front cover of all reports produced by the National Care Standards Commission that states the following. "This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior expressed permission of the National Care Standards Commission". It is a requirement that this extract is removed from the fostering services Statement of Purpose. The fostering service may wish to replace this with a reference to the inspection report and detailing how it may be accessed.

The Children and Young Persons Guide to the fostering service includes a summary of what the service sets out to do for children/young people, and is provided to children/young people as soon as they are fostered and to all foster carers. It contains information on how a child/young person can secure access to an independent advocate and how to complain.

As the agency only has a small number of children/young people fostered they are realistically able to personalise the guide for each child/young person. There was evidence to demonstrate that the guide had been produced in different formats to meet the needs of an individual child/young person. The Inspector was informed that the agency would even be able to produce an individual guide in an audio or video format.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The registered provider and the registered manager both have a professional qualification relevant to working with children, and extensive experience of working with children/young people and families. The registered manager is currently undertaking a qualification at NVQ level 4.

Through discussion with staff, foster carers and placing authorities and through observation during the inspection, there was evidence to demonstrate effective leadership within the agency. The agency team is small and staff report that they have positive, professional and supportive working relationships with the registered provider and registered manager respectively.

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
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An inspection of relevant staff files was made and the Inspector was able to evidence that the requirements set out in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 were being complied with.

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

The size of the organisational structure affords and provides clear roles, responsibilities and procedures for managing and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance. There was evidence to demonstrate clear lines of accountability between the registered provider, registered manager, staff and carers, which was well understood by all parties and avoided confusion and potential conflicts of role. There was evidence of sound financial procedures, which are reviewed on a regular basis. Good information is provided to purchasers of the service. Clear financial procedures and information is provided to foster carers in writing.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From discussion with the registered provider, registered manager, staff and through viewing documentation it was evident that the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently. The manager has a clear job description setting out his duties and responsibilities. The level of delegation and lines of accountability are clearly defined through the job description and supported by the management structure. There are clear arrangements in place to ensure the continued effective management of the service, in the absence of the manager.

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
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The Inspector visited a foster home as part of the inspection and also interviewed a number of foster carers. Foster carers are made aware and understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the National Care Standards Commission inspection process.

The home visited was warm, adequately furnished and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Within the home visited all the fostered children/ young people had their own bedroom. The accommodation arrangements reflected the child's/young person's assessed need for privacy and space.

Health and safety assessments are undertaken as part of the annual review and the Inspector was able to evidence this on foster carer files. Health and Safety issues are covered as part of the preparation training for foster carers and they are also provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. The Foster Carer Handbook includes a health and safety checklist.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Through discussion with staff, foster carers and the panel chair; from attendance at the support group; and through reading panel reports, there was a lot of evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service ensures that children/young people and their families are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. This principle is reinforced through policy and procedure, the Foster Carer Handbook, regular supervision and training. The fostering service ensures, through support given to foster carers by the supervising social worker and ongoing training, that each child/young person is encouraged to develop and maximise his/her potential and to lead as full a life as possible. Arrangements are made for foster carers to receive and resource information so that appropriate and informed care can be provided for children/young people which respects and preserves their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Through interviews with key staff, discussions with foster carers and inspection of files, the Inspector was able to track the process of referral and placement of children/young people. There is a very stringent process that takes place before a placement is considered; therefore the Inspector was informed that a number of referrals are not progressed because a match could not be achieved.

The manager ensures that comprehensive information is received from the placing authority and takes into account the child's/young person's care plan and written assessments of the child/young person and their family, prior to the identification of a foster carer. In this way matches are achieved by a degree of information sharing and involving all relevant professionals, the child and his/her family, potential carers, their families and other children in placement.

However, the Inspector heard and observed that frequently limited information is available at the point of referral. Foster carers commented that on how crucial it is to have adequate information. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is often difficult to get information from the Local Authorities, there was evidence on file to demonstrate that Ryancare Fostering Service have made contact with the respective local authority requesting the required information, in line with their responsibilities. The fostering service must continue to make efforts to obtain information at the outset of the placement and record this on file.

The agency have clear expectations in respect of Foster Placement Agreements and what is required from the foster carer, local authority and the agency themselves.

Where possible, a period of introduction is planned for the child/young person to visit the proposed foster carer. Through discussion with foster carers it was evident that they are aware that this should be enabled whenever possible. However, this is not always possible in the case of emergency placements.

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 places a high emphasis on the provision of "safe care". This is reinforced through supervision, training and support groups. The Inspector was able to evidence this through discussion with foster carers. All foster carers receive training in the recognition of abuse, how to respond to signs or indicators of abuse and caring for a child who has been abused. This was evidenced on foster carer's individual training profiles. The training aims to develop foster carer's awareness of all issues relating to the protection of each child/young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. This is reinforced through supervision, training and support groups. The Foster Carer Handbook contains clear information and guidance to foster carers in safe care practice. There are clear policies and procedures on anti-bullying; that corporal punishment is not acceptable; and if a foster child/young person is missing from home.

Whilst there are management systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. The agency must also ensure that the Commission is notified, without delay, of all

other events as listed in Schedule 8, Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. We refer to the incident where after-care support was provided by a foster carer without appropriate safeguards being taken, for example Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB). This was investigated by the placing authority, who was satisfied that the placement was a safe and appropriate one and continue to place young people with the foster carer. The agency took appropriate action to rectify this as soon as they became aware of the issue. However, the Commission was not notified of the incident in compliance with Schedule 8, Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. It is important that the Commission is informed of all notifiable events, without delay, as the Commission may also decide that it needs to undertake investigations to ensure compliance with the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services. The Inspector was satisfied that information is scrutinised on a regular basis by an independent childcare consultant. It is a requirement that the fostering service review the management system to ensure that the Commission are notified, without delay, of any events as listed in Schedule 8, Regulation 43.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%
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Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Through inspection of files and discussion with staff and foster carers, the Inspector was able to evidence ongoing work to encourage, maintain and develop family contacts and friendships for children/young people in foster care. This is particularly important where children may be placed a long way from home.

There was evidence of clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. It is an expectation that contact arrangements form part of the Foster Placement Agreement and care plan.

The Inspector was able to evidence that carers record the outcome of contact arrangements.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Inspector heard from foster carers that they are encouraged to seek out children's/young people's opinions and understand the importance of listening to the views of children/young people in their care. This was further evidenced in feedback questionnaires from foster carers and children/young people, who commented positively, when asked if "the fostering service ever asked for their opinions in respect of the service". Through policies and practice guidance there was evidence to demonstrate that 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. From information in feedback questionnaires it was evident that children/young people had been "told how to make a complaint". There is a "Children's Guide to Complaints" and the agency are planning to further develop this in formats suitable for different age groups and abilities of children/young people.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Through discussion and viewing written information contained in policies and foster carer practice guidance, there was evidence to demonstrate that Ryancare provides foster care services which help each child/young person to receive health care which meets his/her needs for physical, emotional and social development, and that children/young people are enabled to make informed decisions about health needs.

Where placement agreements received from the responsible authority did not contain a full description of the health needs of a child, there was written evidence on file to demonstrate that this information had been sought from the fostering service. The fostering service must ensure that they continue to request this information as required, and record this on file.

Foster carers are clear about their responsibilities in respect of registering a child/young person with a GP or dentist and taking the child to any health appointments when required. Foster carers receive training in health and hygiene and first aid.

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

From discussions with foster carers, case tracking, feedback from questionnaires, policies and good practice guidance there was a lot of information to demonstrate that the fostering service and foster carers give a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person. Foster carers were seen to promote an environment in which education and learning are valued. Where foster carers had experienced difficulty in obtaining an educational placement, the foster carer with support from the fostering service had made appropriate representation on behalf of the child/young person.

The foster placement agreement identifies the financial responsibility for all associated school costs. Foster carers are clear in respect of their role in school contact, for example parents' evenings, open days, discussions with teachers.

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 Inspector found good evidence in relation to preparing young people for adulthood and there was individualised planning. Young people preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living are consulted about their future and actively encouraged to be involved in decision-making and the development and implementation of the Pathway Plan.

During a visit to a foster carer's home, the Inspector was told how they are helping a young person in their care to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. A visit was taking place that evening by a social worker from the Leaving Care Team and a leaving care review was scheduled to take place. The foster carers and the young person had identified the practical skills and assistance he required to see him through this potentially difficult transition.

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?

3

Records were inspected at the office of the fostering service and staff were interviewed as part of the inspection process. The records were maintained to a good standard and files were well structured. There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. The fostering service operates a robust recruitment procedure.

All social work staff involved in assessment and approval of foster carers are qualified social workers, with relevant foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment. The fostering service has recently advertised for a supervising social worker to fill a vacant post.

From discussion and inspection of documents, files, policies and procedures, there was evidence to demonstrate that the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and that they are recruited, managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care.

Total number of staff of the agency:

4

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

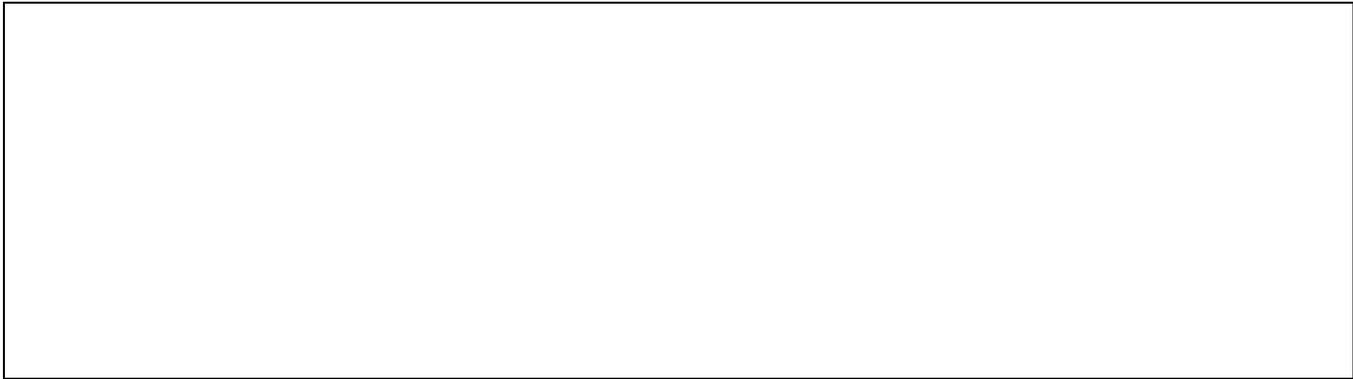
There is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability and this links with Standard 5.

There are designated administrative staff and clerical support services and the structure ensures that all staff receive appropriate levels of support to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. The Inspector discussed the systems in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed effectively.

Professional supervision and consultation are provided for social work staff by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. All other staff in the fostering service receive supervision in line with their roles and responsibilities.

There was evidence seen on foster carer files of a training portfolio and a training plan has been produced, which details on going training.

Ryancare Fostering has an Employee Handbook, which includes policies on grievance and disciplinary procedures, equal opportunities and health and safety.



Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence to demonstrate that currently the agency has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of children/young people for whom it aims to provide a service and is in line with the Statement of Purpose. The fostering service is very small but has plans to develop further. The fostering service is currently in the process of recruiting an additional supervising social worker. However, the registered provider and the registered manager are committed to ensuring that the same standards and level of service are maintained; and will not compromise “quality for quantity”. There is a clearly set out process for the assessment of foster carers. This is further supported by the standard of Form F assessments and the monitoring of the standard of the assessment process by the panel chair. The Inspector was informed that foster carers are recruited in accordance with the British Agencies for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) Guidance and the Competency Framework, which is used as part of the Form F assessment of foster carers.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Through discussion with agency staff and foster carers; viewing policies and procedures, documentation and files there was a lot of information to demonstrate that the fostering service is a fair and competent employer. They operate sound employment practices, in relation to both staff and foster carers. There is an Employee Handbook: a Foster Carer Handbook; and Health and Safety Policies. Foster carers commented positively on the level of support that they received from the supervising social worker and Ryancare Fostering service. “There is always someone on the end of the telephone to help”. There is an effective out of hour’s management and support service available to foster carers. Systems were in place for carer supervision, appraisal and support. There is a whistle blowing policy, which is well known to all staff and carers. The Inspector was able to check that the agency had public liability and indemnity insurance.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There was evidence of a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and ensure staff are kept up-to-date with professional and legal developments and changes in legislation or guidance that is relevant to their jobs.</p> <p>The effectiveness of all training is evaluated and training programmes are reviewed and updated as appropriate. The training programme links to, and is reflective of, the policies and procedures of the fostering service.</p> <p>The Inspector was shown a training pro-forma that records training undertaken and identifies/plans future training needs and programmes for foster carers and other agency staff. From this information an annual training plan is produced.</p> <p>All foster carers are required to attend a three-day "Choosing to Foster" training.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>From viewing staff records, policies and procedures and through discussion with both the manager and other staff it was evident that all staff that come into contact with foster carers and children/young people receive supervision. Supervision takes place on a regular basis, is planned in advance and a record is maintained of the content of the supervision. The Inspector found evidence of staff appraisals, which address training and development needs. All staff have written job descriptions and the policies and procedures of the organisation. Staff team meetings are held on a regular basis.</p>		

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**

Through discussions with foster carers and staff, and from viewing documentation, for example policies and procedures and foster carer files, it was very evident that the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

The Inspector heard from carers that they feel very well supported by the agency. "Always someone there and always ready to go the extra mile". "There is always someone at the end of the phone, 24 hours".

The agency operates an excellent ratio of supervising social worker to foster carers and they receive regular visits. This is reflected in foster carer comments about the support received. In questionnaires completed as part of the inspection all the carers who replied to questions about support, commented that they felt very well supported by the agency.

Foster carers are encouraged to attend the monthly support groups and it is reported that they are well attended. Carers viewed these groups as an important part of their support network.

The role of the supervising social worker is clear to both the worker and the carer. All foster carers are reviewed annually and reports are referred to the fostering panel. The agency operates an effective out of hour's system.

One placing authority completed a questionnaire and the Inspector was able to contact three other placing authorities by phone, as part of the inspection. In response to questions about how well the agency works with the placing authority, all four said that they felt that the agency worked well in partnership with them.

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**

A random sampling of foster carer agreements were inspected. Those sampled are clear and in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. All foster carers receive a copy of the organisation's "Foster Carer Handbook", which is very comprehensive and covers the details as required under Standard 22.5 This handbook is reviewed and regularly updated.

Each foster carer is regularly supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice to enable the provision of consistent, high quality care for a child/young person placed in his/her home. Unannounced visits are undertaken at least once a year. This was evidenced through documentation in foster carer files and through discussion with foster carers.

Information about complaints and representations is available to foster carers in the handbook. Records about allegations of abuse are maintained and monitored. There is a clear policy, which details the circumstances in which a foster carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

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 Inspector did not attend training for foster carers as part of the inspection. However, the Inspector was able to view the training programme for foster carers and see that important areas of fostering practice are being addressed. The induction training for foster carers is held over three consecutive weekends. All training is within a framework of equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practice and are organised to facilitate attendance. The provision of safe caring forms a high priority within Ryancare Fostering training programme. Each foster carer has an individual training portfolio and are actively encouraged and supported to undertake NVQ training, as appropriate. (See also Standard 19)

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From discussions with the manager and administrative staff, and through viewing case records, there was evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service maintains comprehensive and well organised records. There is a written policy on case recording, which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files. Children/young people and the placing authority have access to records held by the agency.

Ryancare Fostering is a registered data controller. All information is stored in a secure manner and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Foster carers receive training in how to record information and significant life events for child/young person. Through discussion with foster carers it was evident that they understood the need to encourage children/young people in their care to reflect on and understand his/her history, and to keep appropriate memorabilia.

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

Through discussion with staff, and viewing case files and policy/procedural guidance, the Inspector found evidence to demonstrate that the fostering service's administrative records contained all significant information relevant to the operation of the foster care service and as required by regulation. Records are maintained and constructed in such a way that it is easy to "track" events and the process of decision-making.

There is clear guidance for staff on record keeping, managing and accessing confidential information.

Separate records are kept for staff, employed and independent/sessional, foster carers, children/young people, complaints and allegations.

The information detailed below in respect of current weekly payments to foster parents reflects the payments for 2003-2004. The weekly payments are due to be increased from 1st April 2004, in line with inflation.

See also National Minimum Standard 9 and its corresponding requirement.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			12
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			13
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			12
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			2
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			2
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	240.00	Maximum £	319.00

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used as offices by the fostering provider are suitable for the purpose. The premises are well equipped and maintained with good quality furnishings and fittings. There is a main office/reception and an additional office, which is used by the registered provider but can be utilised for other purposes such as meetings, supervision, interviews etc. The premises and its contents are adequately insured. The office administrator maintains fire records and there is a clear health and safety policy. The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room; there is an intercom entry system and an appropriate alarmed security system.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The organisation has a designated member of administrative staff who has financial responsibilities. There are systems in place to deal with all accounting and financial arrangements. The organisation has a business and financial plan, which is open to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission.

The Inspector was satisfied that the agency is financially viable and has sufficient resources to fulfil its obligations.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a written set of principles and standards describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by staff at all levels.

The agency's accounts are maintained and properly audited by a registered accountant.

A clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses is available on request to purchasers and others with a legitimate interest.

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

Through documentation viewed and discussion with foster carers there was evidence to demonstrate that each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child/young person placed with him/her. Foster carers commented that they always received their payments promptly and at the agreed time. They receive clear information about allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child/young person is placed. The agency has a written policy on fostering allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

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?	3
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Previous Panel minutes were read and the panel chair was interviewed by telephone as part of the inspection. There was no panel meeting held during the course of the inspection, therefore the Inspector was not able to observe a panel meeting.

A new Chair has been appointed to the fostering panel following the death of the previous chair.

The fostering panel have clear written policies and procedures about the handling of their functions.

Detailed consideration is given to the Form F assessment, acknowledging strengths and identifying areas in need of development.

There is a presentation by the assessing social worker and then the prospective foster carers attend the panel. This enhances the decision making process as panel members are able to question the prospective foster carers on points of clarification and affords the foster carers an opportunity to also ask questions.

Panel members have expertise in education, child health and child protection. There is one panel member who was previously a young person in foster care. The panel has access to medical expertise as required.

The panel also has a role in providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. They ensure that there is a consistency of approach and standard of assessment across the service and that it is completed in a thorough and rigorous way.

Foster carer annual reviews are also brought to the panel.

Through discussion with the panel chair and from viewing the written policies and procedures, the Inspector was satisfied that Ryancare 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/young people in foster care.

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?	9
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Ryancare Fostering Service does not provide short-term placements within the meaning of the Fostering Services Regulation 37.

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?
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This standard is not relevant to Ryancare Fostering service.	9
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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 26th January 2004 of Ryancare Fostering Service and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The registered provider has challenged some aspects of the report and some amendments have been made. The provider's comments are attached in full with the report.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ 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 _____ of _____ 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.