

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES**  
**CARE STANDARDS INSPECTORATE FOR WALES**

**Care Standards Act 2000**

**INSPECTION REPORT**  
**FOSTERING SERVICES**

Independent Foster Care Services

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**DATE OF PUBLICATION – 19 July 2006**

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**CARE STANDARDS INSPECTORATE FOR WALES**

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<b>Inspection report for the year:</b> 2006-2007	
<b>Name of fostering service:</b>	Independent Foster Care Services
<b>Contact telephone number:</b>	02920 230555
<b>Registered provider (IFA's only):</b>	Independent Foster Care Services
<b>Manager:</b>	Gail Lorraine Tobin
<b>Date of first registration:</b>	16 August 2004
<b>Dates of this inspection episode:</b>	03.05.06, 11.05.06, 15.05.06, 16.05.06, 22.05.06, 07.06.06, 12.06.06.
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<b>Inspected by:</b>	Lisa Parker
<b>Other regions contributing to this report:</b>	None

## **GUIDELINES ON INSPECTION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report has been compiled following an inspection of the fostering service undertaken by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Regulations.

The purpose of the report is to comment on the quality of the service provided, including the organisation and management of the service and the quality of support delivered to carers and the children and young people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of it.

The report contains information on the process of inspection and records its outcomes. It is divided into twelve parts reflecting the broad areas of the National Minimum Standards. An overall conclusion of the services' compliance with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations is recorded.

CSIW's inspectors are authorised to enter and inspect fostering services at any time. During each inspection episode or period there are visit/s to the service, some unannounced, in addition to a range of other activities such as discussion groups, self- assessment and the use of questionnaires. CSIW tries to find the best way of capturing carer's, service users' and their relatives'/representatives' views and experiences of the service. At any other time throughout the year visits may also be made to the service in response to changes in the service or to investigate complaints for example.

Inspection enables CSIW to satisfy itself that the service should continue to operate. It ensures compliance with:

- Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Regulations, whilst taking into account the National Minimum Standards
- The services' own statement of purpose

Over a 12 month period inspectors will:

- Consult with service users, which in this context means foster carers as well as children and young people about their experience of the service
- Inspect the premises used by the fostering service
- Inspect core processes such as the operation of fostering panels or assessment of carers
- Talk to the manager and staff
- Satisfy themselves that appropriate policies and processes are in operation and that all records are being properly maintained

Readers must be aware that a report is intended to reflect the findings of the inspector during a specific inspection period. Readers should not conclude that the circumstances of the service will be the same at all times; sometimes services improve and sometimes they deteriorate. The Regulations and National Minimum

Standards are very technical and detailed in nature and CSIW does not closely examine all aspects of these standards on each visit.

If an aspect of the service falls short of that required to meet the regulations, CSIW will make requirements on the service to make improvements. The report clearly indicates any such requirements made by CSIW. This will include any made since the last inspection report which have now been met, any that remain outstanding and any new requirements arising from this recent inspection. Where requirements are made, the provider may develop an action plan to show how they plan to make the necessary changes and you may wish to discuss this with them.

The reader should note that requirements made in the previous report which are not listed as outstanding have been appropriately complied with. The report will also comment on aspects of service that are felt to be positive.

If you have concerns about anything arising from the inspector's findings, you may wish to discuss these with CSIW or with the registered person.

The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales is required to make reports on registered facilities available to the public. Most reports are public documents and will be available on the CSIW web site: [www.csiw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.csiw.wales.gov.uk)

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## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This report is based on the second inspection of Independent Foster Care Services (IFCS) since its registration in 2004. This period of inspection has taken place over 6 weeks between May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006 and June 12<sup>th</sup> 2006. The information included in this report is gathered from the following sources:

1. Pre inspection information received from the provider including a copy of updated procedures and a statement of purpose.
2. Discussion with the manager of IFCS, Mrs Gail Tobin, the director Mr Adrian Wilson and also several members of the staff group of IFCS.
3. Feedback from social workers at 4 different placing local authorities.
4. Completed questionnaires from most of the staff group and manager of IFCS.
5. Completed questionnaires from 4 Foster Panel Members at IFCS.
6. Completed questionnaires from 11 children in placement aged 7 to 16 years.
7. Completed questionnaires from 19 IFCS Foster Carers.
8. Two days examining records held by IFCS at the agency premises.

In addition to the above the inspector has observed Skills to Foster Training of prospective foster carers and also attended a formal support group of foster carers which involved an educational speaker. The inspector also made three visits to foster carers and children in placement.

The inspection period was spread over a six week period in order to allow the inspector the opportunity to observe the foster care support group and foster skills training dates which had already been set in advance by IFCS. The manager and director received feedback from the inspector as and when the inspection occurred and immediately responded to requirements and recommendations made by the inspector.

Due to the considerable growth of the agency there have been additional social workers recruited, as the number of foster carers increased. However the actual caseload of those social workers remain manageable in order to provide high levels of support to foster carers and both the manager and director are committed to this arrangement. At the time of inspection there were 25 carers and 28 children in placement from neighbouring local authorities. There were a further 25 prospective foster carers being assessed or waiting to go to the IFCS foster panel. The agency were also continuing to advertise in recruiting foster carers, and only had three referrals waiting at this point.

The agency's move to a new building appears to have made it easier for the agency to provide new facilities and additional support to foster carers. Staff in particular appeared to be happy working within their new environment. Placing local authorities have given positive feedback in respect of the agency and the foster care children and young people experience. Those children and young people in placements have communicated that they

are happy and some expressed a desire to remain with their carers. Foster carer's were unanimous in positive feedback towards the agency, with a general feeling of being well supported and guided.

There were very few requirements and recommendations made during this inspection period and most were rectified immediately by the manager and director.

**GOOD PRACTICE COMMENTS**

## **SECTION ONE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE and CHILDREN’S GUIDE**

### **Inspector’s findings:**

Independent Foster Care Services have a clear and comprehensive statement of aims and objectives in place which is available in a booklet format and can also be accessed on the agency’s website. Children and young people in placement also have access to a shortened format, which is age appropriate and easy to read with pictures and colour script. The agency provides a wide range of services for children who are placed with their foster carers, which the agency describes as a ‘holistic’ approach to ensure that children’s needs are met when in placement. During the agency’s inspection this was demonstrated on several occasions, when children’s needs had been identified by placing authorities and the agency had accessed appropriate professionals and services to meet children’s needs.

Of those foster carers visited as part of the inspection, all displayed a familiarity with the agency’s statement of purpose as did agency staff. The agency has appointed several new members of staff in recent months who need to be included in the statement of purpose, additionally those members of staff who have left the agency need to be withdrawn from it.

The agency provides each child in placement with a lockable box, which includes all elements as required in respect of a children’s guide to services. Within this box the agency provides all children with an age appropriate and easy to understand shortened statement of purpose and guide to services. There is information on how to make a complaint and how to contact the NSPCC, Childline and also the British Association of Fostering and Adoption. Information is also provided to children in respect of how to contact the Children’s Commissioner and CSIW with necessary telephone numbers, addresses, email addresses and stamped envelopes. The agency also provides this information in the format of a cd rom which has an audio facility to read to those children and young people who would prefer this option. (This service is facilitated by the agency providing their foster carer’s computer software packages.) Also within this box is information on how children and young people can access advocacy services. In particular the box includes a disposable camera, a diary and a lifebook for the child or young person. Feedback from children and young people in placement during inspection confirmed that these boxes provided and were very much perceived in a positive way and staff also commented that children enjoy having them.

The statement of purpose is available in both Welsh and English.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>
The fostering service must revise the statement of purpose where appropriate and necessary to include new members of staff and withdraw previous staff details.	31/07/06	4 (a)

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

## **SECTION TWO – FITNESS TO PROVIDE OR MANAGE A FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **Inspector's findings:**

The Director of Independent Foster Care Services Mr Adrian Wilson, is also the responsible individual and business manager . His role within the agency offers financial and strategic direction to the service, ensuring the agency is both viable and stable. It was evidenced during inspection that the director holds a strong commitment to achieving a quality service for looked after children, seeking to achieve good outcomes at all times. The director has over 18 years experience in the field of social work and is seeking to undertake a business management degree to enhance his current position within the agency.

The registered manager Mrs Gail Tobin is responsible for the day to day management of the service, assessing and matching referrals and has responsibility for supervision of her staff team. Mrs Tobin has over 15 years experience in statutory child care social work, both as a practitioner and as a senior manager and was also a foster carer herself for over 10 years.

Mrs Tobin is near to completion of her NVQ level 4 as required in her role as a manager. This would have been completed sooner, however a previous training body misplaced Mrs Tobin's portfolio which meant the whole process had to begin again with a different training body.

During inspection it was evident that as a registered manager Mrs Tobin ensures that the fostering service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare practice. Mrs Tobin displays a strong commitment to children who are looked after and strives to ensure that foster placements offer children an opportunity to experience stability, security and a nurturing environment.

During inspection it was noted that personnel files are maintained in respect of every staff member. However on one occasion it was noted that a reference for a new member of staff had not been obtained prior to this person commencing employment, ( however, it was evidenced attempts had been made to obtain this reference). When this was brought to the attention of the responsible individual and registered manager remedial action was taken immediately.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>
The agency needs to ensure full and satisfactory information is available in relation to members of staff.	31/07/07	20 (3) (d)

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

### **SECTION THREE - MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

**Inspector's findings:**

It was observed during the period of inspection that there are open lines of communication between social work staff, their manager and their administrative colleagues. Due to the agency's relocation, their new office layout which is open plan allows for this and it was evident during inspection that staff members openly support one another. One member of staff described the work environment as 'enabling'.

The registered manager occupies an office, independent to her staff group but advocates an 'open door policy' for her staff to receive guidance and support. As a result the manager is well informed of day to day events and issues relating to the agency. All of the social work staff, the family support worker and the administrative staff receive supervision from the registered manager.

Details in relation to the agency retaining information on job descriptions and person specifications in relation to the staff and the manager are held on the procedural manual.

Four local authorities who provided the inspector with feedback in relation to the agency gave positive accounts of their experiences as placing authorities. In particular, one social worker felt that the matching of children was well considered by the agency which she felt has allowed for settled placements and positive experiences for placed children. Another local authority also felt this was a strong feature of the agency's practice, in that at the point of referring children and young people the agency offered the best possible placements for them. Most of the feedback commented on how the agency was very consistent in keeping placing social workers informed of the progress of placements.

The agency holds a comprehensive procedural manual which is available to access on the agency's website, in order for information about the agency to be immediately available as well as creating an element of transparency. In addition copies of the procedural manual are available for staff within the workplace and foster carers at their home.

During inspection it was evidenced that the agency has procedures in place to monitor and control activities within the service, for example social workers make weekly visits to foster carers which are recorded and then inform a three monthly supervision session, which in turn informs an annual review. Management within the agency are familiar with the need to have review systems in place to review the quality of care and the requirements set out in Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. A report had not been provided to the CSIW at the time of inspection, although the responsible individual is presently collating the necessary information in order to write a report. The agency recognise that whilst collating this information the sources need to include foster carers, children in placement and their placing authority.

The process for notifying the CSIW of Schedule 8 circumstances had not been occurring within the agency for a period of time and at inspection this was brought to the attention of the responsible individual and the registered manager. Internal procedures were immediately reviewed and this situation was rectified with the CSIW now receiving schedule 8 notifications from the agency.

**Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>
A report must be made available to the CSIW in respect of reviewing quality of care.	29/12/06	42 (2)

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

## **SECTION FOUR – SECURING AND PROMOTING WELFARE**

### **Inspector's findings:**

During the process of inspection, foster carers were consulted by questionnaire and home visits were made to 3 sets of foster carers. During those home visits the inspector noted the agency's foster carers demonstrate great warmth to children in placement offering security and stability within a nurturing environment. Within those foster carer's homes children have their own bedrooms, which are well furnished and personalised to individual preference of the child or young person which assists in a sense of belonging. Two children in placement informed the inspector that they had '...everything they wanted..' in their placement and had choice afforded to them in respect of their physical surroundings.

The agency completes a health and safety assessment of the foster carer's home during the assessment process and thereafter at their three monthly supervision sessions. Safety checks are undertaken in respect of foster carers transport at the time of assessment and annually thereafter.

During the inspection it was recognised that the agency ensures children who are looked after have opportunities which value diversity and promote equality. Additionally, children in placement are given opportunities to develop interests and hobbies. One foster carer informed the inspector that a child in placement they were caring for has complex needs and so has been encouraged to participate in hobbies which has raised self esteem and which also allowed for the child to integrate into groups within the local community. Other examples of the agency encouraging such opportunities for children were children achieving certificates in swimming, gymnastics and other past times. Of those foster carers visited, such achievements were on display allowing for children to have achievements recognised and valued.

In discussion with the registered manager it was evident that she examines referrals in detail before making decisions on placements to ensure matching occurs. On occasions referrals are not accepted if appropriate matching of children to foster carers cannot occur, a record is also kept of such decisions. The manager informed the inspector that in order for placements to succeed, it is crucial that the agency receives full and detailed information at the point of referral as often information provided is not as up to date as it should be.

On inspection of children's files it was evidenced where possible children have a period where they are introduced to their foster carers prior to placements beginning. One foster carer visited informed the inspector that they had experience of children making visits to the placement prior to actually moving in and reflected that this was a good experience for the child and the carer. Contrastingly, another foster carer informed the inspector of an experience where a child was visiting her on an introductory visit and decided for various reasons that he / she didn't want to live with this carer. Both foster carers felt well guided and supported with such experiences.

On examining feedback from the agency's foster carers, it was evident that they feel well supported by the agency in the fostering task. One foster carer informed the inspector that the first priority is always the child (ren) in placement, but that foster carers were always supported by their social worker and the agency as a whole.

Foster carers attend sessions on the areas of 'safe caring' and 'child protection' as part of the Skills to Foster framework. The agency also has a Child Protection policy which is accessible to foster carers and staff via the procedural manual. Of those foster carers visited all had an awareness of the child protection policy. When the subject area of safe caring was discussed with foster carers, most felt that this was inherent within their role. However it maybe useful for foster carers to have access to a safe caring policy or guidelines which the agency could develop in consultation with everyone within their household. These guidelines should then be agreed with the child's social worker and the child or young person. (N.M.S 9.3)

On examining the records held in respect of child protection, there were only two recorded incidents over the past year. The agency has a system in place to record bullying. It was identified during the inspection that this record should also include details of action taken to address the problem and by whom. This recommendation was immediately taken onboard by the agency.

The agency seeks to ensure that children placed with foster carers continue to have contact with their birth / previous families. This was evidenced when visiting foster carers, who appear to facilitate regular contact for children with siblings, parents or other extended family members. Some children in placement had particularly complicated contact arrangements with family members and it was noted by the inspector that the agency foster carers dealt with these in a professional manner. The agency also provides financial support to foster carers where necessary to ensure contact takes place at the desired frequency and place as set out by the placing local authority. Of those placing local authority social workers spoken to by the inspector, all commented on how positive this element of the service was for children.

The agency consults with children via questionnaires, support groups and the agency's newsletter. In addition to this children and young people can contact the agency directly by e mail (using the computer software provided to foster carers by the agency) or use the stamp addressed envelopes provided in the childrens box to send letters. The agency has also developed a Young Persons Placement Report to ensure children's views are heard. The agency has a behaviour management policy and those children who completed questionnaires for the purpose of the inspection appeared to have clear boundaries and insight into acceptable and non acceptable behaviour in placement.

All children in placement are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician( where necessary). The agency have also developed a 'health record' for every child or young person looked after. Foster carers participate in their completion and the record will follow the child when they leave. In those placements visited by the inspector, some children had had varying degrees of learning disability, behavioural issues and also complex dietary needs. In these circumstances the agency had accessed external agencies to enhance and support these children's day to day lifestyle. Furthermore the agency has also employed the services of a Family Therapist and Educational Consultant, who with the permission of placing authorities can focus on identified needs of children.

The inspector received 11 responses from children in placement with nearly all of those children communicating that they were happy in their placement. All children identified people they could speak to if they were unhappy, those being fostercarers and their placing social workers, also social work staff at the agency.

**Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>
It may be beneficial for each foster care setting to develop a safe caring policy.	9.3

## **SECTION FIVE – RECRUITING, CHECKING, MANAGING, SUPPORTING AND TRAINING STAFF AND CARERS**

### **Inspector's findings:**

Over the past year the agency has grown considerably, the staff group now consists of the Director, the Manager, 5 Social workers who all have experience in fostering and family placement work , 1 experienced Family Support Worker and 2 administrative officers. At present the agency has 25 sets of approved foster carers with an additional 25 prospective carers. As a result of recruiting more staff there has been an increase in foster carers. However the agency remains committed to ensuring staff have a reasonably manageable caseload in order for staff to provide high levels of support to foster carers. The staff team are supervised by the registered manager.

The agency contracts the services of a Family Therapist, Medical Advisor, Legal Advisor, Educational Consultant and also a Training Consultant.

The services of these professionals have enabled the agency to provide training for foster carers on subject areas such as managing challenging behaviour to attachment issues. The inspector observed the Educational Consultant delivering a session on the educational needs of those children in the looked after system to foster carers within their support group meeting. This guidance subsequently led to a child who had no educational placement being successfully integrated into a mainstream placement.

The addition of a Training Consultant has enabled the agency to devise a training plan for their staff group for the forthcoming year, which addresses the individual needs of staff.

All newly appointed staff and prospective foster carers attend a whole programme of sessions provided by The Fostering Network entitled the ' Skills to Foster ' , which is usually facilitated by the social work staff at the agency. The inspector observed such sessions being delivered and can conclude that prospective foster carers can learn about the role in a safe and supportive environment. The agency delivers this programme in an interesting and informative manner with use of visual aids and hand outs.

A strong feature of this agency is the consistent support offered to foster carers by the agency. This is evidenced in the provision of an informal weekly drop in for foster carers in addition to a formal support group occurring every three months where relevant guest speakers are invited along. The agency has also developed a 'buddy scheme' which involves more experienced carers being available to new and less experienced carers by phone at any time. There are also social events held by the agency for foster carers throughout the year. Also, the agency offers 24 hours, 7 days a week support by their social work staff, who participate in an out of hours rota system. Foster carers have named workers from the agency who make weekly visits to placements. Respite is also offered internally to foster carers to ensure foster carers have rest and recuperation which in turn ensures placement stability. Those foster carers also have fees paid to them as retainers when there are no children in placement. The agency are also developing ways of supporting children of foster carers, as they recognise that they too may need elements of support as foster children join their family unit.

The agency has clear procedures in place for recruitment of staff. All staff have enhanced crb checks in place and all have job descriptions and employment contracts. Staff have regular meetings as a team and minutes are maintained by the agency. A format has been devised by the agency for staff to receive planned appraisals.

As stated previously, at the time of the inspection there were 25 foster families in place, with most of those placements occupied. The agency also has several prospective foster carers in place who are subject to the agency's assessment process. The agency uses the British Association of Adoption and Fostering Form F's for assessment purposes. The assessment necessitates visits by a named social worker from the agency prospective carers over a period of time. This assessment also includes comments from a medical advisor, written reports of interviews with at least two referees and details of checks undertaken.

Such assessments are scrutinised by the manager and foster panel members before a recommendation is made to the agency director. One foster panel member informed the inspector that the decision making process in respect of assessments is simplified by the agency's staff producing assessments that are 'detailed', 'clear' and 'indepth' which ensures the process is informed. Another foster panel member felt that due to the 'close' attention given to the foster carers in the recruitment process and also the 'high level of support offered to carers ...this is reflected in the high retention of carers'.

As part of the assessment process foster carers have health and safety checks carried out by agency, which are then reviewed. Foster carers are also expected to undertake training in specific core areas to enhance their skills in order to provide quality care. Such training is evaluated and then recommendations are made for future training. The manager also makes final recommendations. Foster Carers receive formal recognition of training with certificates issued by the agency.

#### Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

#### Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

#### New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

## **SECTION SIX – RECORDS**

### **Inspector's findings:**

The agency holds separate files in respect of staff, foster carers and those children in placements. The agency has a comprehensive and detailed system for retrieving information. Confidential records are stored securely and the agency has a policy on access to records. It was noted by the inspector that all recordings made by agency staff were clear and upto date.

The agency holds a register detailing each child in placement , however during the inspection it was noted that the statutory provision under which the child is placed had not been recorded. When this was brought to the attention of the manager these details were immediately included. Similarly the agency holds a register for staff , but these details were also incomplete. The manager was made aware of this and then rectified the details.

On examination of childrens files it was noticeable that necessary Looked After Children documents were often not held on file. The manager confirmed this, stating that placing authorities did not always provide complete information on children despite attempts made by the agency to obtain these. On examination of files within foster carer's homes there was a similar situation in respect of Looked After Children documents and it was noted that the standard of information differs from one placing authority to another. However it was noted by the inspector that the agency's staff always provide the foster carers with as much up to date information as possible in respect of children placed. Placing local authority social workers informed the inspector that communication between themselves, agency staff, the foster carers and the child or young person is open and effective.

It was evident during visits to foster carers and children in placement that significant life events and achievements were recorded and celebrated. In particular one young person who had received educational achievements was rewarded by the agency and her foster carer displayed her certificate within the home. Foster carers also encourage those children and young people in placement to reflect on and understand their history, one foster carer informed the inspector that this is carried out by completing a life story book with a child.

All foster carers are provided with lockable space to share confidential and sensitive records.

The agency has a system in place for keeping records about allegations and complaints. At the time of inspection there were no recorded allegations or complaints in respect of foster carers or agency staff. The agency holds a comprehensive complaints policy and procedure in respect of staff, foster carers and those using the fostering service. Children and young people in placement are well informed about the complaints procedure , through information provided in the childrens guide and childrens box, in particular appropriate contact details for the Childrens Commissioner, CSIW, Childline, NSPCC and BAAF as well as local advocacy details.

The complaints procedure is reviewed annually by the director of the agency.

All Foster carers have approval notices kept on their file at home and within the agency.

Foster carers maintain written records of children and young people in placement on a daily basis. Agency staff supervising foster carers use placement monitoring checklists which enables the agency to monitor of school attendance, contact, accidents etc.

The inspector had an extremely positive response in respect of completed questionnaires by children and young people. Mostly all of the children in placement felt happy and listened to, with an ability to identify people they were able to speak to if they were worried or had a problem. The agency has a policy on children contributing to their daily recordings which was evident within some of the foster homes.

**Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

## **SECTION SEVEN – FITNESS OF PREMISES FOR USE AS A FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **Inspector's findings:**

The agency has recently moved to a new building , on a small business park which is located on the outskirts of Cardiff. Both staff and foster carers informed the inspector that the move has greatly improved the agency's service delivery, many foster carers commented that they were now able to 'drop in' whenever needed and always receive consistent support.

The agency occupies the whole of the ground floor of a large building, which allows full disabled access. There is a dedicated family/contact room, a conference / training room and also more than adequate space for staff in an open plan office layout. Additionally, there are two separate offices within the building for the director and the manager. The new premises have allowed for greater storage facilities, the formation of a library, and more computers for staff.

The agency has an appropriate security system which is connected to the local police. There are security cameras and an intercom system for visitors to the agency. The agency is also adequately insured and these documents were seen during inspection.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

### **New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

### **Good practice recommendations:**

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

## SECTION EIGHT – FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

### **Inspector's findings:**

The director of the agency has submitted a financial report to the National Assembly (financial department) based on trading over the past 18 months since registration. The agency has also submitted a detailed 3 year business plan. The National Assembly financial department has informed CSIW that the agency is financially viable and successful to date.

The agency has a registered accountant to maintain and audit their accounts.

There has been a reduction in fees for foster placements since April of this year, as a result of the agency achieving financial stability. The reduction is 9.3 % (approximately) of previous fees, all prices are published and available to see on the agency's website. The director maintains that this reduction continues to include all services for children and young people, with no 'extra' charges incurred.

As previously stated foster carers receive a retainer fee when they have no children or young people in placement. Foster Carers receive their payments weekly and also receive additional payments for mileage expenses.

The agency also has a 'miscellaneous fund'. The purpose of this fund is to provide children and young people and their foster carers with financial resources to enable positive development in the area of leisure and play. The inspector was informed by foster carers that the agency is always willing to listen to requests. Any decision made by the agency is done so after consulting with the placing local authority or parent of the child. The foster carers visited and staff spoken to during inspection feel that this fund underpins the philosophy and ethos at the centre of the agency. There is a strong philosophy communicated by the director and manager that children and young people in the looked after system should be afforded such opportunities. Foster carers gave the inspector examples of when the fund had been accessed, one child had received a bike, another had received educational tutoring, and another two children were able to accompany their foster carer on holiday as a result of the fund.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>	<b>NMS or other source</b>

## SECTION NINE – FOSTERING PANELS

### **Inspector's findings:**

The inspector did not observe a fostering panel for this inspection, as this had been examined in detail at the last inspection. However foster panel members were consulted for feedback by CSIW for the purposes of this inspection.

There have been 4 foster panels held over the last year. Detailed minutes are recorded and kept by the agency. These minutes illustrate that assessments are discussed in detail by panel members and also demonstrated that annual reviews of foster carers take place.

The agency conforms to regulations in relation to the composition of foster panels, including members that have experience of the looked after system and professionals with expertise in health and education. Of those foster carers visited during inspection, some commented positively, at they had attended foster panel and felt it was extremely informative. The agency does encourage prospective carers to attend foster panel and offers appropriate support in that process.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

### **New requirements from this inspection:**

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

## SECTION TEN – SHORT – TERM BREAKS

### **Inspector's findings:**

This area of provision was not examined in detail by the inspector on this occasion.

The manager informed the inspector that the agency only accept referrals for respite/ short term placements that allow for a high degree of planning and introductions and are not provided on an emergency basis by the agency.

The agency also maintains that the matching assessment will incorporate the views of the responsible social worker, parents and the child or young person.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

### **New requirements from this inspection:**

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

## **SECTION ELEVEN – FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS CARERS**

### **Inspector's findings:**

The agency has a holistic approach to the care of children and young people which embraces the use of family and friends as carers. During the assessment process those family members who are in close contact with the child in placement are assessed and appropriate checks are made with their consent. The agency maintains that this acts as a 'natural support system' for foster carers.

The agency recognises the role of family members and in particular, those children of foster carers who would benefit from their support. The agency are currently examining the need for this service and will shortly be making plans to develop such groups. This is a positive step which the agency perceives as an important element in ensuring the overall stability of the placement. Some foster carers have informed the inspector that this service would be of value to their own children.

### **Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

### **Requirements which remain outstanding:**

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

### **New requirements from this inspection:**

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

### **Good practice recommendations:**

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Inspector:

Lisa Parker

Date:

4 July 2006

## **SECTION TWELVE – PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN**

**N.B.** Use of this section of the report will apply primarily to inspections of local authority fostering services and the duties and responsibilities covered in Parts 5 and 6 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 only. It may need to be used for inspections of independent agencies where a local authority delegates certain duties to them under Regulation 40.

<b>Inspector's findings:</b>
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Not Applicable.
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**Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>When completed</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**Requirements which remain outstanding:**

<b>Action required (previous outstanding requirements)</b>	<b>Original timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

**New requirements from this inspection:**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Timescale for completion</b>	<b>Regulation number</b>

<b>Good practice recommendations:</b>
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<b>NMS or other source</b>
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