



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Safehouses Ltd

Pippa`s End

Wood Farm, Burlings Lane

Knockholt

Sevenoaks

Kent

TN14 7PF

23rd- 26th August 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

Safehouses Ltd

Tel No

01959 534000

Address

Pippa`s End, Wood Farm, Burlings Lane, Knockholt,
Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 7PF

Fax No

01959 532400

Email Address

kent@safehouses.org

Registered Number of IFA

H060000605

Name of Registered Provider

Safehouses Ltd

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Catherine Dianne Moore

Date of first registration

21st November 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

21st November 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

02.04.03

Date of Inspection Visit		23 rd , 24 th , 25 th & 26 th August 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Alex Turner	099984
Name of Inspector	2	NA	
Name of Inspector	3	NA	
Name of Inspector	4	NA	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		NA	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		NA	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Catherine Moore	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Safehouses 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 CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Safehouses (Kent) is a branch of an independent foster care agency with foster carers providing placements in Kent and Essex. Safehouses offer a comprehensive support system to foster carers, including access to specialists in education, an out of hours support system and respite care. Safehouses provides care on a short and medium to long-term basis for children of all ages, including babies, siblings groups and adolescents. They also have carers who can accommodate mother and baby placements. Safehouses encourage and have enabled young people leaving care to use the resources of the fostering service as a conduit to post 'being looked after' advice, guidance and support.

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.)

The inspection was announced and conducted over four consecutive days with an additional visit to observe the fostering panel. Previous requirements and recommendations from the last inspection report had been incorporated into practice. In total thirty standards have been assessed. Twenty-four standards have been rated as met, three standards have been rated as almost met and three have been rated with standard exceeded.

Statement of Purpose - Standard 1

Standard met.

The Statement of Purpose and the Childrens Guide provides the information required by this standard. A recommendation has been made regarding the format of the childrens guide.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service - Standards 2 & 3

Both standards were met.

The qualifications, experience and achievements of senior personnel working within the agency relate to their operational functions and support their fitness to carry on a fostering service.

Management of the fostering service - Standards 4 & 5

Both standards were met.

The fostering service has been managed with energy and diligence by people who are competent and committed to do so. Fostering practice is closely monitored; there has been ongoing quality assurance.

Securing and promoting welfare Standards 6 to 14

Seven standards were met / One standard had been exceeded

The agency operates in a manner that protects and promotes childrens & young peoples welfare. Safehouses have demonstrated a firm commitment to providing good quality educational support for looked after children and young people. Safehouses support for looked after young people leaving care and moving onto greater independence exceeds Minimum Standards. A recommendation relating to young peoples' health care records has been made.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers - Standards 15 to 23

Six standards were met / One standard had been exceeded

The recruitment procedures are in line with this standard. Foster carers commended Safehouses for the support that had been provided. Safehouses has demonstrated commitment to ensuring all staff and carers have opportunities for training and professional development. Two requirements have been made in relation to personnel records and foster

care agreements.

Records - Standards 24 & 25

Both standards were met

Childrens and foster carers files were comprehensive and well organised. Other administrative records were also kept inline with these standards. Information retrieval was both quick and efficient.

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service - Standard 26

The standard had been exceeded

The premises of the fostering service met all the criteria of the standard and exceed them in some respects for instance in the facilities provided by Safehouses in Essex which offer a venue for meetings, training, and contact visits.

Financial requirements - Standards 27 to 29

All three of the standards assessed were met.

The agencies financial systems and procedures have been effective in maintaining and developing the ongoing operation of the agency.

Fostering panels - Standard 30

Standard met

The fostering panel has been constituted and has exercised its functions in line with the standard and regulatory requirements.

Short-term breaks - Standard 31

Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

Family and friends as carers - Standard 32

Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

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:

Not applicable.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Alex Turner	Signature	 06/09/04
Second Inspector	NA	Signature	NA
Regulation Manager	Linda Ribbands	Signature	
Date	9.9.04		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	20 & 22	FS15	The Registered Person shall ensure that all the elements of schedule 1 & 2(2) (Foster Service Regulations 2002) are met in respect of all persons working for the Fostering Service including sessional workers and consultants.	20.10.04
2	29	FS16	The Registered Person shall ensure the interval between a foster carers review is not more than one year.	06.09.04
3	28	FS22	The Registered Person shall enter into an agreement with approved foster carers that incorporate the points set out in schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.	20.10.04

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

1	FS1	The Registered Person should work towards producing the childrens guide in different formats aiming to ensure that when a child or young person is given a copy of the guide it is appropriate to their particular circumstances, for example their age or reading ability.
2	FS5	The Registered Person should make arrangements aiming to ensure that any foster parent or prospective foster parent of the fostering service, and any child placed with a foster parent by the fostering service and the parent of any such child is aware that a regulation 42 report is produced and will be made available to them on request.
3	FS12	The Registered Person should review the manner in which health care information is recorded by Safehouses and foster carers provided by Safehouses aiming to have an up to date record of a child / young persons health care status which at the end of their placement can move with them.
4	FS13	The registered manager should in relation to placements in Kent, develop information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school
5	FS19	The Registered Person should clearly evidence that all new staff are given induction training that commences within 7 days of starting their employment and that is completed within 10 weeks.
6	FS22	The Registered person should in producing the Foster Care Agreement for a foster carer, in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, ensure that the agreement contains the information they need to know, in a comprehensible style, to carry out their functions as a foster carer effectively.

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

PART B

INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	13/07/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	32

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

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 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?

3

Safehouses has published a Statement of Purpose that provides clear and where necessary detailed information that describes the aims, objectives, facilities and services provided. A childrens guide has also been published. At the foster homes the inspector visited, young people confirmed they had received a copy of the guide. Comments made by foster carers indicate that for young children the current format of the childrens guide may not be an effective medium to convey the information within. This may also be the case for children who may have problems reading (including children who have not been taught to read English). The recommendation was made to look into publishing the childrens guide in additional formats taking into account these issues.

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 Manager has the experience and qualifications required to meet this standard. The majority of standards inspected have been met thus indicating that the service has been organised, managed and staffed in a manner that has enabled the delivery of good quality fostering.

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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Records demonstrate that the checks specified in this standard have been completed and that the outcomes have been satisfactory.

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 manager and staff of the fostering service were clear about their own and each other's roles. All staff members spoken to were well informed about the affairs of the fostering service indicating good communication between them. Clear lines of accountability have been established. Financial procedures are monitored by the company secretary with input from the group office manager (administrative team) leaving the registered manager to focus on social work / childcare practice. Records demonstrated that information regarding charges for services is provided to purchasers of services. The Fostering Service Regulations require registered managers to monitor specific matters with regard to the activities of the service and report on their findings. The first report relating to this exercise has recently been completed and was made available to the inspector. The report summarises relevant issues and details action for improvement. The manager's attention was drawn to whom these reports should be made available to. The recommendation was made to keep in mind the intended audience of the report and how best to inform these people that such a report is produced and is available to them on request. The inspector suggested including in the reports the number of children for whom there is no placement agreement and the action being taken to address this shortfall.

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

1

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.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The manager has a clear job description setting out duties and responsibilities and does not hold a similar position in another organisation. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, have been defined. Arrangements are in place to have a specific person in charge when the manager is absent.

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

The inspector visited four foster homes as part of the inspection process. In all of the homes visited there was evidence of building / redecoration works underway or nearing completion. In one home the kitchen had been gutted and other unfinished works were evident (the foster carer explained that her brother lived next door and so was able to use his kitchen facilities prior to getting their own kitchen refitted). In another home the inspector was informed that upstairs rooms had been plastered that day, were still drying and hence these were not viewed. The inspector discussed with the manager and one of the directors the nature of these works. They asserted that the works were being managed safely and competently, a view informed by the contact and supervision of foster carers by the supervising social workers. Children do not share bedrooms unless specifically agreed on by all those concerned and that these reasons are child centered as opposed for example to practical or financial reasons. Documentation demonstrated that foster carer's preparation and training cover health and safety issues and that carer's are provided with written health and safety guidelines. Where foster carers provide transport the fostering service carries out checks, for instance of insurance documents and MOT certificates. These checks and other health and safety checks of the foster carers home are carried out at the initial assessment and approval stage and then normally repeated as and when there are changes in circumstance or at the foster carers annual review.

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

Matching considerations that have been documented and taken into account include gender, religion, ethnic origin, language and culture. Arrangements have been made to help meet childrens / young peoples needs in this area for example a young person has been supported to purchase and prepare specific foods; foster carers have found out where a young person could go to mosque and supported them to do so. Pre inspection questionnaires completed by fostered children confirm that their foster carers give them encouragement and provide opportunities to develop and pursue interests and hobbies. The training syllabus for foster carers covers the topics set out in this standard.

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
Records demonstrate that information regarding the prospective placement is gathered and then cross-referenced with the experience and competencies of foster carers with vacancies and whose approval status would allow them to accept the placement. In conversation with foster carers and supervising social workers it has been ascertained that discussion takes place with the foster carers and the supervising social worker regarding the referral and a collaborative decision is made whether to put the foster carers forward as a suitable match. There was evidence on record that if foster carers proven experience and competencies did not match in the main the identified needs of the child / young person being referred then they would not be put forward as suitable. Transcultural placements were included in those made to the foster homes visited. What made foster carers a suitable match for such a placement was evidenced (though not in one case using the mechanisms Safehouses has in place to do so). Foster carers confirmed that planned placements have included a process of introductions and trial visits for the child / young people who has been referred.		

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?	3
Training for foster carers incorporates the topics identified in this standard. In the foster carers files inspected each contained a copy of the families safe care policy. The policies were specific to the foster home and were updated when a new placement was made. The written information / guidance provided to foster carers by Safehouses incorporates the topics set out in this standard including for example procedures relating to missing children and bullying. In conversation with young people and foster carers it was conveyed to the inspector that in their experience incidences of bullying had been recognised as such and effectively dealt with. The manner in which information about allegations, abuse or neglect is processed is in line with the standard.		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers handbook provides guidance relating to promoting contact and supporting children / young people in this area. Information regarding contact arrangements is ascertained at the referral stage and is one of the factors taken into account in the matching process. In the files inspected it was evident that supervising social workers of Safehouses make a significant contribution to ensuring the arrangements regarding contact are clear and conveyed to those whom need to know. Foster carers and children / young people have spoken about a variety of ways in which contact has been made possible. This included email, facilitating visits and days out, telephone calls, and the provision of suitable facilities and supervision for contact visits to take place. The outcomes and observations made in relation to contact visits have been recorded and fed back to placing social workers by amongst other means the statutory review process.

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

Comments made by young people indicate that Safehouses have achieved a degree of success in ensuring that foster carers understand the importance of listening to children / young people and are able to do so effectively and respond appropriately. Young people have confirmed they are often asked for their views and that these are taken into account. Example of consultation included what school to go to, contacts arranged, nighttime routines, activities arranged and decoration of bedrooms. Information about how to make known any concerns or complaints is included in the childrens guide.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The agency is well informed about health services local to the areas where they have foster carers. These matters are included in the factors taken into account in the matching process. Foster carers role in promoting health is clearly set out in the foster carers handbook. In the files inspected information regarding childrens health was limited and varied depending to some extent on the quality of information provided by the local authority making the placement. It was confirmed that each child / young person was registered with a doctor and a dentist near to their foster home. The way in which health records are maintained was discussed. Recommendation was made to review the manner in which health care information is recorded aiming to have an up to date account of a child / young persons health care status which at the end of their placement can move with them. First aid training is provided for staff and foster carers.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Safehouses work collaboratively with the National Teaching and Advisory Service (NT & AS) to address the learning and educational needs of children / young people placed with foster carers approved by Safehouses living in Essex (the service does not operate in Kent). The service provided is exemplary in terms of the contribution made to assessing, planning, delivering and reviewing the educational component of children / young peoples care. Safehouses are commended for this level of demonstrable commitment to the education of children / young people in foster care. Efforts to ensure that children in foster care attend regular schools local to their foster homes have on the whole been successful. To support foster carers in the process of securing a suitable school place for a fostered child / young person in Kent Safehouses have developed a resource guide for foster carers. The guide covers accessing school places that follow practice guidelines published by the Local Education Authority. Information is collated and fed back by the NT & AS to Safehouses regarding the number of exclusions and the educational attainment of children and young people in their foster care services in Essex. The recommendation was made to develop information systems to demonstrate these indicators for children / young people placed in Kent.

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?**

4

Safehouses have a designated social worker in the team to assist young people and their carers in planning and preparing for independence. Records demonstrate that this area of fostering practice is included in the assessment and post approval training of foster carers. Files inspected evidenced support that had been planned and coordinated. Young people spoken to during the course of this inspection confirmed that they had been consulted with and involved in the decisions made regarding their future. Records indicated that this area was covered in the formal supervision of foster carers and that action plans were developed and followed through. Safehouses have a policy of encouraging young people to preserve the relationships they have made with foster carers when they move on and if desirable to use Safehouses as a conduit to post 'being looked after' advice and support. This extended provision of services is provided voluntarily by Safehouses and merits commendation.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has established recruitment procedures. The procedures include the completion of an application form and if short-listed a formal interview; follow up checks on references are carried out and an application made for a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure at the enhanced level. Based upon personal files inspected social workers employed by the agency are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake their respective functions. The recruitment records relating to part time and sessional staff did not meet regulatory requirements in their entirety and a requirement has been made to address this shortfall.

Total number of staff of the agency:

16

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 – 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

It was evident from speaking with staff of the fostering service that there are clear lines of accountability. Staff members were knowledgeable about their own role and the role of their colleagues. Staff said they enjoyed working with the fostering service and that they were managed well and supported in their work. Assessments, reviews and approvals of carers have been thorough however there was evidence that annual reviews have not always been completed within a twelve-month period as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The registered manager provides professional supervision and consultation for social work staff. Training opportunities are provided for staff and foster carers with training profiles maintained for each. Administrative support is efficient and in tune with the needs of the service. The service has access to medical and educational advice.

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
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Feedback from placing authorities and foster carers indicates that the staffing of the fostering service has been in line with meeting the needs of children placed and effective in terms of fulfilling its everyday business functions. Staff turnover has been low. The manager and the director explained how the recruitment of staff and foster carers takes into account and aims to reflect the diversity of the areas in which the fostering service operates and the backgrounds and needs of children / young people being referred. The fostering service's assessment of prospective foster carers adheres to the criteria of this standard.

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
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Staff and foster carers were unanimous in their praise of Safehouses in terms of employment practices and support. Foster carers spoken to were emphatic that support from the fostering service was always there whenever it was needed (including 'out of hours'). There are established systems that have been evidenced in practice for the supervision, support and annual review of foster carers. Foster carers are issued with a handbook containing amongst other information, details regarding health and safety and what is expected of them in relation to these matters. It was confirmed that there is a public liability and professional indemnity insurance for staff and carers.

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
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A staff induction pack has been put together by Safehouses. The pack contains essential information that serves to inform new member of staff of key principles, procedures and practices relating to their employment. The induction procedures were discussed and it was clear that time is spent ensuring that new staff are supported and guided with respect to familiarising themselves to their roles and the day-to-day operation of the service. There is however no agreed timescale in which the induction is completed and no discernable indicator as to when the process has ended. The recommendation is made to address this issue and take into account the timescales set by this standard. The training needs of staff have been identified formally in the supervision and appraisal process. Staff confirmed that opportunities have been provided and that they have been encouraged to address their professional development needs. Joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers has been held on six occasions between January and July 2004.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Staff spoken to knew whom they were accountable to. Staff were complimentary about the support they received; this included formal systems of support via line management and supervision and more informal support for instance ad hoc advice and consultancy from colleagues. Job descriptions have been developed clearly detailing what is expected in terms of the capacity in which staff are employed. All staff members receive management supervision; a record is kept of the content of the supervision and of progress made. Supervision sessions have been regular and planned in advance. A system of staff appraisal is in operation. Regular staff meetings are held; it was confirmed that each member of staff has the opportunity to attend and contribute to these meetings.

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?****4**

There is a written strategy for working with and supporting foster carers. This is detailed in the fosters carers handbook and is included in the fostering service's written policies and procedures. In discussion with foster carers and judging by the written comments received from foster carers and placing authorities it is evident that these strategies have been put into practice with good effect. Foster carers spoke about individual workers and the agency as a whole with positive regard and described incidences where they considered the support received had been commendable. Foster carers and supervising social workers were knowledgeable about their own and each others roles. Annual review reports relating to foster carers are to a high standard. These are routinely presented to the fostering panel and contain detail and comment on the experience and training that has been gained by the foster carer(s) over the proceeding year. There was evidence on file to demonstrate supervising social workers have been tenacious in their commitment to establish clear channels of communication between themselves and looked after childrens placing social workers.

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?****2**

Before taking any placements the Fostering Service and Foster Carers are obliged to enter into an agreement (The Foster Care Agreement) that sets out what is to be expected from the fostering service, the foster carers and placing authorities. Safehouses are in the process of updating their 'contract of engagement' with foster carers to bring practice in line with current regulatory requirements. Fosters carers are provided with a handbook and a policy and procedures manual. The supervision of foster carers is in line with the criteria of this standard.

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

Pre-approval and induction training for each carer has been organised. There is on-going provision of training for foster carers. Safehouses have considered and are looking at ways to ensure foster carers attend a minimum of six training sessions a year. Safehouses have varied training venues to cater for practical difficulties that foster carers have identified in attending training. Foster carers reported that there have been occasions when the 'trainer' has gone to the foster carers home to overcome such difficulties. Records sampled showed varying levels of attendance by foster carers with a disappointing amount of training sessions having been requested, subsequently arranged and then not attended by those whom had identified the need. Examples of topics covered in the training programme include safe care practices, child protection, supervising contact and basic first aid. In addition to the core training programme Foster carers have also been supported to attain relevant National Vocational Qualifications. Annual Reviews considered at panel during this inspection included an appraisal of foster carers training and development needs. There are systems to evaluate and review training provision.

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

The case records of seven fostered children were inspected. The files demonstrated that the fostering service receives and takes into account information from placing authorities relating to children referred and subsequently placed. Where additional information has been required this has been requested. In a number of the files inspected there was no placement agreement setting out details such as health status, education plans, contact arrangements and consent for treatment. There was evidence however these matters were being identified and addressed by the fostering service. For instance the fostering service have documentation to record action plans following statutory child care reviews, contact arrangements and perceived outcomes / impact of contact visits. The files were well maintained and easy to navigate. Individual daily logs / diaries kept by foster carers were regularly reviewed by supervising social workers. Foster carers visited spoke about ways they had supported children placed with them to keep a record of life events whilst with them including photograph albums, videos and other assorted keepsakes. Foster carers visited demonstrated awareness of the need to keep records securely.

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

A range of records was inspected including children's, staff and carers' files, and records of complaints, allegations and accidents. Separate records were kept for permanent staff and sessional workers (for instance therapists and panel members); the records relating to sessional workers were unsatisfactory and failed to meet regulatory requirements (see requirement no.1) The register of children placed via the Fostering Service was in line with regulatory requirements. Records are stored securely and the premises are alarmed. The records were in the main clear and legible to read. The content of entries was in keeping with professional standards. Record retrieval systems were effective.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			29
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			16
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			22
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			4
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			6
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	345	Maximum £	345

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?

4

Effective administrative systems have been established and continue to evolve, including computer and electronic communication systems. Measures have been taken to safeguard electronic data. The premises offer a suitable base from which staff may work. In addition to the main premises meeting the criteria of this standard Safehouses have additional premises in Essex providing facilities for training sessions, meetings, and supervised contact visits. Supervising social workers and staff of the National Teaching and Advisory Service supporting foster carers and children living in Essex are also able to use these premises as a base from which to work. Safehouses are commended for the investment it has made in securing and providing premises that enhance the operation of the fostering service.

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
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Budget projections and audited statements confirm that Safehouses is financially viable with sufficient resources to fulfil its obligations. Financial procedures are in place to ensure that regulations and guidelines imposed upon businesses are conformed with.

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
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Financial procedures of Safehouses have been audited by their chartered accountants and were found to be satisfactory. The agency has a written set of principles and standards governing its financial management that describe the financial procedures and responsibilities of relevant personnel. Correspondence on file indicated that local authorities are informed of the charges made by Safehouses.

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

Foster carers confirmed that they receive an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the financial cost of caring for each child or young person placed with them. Foster carers have said that payments are made promptly at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually. The allowances paid are in line with the agency's written policy on fostering allowances. Foster carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them prior to any placements being made.

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

There are written policies & procedures about the handling of the panels' functions. The procedures have recently been reviewed and are in line with this standard. Through discussion with the chair and observation of a panel meeting it was confirmed that the panel has an active role in monitoring the quality of assessments and providing comment on this matter to the management team of Safehouses. The inspector fed back to the chair observations made; this included comment on the extent that panel members analysed information, pulled out relevant details for discussion and pursued lines of enquiry. The panel routinely considers information about foster carers annual reviews. The chair gave examples of where such information has led to the panel making recommendations regarding foster carers approval status. Panel membership includes people with expertise in health and education and a person who has experience of being fostered them self.

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?
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Not applicable at the time of this inspection.
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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?	0
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Not applicable at the time of this inspection.

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 the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th of August 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

We found this inspection to be thorough, and in the main a positive and helpful experience. There are no major inaccuracies in the inspector's findings, which we feel give a fair and balanced view of the service we provide.

Our only comment would be one of clarification, in that under Regulation 20 and 22, FS 15 we would stress that under normal circumstances references are sought from all persons working with the organisation – these include CRB enhanced disclosure, NSPCC, Local Authority checks, and personal and where applicable employers' references. Any shortfalls in these areas relating to sessional workers or consultants will be assiduously dealt with, and are now under constant review.

We would also state that Sessional Workers are only used as independent assessors within Safehouses, and are not employed in any other role.

For our clarification, we would see guidance on who as a consultant would need to have multiple checks carried out, since this might not always be appropriate or possible.

Action taken by the CSCI 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 8 October 2004, 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 CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Marion Layberry of Safehouses Independent Fostering Agency 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 Marion Layberry
Signature _____
Designation Director
Date 29.09.2004

Or

D.3.2 I Marion Layberry of Safehouses Independent Fostering Agency am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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