



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Ryancare Fostering Ltd

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

Lead Inspector
Ms Gwen Lording

Announced Inspection
17 October – 25th November 2005 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

Name of service	Ryancare Fostering Ltd
Address	Oak House 5A Wellington Road Wanstead London E11 2AN
Telephone number	020 8989 4970
Fax number	020 8989 0854
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Mr Adrian Paul Ryan
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Jonathan Francis James Drury
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 12th January 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Ryancare Fostering Limited is an Independent Fostering Agency operating from an office based at Wanstead in the London Borough of Redbridge, and has been operational since 2002.

The agency provides a range of services, 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.

The agency operates with a small but experienced team of staff who have a broad range of experiences.

Ryancare Fostering places a strong emphasis on support, training and supervision with the aim of providing a high and consistent standard of care to the children and young people placed in their care.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection took place over six days between 17th October and 25th November 2005. This included visits to the office itself, talking to the registered provider; the registered manager; meeting with agency staff and examining records, observation of the fostering panel, attendance at a foster carers support group and visiting the homes of foster carers to meet with them and the young people in placement.

Questionnaires were sent out to eleven placing authorities, seventeen young people and eleven foster carers. Last year an excellent response was received in relation to the questionnaires however, the response rate this year was less. Of those individuals who responded, all commented positively about the care and support provided by the agency.

An allegation was made by one young person, against a foster carer, which was subject to an investigation under child protection procedures. The investigation has now been concluded and the outcome is that there appears to be no validity to the allegations and the investigation is therefore ended. The Commission for Social Care Inspection is satisfied that the agency had dealt with this satisfactorily.

The Inspector would like to thank the foster carers and young people who welcomed the Inspector into their homes, those who completed the questionnaires and attended the support group. The Inspector also wishes to extend her thanks to the agency, its staff, the panel chair and panel members for their openness, co-operation and hospitality.

What the service does well:

The main strengths of the agency is the excellent level of support it provides to its foster carers and the high focus that the agency places on the safe care and welfare of children and young people.

Staff and foster carers said that they feel valued and there is a mutual level of respect from all people involved in the work of this fostering service.

The questionnaires sent out asked young people, 'What's the best thing about fostering for you':

"We completely, without a doubt understand each other"

" I get asked my opinions about stuff"

" I've never been healthier"

" Good work !!!"

"I want to stay here"

"My foster dad gives me the help I need"

Foster carers questionnaires asked, 'What's the best thing about the agency':

" 24 hour support. Carers are speaking to someone who understands their situation"

"We feel part of the agency"

"Good training and support"

" I know if needed, someone will come out to me, as they have done at 1.30 am"

"They not only support me, but the children know if they can't speak to me, Ryancare are there for them too".

"They will fight (if needed) at reviews to make sure that the child's voice is heard"

"How they recruit their foster carers"

"There is always someone to talk to, about anything, night or day"

"Whoever answers the phone is happy to talk to you. Always get a welcome when I go to the office or training courses"

What has improved since the last inspection?

Following consultation with foster carers about the process, the monthly support groups are more structured. The venue for support groups and foster panel meetings has changed and this has provided more spacious and comfortable surroundings.

The staffing level of Supervising Social Workers has increased slightly.

The agency has exceeded seven of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The areas the agency improved on further where around meeting the educational needs of each child/ young person and developing skills and competence for adult living; and working with and supporting foster carers.

What they could do better:

There are no requirements from this inspection. The agency is committed to work with the Commission in order to improve and further raise standards.

Foster carers questionnaires asked, 'What's the worst thing about the agency':

" We haven't got any worse things so far"

"Can't think of any"

"None"

"So many meetings/ courses to take"

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 12

The agency and its foster carers are proactive in promoting children's/ young person's health and any specialist needs, by providing foster care services which help each child/ young person to receive health care which meets his/ her individual needs.

EVIDENCE:

Through discussion with staff and written information contained in policies and good practice guidance, there was evidence to show 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 their health needs.

Foster carers were clear about their responsibilities in respect of registering a child/ young person with a GP or dentist and taking the child/ young person to any health appointments when required, and this was evidenced through practice.

There are a number of children/ young people with specialist healthcare needs and there was evidence to show that foster carers were meeting their needs and that foster carers and the agency advocated effectively on the children's/ young person's behalf.

Where full information had not been received from the placing authority, there were systems in place for this information to be sought.

Comments on children's questionnaires around help with healthy lifestyles included: "I've never been healthier"... "The whole balanced diet"... "Vegetables on every meal".

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 3, 6, 8, 9,15 & 30

The agency has robust recruitment practices, which ensure that children and young people are fully safeguarded. Through a process of information sharing and the involvement of all relevant professionals and individuals, the agency is able to offer children and young people the most suitable match they are able to provide.

EVIDENCE:

The Inspector observed the fostering panel as part of this inspection. No prospective foster carers were being presented to the panel for approval on this occasion however, the Inspector observed a panel meeting where potential foster carers were presented at a previous inspection. The fostering panel has been shown in previous inspections to meet all regulatory and good practice requirements.

At this panel a number of annual reviews of approval were undertaken and discussions took place around permanency matching, de-registrations and health monitoring of foster carers. The Inspector observed robust discussion of issues and appropriate facilitation by the panel chair. Several panel members have started their second consecutive term of office for the panel. The agency has clear plans for managing the process of succession to ensure that the expertise of the panel is maintained whilst developing new panel members. Current panel members have expertise in education, child health, child

protection and medical expertise. Consideration is being given to appointing a representative from the Asian community to reflect the diversity of the foster carers and children/ young people, and a representative with legal experience.

No new staff have been recruited to the agency since the last inspection. All records inspected at the previous inspection were being maintained to a good standard. There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children/ young people and the fostering service operates a robust recruitment procedure. The agency was able to evidence that the people who work in or for the service are recruited, managed, trained and supported as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children/ young people in foster care.

As part of the inspection the Inspector visited a number of foster carer homes. Foster carers are made aware and understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the inspection process.

All of the homes visited were warm, adequately furnished and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Within the homes visited, all the fostered children/ young people had their own bedrooms. 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 this was evidenced at panel meetings and on foster carer files. Health and Safety issues are covered as part of the preparation training for foster carers; written guidelines are provided on health and safety responsibilities and health and safety issues are addressed during each visit to a foster care home by the Supervising Social Worker (SSW).

Through discussions with key staff, foster carers and inspection of files, the Inspector was able to effectively track the process of referral and placement of children/ young people. The agency 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. Effective matching is promoted by means of information sharing and the involvement of all relevant professionals and individuals.

The agency have clear expectations in respect of Foster Placement Agreements and what is required from the foster carer and local authority. Where relevant information has not been forthcoming from local authorities, the agency have been pro-active in requesting this required information, in line with their responsibilities.

Where possible, a period of introduction is planned for the child/ young person to visit the proposed foster carer. This was evidenced through discussion with foster carers individually, regarding the moving in process, and at a support group where foster carers discussed ways of helping children/ young people settle in. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is not always possible in the case

of emergency placements, it is an expectation that this would occur where the time frame allowed.

All foster carers receive training in the recognition of abuse, how to respond to signs or indicators of abuse and caring for a child/ young person who has been abused. This was evidenced through discussion with foster carers and agency staff; training programmes and on foster carer's individual files. The training aims to develop foster carers' awareness and understanding of all issues relating to the protection of each child/ young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. The agency places a high emphasis on "safe care" practice and this is consistently and constantly reinforced through supervision, training and at support groups. The Foster Care Handbook contains clear information and guidance to foster carers in safe care practice. In discussion with foster carers it was evident that they were able to recognise symptoms of abuse and were clear about what to do with the information. There are clear policies and procedures on anti-bullying; that corporal punishment and restraint are not acceptable; and if a foster child/ young person is missing from home. Foster carers reported that the agency staff were very responsive and actively involved in situations where children/ young people were missing from home.

Management systems were 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 has consistently kept the Commission informed of all issues relating to child protection and their outcome since the last inspection and has liaised effectively with local authorities. An allegation was made by one young person, against a foster carer, which was subject to an investigation under child protection procedures. The investigation has now been concluded and the outcome is that there appears to be no validity to the allegations and the investigation is therefore ended. The Commission is satisfied that the agency has dealt with this satisfactorily.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 7, 13

The agency works with the child/ young person, foster carers, local education authority and placing authority to promote the best educational outcomes for the child/ young person.

Issues of diversity and the promotion of equal opportunities for children/ young people, and their families are discussed and addressed through training and policy/ procedure to ensure that these issues are promoted in practice throughout the fostering service.

The agency does not provide short-term breaks.

EVIDENCE:

Through discussion with agency staff and foster carers; attendance at the fostering panel and 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, promote equality and recognise address her/his needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture and sexuality. This principle is consistently reinforced through policy and procedure, the "Foster Care Handbook", regular supervision and training.

As part of the matching process careful consideration is given to issues such as race, culture, religion, and linguistic background of the carers, as well as the ability to respond to the children's/ young person's other care needs such as a history of abuse, and experience of working with challenging teenagers. Where required, arrangements are made for foster carers to receive and resource information so that appropriate and informed care can be provided. One young

person had expressed a wish to be christened; she was supported by her foster carer who made all the appropriate arrangements for her to achieve this personal goal.

From discussions with staff, foster carers, case tracking, feedback questionnaires, policies and good practice guidance there was a lot of information to demonstrate that the fostering service as an agency, and foster carers individually, give a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child/ young person. Foster carers were seen to promote an environment in which education and learning is promoted and valued. Feedback from foster carers indicated that there was pro-active involvement from the agency in matters such as school attendance and they had valued the input and support of the agency at Personal Education Planning meetings and liaison with local educational authorities. The agency makes every effort to ensure that the children's/ young person's care package meshes with the individual's educational package. The Inspector found evidence on files of requests to responsible placing authorities for information in respect of addressing the need for a personal education plan. There is a standing item on the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) Visit Form, which prompts SSW to discuss educational needs and attainments. Foster carers are clear in respect of their role in school contact, for example parent's evenings, open days, discussions with teachers. The Inspector was advised that foster carers attended school in the parental role however; this would be shared with the birth parent(s) according to levels of contact.

The foster placement agreement identifies the financial responsibility for all associated school costs.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 10 & 11

The agency and its foster carers work in partnership with children/ young people, their families and others significant to the child/ young person, to ensure that they are consulted about all aspects of their lives, according to their age and understanding.

Contact arrangements are clearly known and followed so that each child/ young person is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as appropriate.

EVIDENCE:

There was evidence of clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child/ young person 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. Where this information is not included, then a written request is sent to the placing authority for this information to be sought. Children and young people had a variety of contact arrangements and foster carers were clear as to their roles in support of these. The Inspector was able to evidence that foster carers record the outcome of all contact arrangements in their diaries. Financial and practical support is provided to the foster carer for transport or other costs involved in ensuring that contact visits take place.

The fostering service actively encourages each child/ young person in foster care to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as appropriate to their care plans and foster placement agreement. The Inspector was encouraged to see that the agency continues, as in previous inspections, to

place an importance on contact when children/ young people are placed a long way from home or where difficulties may arise from contact arrangements.

From discussion with staff and foster carers it was evident that foster carers are encouraged to seek out children's/ young people's opinions and understand the importance of listening to the views of those children/ young people placed in their care. This was further evidenced by comments made in feedback questionnaires from foster carers and young people. Comments included: **"How my work placement is going".... "What to eat on a particular day"..... "My opinions on Stuff".**

There is a standing item on the SSW Visit Form that acts as a prompt for SSW to promote consultation with children/ young people on a regular basis to ensure that their opinions and views are sought on all matters affecting them, including day to day matters.

From information in feedback questionnaires it was evident that children/ young people knew how to make a complaint about how they are being looked after, if they needed to. The agency's Children/ Young Persons Guide contains information about how to complain and is produced in two formats to provide this information that is age/ability appropriate.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standard 14 & 29

Foster carers help to develop the skills and competences of young people and begin to prepare them for adulthood.

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, the policy and process ensure that payments are made promptly and at the agreed time.

EVIDENCE:

From discussion with agency staff and foster carers there was a lot of evidence in relation to positive and inclusive preparation of young people for adulthood. Young people preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living are consulted about their future and actively involved and encouraged to be involved in decision-making and the development and implementation of the Pathway Plan. The agency ensures that young people share life skills training with the experiences of adults, through the joint attendance of foster carers and young people on training in for example, Food & Hygiene and First Aid. During a visit to a foster carer the Inspector heard about how she is helping a young person in her care to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

From documentation seen and discussion with foster carers there was evidence to show that each foster care 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 with them. One foster carer had received additional finance from the agency to cover the cost of resources required by a young person with a high level of personal care needs.

The agency has a written policy on fostering allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 4, 5, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 & 26

The fostering service has a clear strategy in place for working with and supporting carers, which provides a support network that enables foster carers to develop their skills.

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff. Children/ young people and foster carers benefit from a well-organised, consistent and reliable service that meets the needs of the children/ young people for whom it provides a service.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service 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 agency's Statement of Purpose.

There is a clearly set out process for the assessment of foster carers and this is further supported by a consistently high standard of Form F assessments and the monitoring of this standard by the panel chair.

Foster carers are recruited in line with the British Agencies for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) Guidance and the Competency Framework in the assessment of qualities, competencies and aptitudes.

From discussions with foster carers, feedback received from questionnaires and comments made in the support group it was very evident that foster carers felt very well supported by the agency; that staff were responsive; their opinions were listened to and valued. Foster carers commented positively on the level of support they received from their supervising social workers and the fostering service as a whole. The agency operates a highly effective and responsive out of hours support system.

Foster carers are encouraged to attend the monthly support groups and they are generally well attended. Foster carers viewed these groups as an important part of their support network. All foster carers are reviewed annually and reports are prepared and presented to the Fostering Panel. The agency has recently moved the venue where support groups are held and this has provided larger and more suitable surroundings. Comments in feedback from foster care questionnaires included:

"24 hour support. Carers are speaking to someone who understands their situation"..... "We feel part of the agency"..... "I know if needed someone will come out to me, as they have done at 1.30am".

From discussion with staff and through examination of case records and policy/ procedural guidance it showed that the fostering service maintains comprehensive and well organised records for each child/ young person. There is a written policy on case recording, which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files. Foster carers are conversant with the policy on confidentiality and the importance of storing information in a secure manner. Foster carers receive training and ongoing support in how to record information and significant life events for the child/ young person, through encouraging children/ young people to reflect on and understand his/ her history and keep appropriate memorabilia.

The records were inspected and as in previous inspections are maintained to a very high standard, so that the process of "tracking events" and decision-

making is made easy. Records examined at this inspection contained all significant information relevant to the operation of the fostering service and as required by regulation. There is an effective system for monitoring the quality and adequacy of records and to ensure legibility all records are typed and countersigned by the manager. There is a reliable method of diarising/ bring forward, to ensure records are maintained and up to date, for example references and checks.

The records of complaints and allegations were examined and were clearly recorded with full details of investigation, conclusion reached and action taken. A separate record is maintained centrally.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	4
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	4
29	3

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

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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