



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Norfolk County Council Fostering Services**

**Social Services  
County Hall, Martineau Lane  
Norwich  
NR1 2SQ**

*Lead Inspector*  
Clive  
Lucas

*Announced*  
9 May 2005

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

## Reader Information

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

*Every Child Matters*, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Norfolk County Council Fostering Services
<b>Address</b>	Social Services, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2SQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 222141
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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	n/a
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	n/a
<b>Type of registration</b>	n/a
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	n/a
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	n/a

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

n/a

**Date of last inspection**      10 May 2004

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Norfolk Social Services Fostering Service is contained within the Children Services Department of Norfolk County Council. The Service is divided into 3 main areas, mainstream fostering, specialist fostering and short term breaks. The short term break scheme is managed within the children with disabilities service. This report is in respect of the mainstream and specialist fostering. There will be a further inspection and report for the short-term break fostering.

# **SUMMARY**

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

This inspection involved meetings with foster carers and workers singly and in groups, discussions with some children, interviews with managers and key staff, case tracking of six sets of carers, reading of records, questionnaire surveys of carers, children and placing social workers and the observation of a disruption meeting and two foster panels.

## **What the service does well:**

There is sound management of the service, which is appreciated by carers and workers. The majority of carers feel that they are supported well and value their support workers. Contact with family and friends is well supported and the welfare of children in foster care is promoted.

Recruitment and approval of new carers is thorough. The vast majority of children and carers are positive about the service.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

Since the last inspection there have been improvements in many areas as the re-organisation of the service in 2003 settles down. There have been improvements in matching of children to carers, promoting education, the use of experienced carers as mentors and in training and the support and supervision of family and friends as carers.

## **What they could do better:**

Staff recruitment process and records require attention in order to meet the Fostering Service Regulations.

Young people need more information on making complaints and carers need to be given more confidence in their ability to raise any concerns they have about Norfolk Children's Services staff.

There needs to be further consideration given to how to use a mix of qualified and unqualified staff, so that the value and potential of all staff is maximised and carers are appropriately supported and supervised in all cases.

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

The full report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Standards

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection



# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12**

The fostering service is actively promoting the health and development of the young people who are placed with its carers. Some additional work is required to fully meet this outcome across what is a very large service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Fostering Service is well aware of the health services in its area. Norfolk Social Services have an inter-agency (Lifescop) team who work with looked after children. The team includes a clinical psychologist and a designated nurse who are available for children who are fostered and who can help to access other health services.

Standard 12 requires that all carers receive training in first aid, which needs to be renewed every three years. This training was previously organised by individual Carer Support Workers (CSWs) or Family Placement Social Workers (FPSWs), but in the last year has become a central function of the training department. Not all carers are undertaking this training. The reasons for this seem to be in some cases the location and timing of courses and in other cases reluctance to renew training which has previously been undertaken. The fostering service manager must ensure that efforts continue to provide this training and that carers are strongly encouraged to attend.

One example was cited of an inexperienced CSW who was unaware of how to access health services for a young person and advised a new carer that certain services would not be available. However, the carer visited their GP and obtained the services for the young person. While this was only one example, it is recommended that the fostering service is mindful of the need to include issues such as how to access health services in the induction for CSW/FPSWs.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30**

Overall the fostering service works to keep children and young people who are placed with it safe. However there are some significant gaps, such as recruitment checks, that need to be addressed.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Response to placing social workers' and children's questionnaires indicated that in the vast majority of cases foster carers were providing safe healthy and nurturing environments. Children in particular were very positive about the care that they received.

Foster carer's homes are not always inspected annually. There is an annual health and safety check that CSW/FPSWs undertake, but if there are no issues this may be done without checking the accommodation. The fostering service manager must ensure that all foster homes are checked annually to ensure that they continue to be suitable.

Last year's inspection identified that some carers for the specialist foster care team have been provided with caravans for foster children. The inspectors were informed that this was to provide accommodation that was acceptable to young people who were not able to live full time with a family. A bedroom

would also be available in the house and some young people had moved into the house once they felt settled. This year two cases were identified where there was no bedroom available in the house, only in the caravan. Furthermore there was some confusion from one carer with a caravan and her FPSW as to how the caravan would be used.

The fostering service manager must ensure that the Statement of Purpose clearly identifies how the caravans are to be used, and that a separate health and safety checklist is produced for caravans in order to ensure that the particular risks of living in a caravan are addressed.

Specific Foster Placement Agreements, as defined in regulation 34 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002, are not used. The Looked After Children paperwork does not meet the requirements of regulation 34. The fostering service manager must ensure that until the Looked After Children paperwork is replaced, the additional information required by regulation 34 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and standard 8 of the National Minimum Standards, is recorded separately. Work to address this is at an advanced stage, but has not yet been widely implemented.

The process of matching has moved forward since last year's inspection. The views of carers and the needs of children already in placement are being widely considered. Matching is to some degree limited due to the choice of carers available. Recording the elements of matching in Foster Placement Agreements will allow for the identification of foster carer's need for additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between child and carer.

The fostering service actively works to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. Safe Care Policies are used for all carers and are more frequently being written specifically for individual children in placement.

A selection of staff files was examined as part of the inspection. It was noted that the requirements of schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 were not being consistently met. The fostering service manager must ensure that recruitment checks as detailed in schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are met in all cases of staff recruitment. Responses to CRB checks should be kept until they can be seen by CSCI.

Norfolk's fostering service uses five fostering panels. The addition of dedicated panel administrators has made a very positive difference to the functioning of the panels. Inductions and training are provided for panel members, and quality assurance measures are in place. It was noted evidence of panel members' CRB checks are not kept and for some panel members there is uncertainty about the checks having been done. The fostering service manager must ensure that all foster panel members have CRB checks and that evidence of these checks are kept until CSCI have had the opportunity to see them as part of the inspection process.



# Enjoying and Achieving

## **The intended outcomes these Standards are:**

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 7 and 13**

The fostering service values diversity and is working to promote equal opportunities. Children are encouraged to educational achievement.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There is careful matching in terms of disability, but lack of options for some young people from some cultural or ethnic backgrounds. The fostering service is aware of this and is actively working to increase the diversity of their carers. CSW/FPSWs spoken with showed an appropriate understanding of diversity. There is no specific training course for caring for children from different backgrounds, but equal opportunity and diversity are included in all courses, thus reaching a wider audience than an individual course which is likely to attract only those carers who already have a commitment to equal opportunities. The service may need to keep the efficacy of this approach under review.

There are positive developments in promoting the education of children in foster care, such as the use of Placement Plus workers to support children who are not in full time education, a regular newsletter and the provision of training courses to help carers support children's education. Where shortfalls exist, these tend to be due to the provision from the Education services.

Work is underway to provide computer and internet facilities for children in foster care. Access to such services is vital to promote the educational achievement of children in foster care.



## **Making a Positive Contribution**

### **The intended outcomes these Standards are:**

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

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

### **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 10 and 11**

Contact is promoted for children in foster care. The process of consultation is moving forward, but there are still areas that need addressing.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service promotes contact for young people with family and friends. Examples were noted when support was provided to carers who were experiencing difficulties due to family contact.

There have been developments in the process for consulting young people about issues that are likely to affect their daily lives and their futures. However there were still a minority of young people who indicated in their questionnaires that they had been consulted about the running of the service, although more stated that they had been consulted about the foster home in which they lived. It is recommended that children and young people are consulted about the running of the service and that this information is fed into the reviews of the quality of care as set out in regulation 34 of The Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

Over 50% of young people who returned questionnaires indicated that they did not know how to make a complaint. This information is included in the new Children's Guides, but the guide for older children has not yet been distributed, which may explain why so many children stated that they did not know how to complain. The fostering service manager must ensure that action is taken to make all children aware of how to make a complaint.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 14 and 29**

Young people are prepared for adulthood, but clarity is needed for young people who reach eighteen years of age and remain in placement. Allowances generally work well, but there is a need to review some aspects of them.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Last year's inspection showed that carers were provided with information on helping to prepare children for adulthood. Evidence from case tracking and files during that inspection showed that there had been some very good practice in this area. This year's case tracking (due to the nature of the cases) did not provide such clear examples of children preparing for adulthood. One issue that did arise was the status of young people when they reach eighteen years of age and remain in the foster home, or visit on a regular basis. It was acknowledged that this is an area in which the service needs to develop a policy. It is an example of good childcare that young people are able to remain in their foster homes over the age of eighteen, or return for support.

It is recommended that a policy be developed for those young people in foster care who on reaching eighteen years of age remain in the foster home, or visit on a regular basis.

There has been a review of the allowances for carers, but this has not yet been implemented. The majority of carers did not identify any concerns about payments, but a significant minority raised issues about the timeliness and clarity of payments. It is recommended that payments be paid promptly and that the review of payments ensures that the full cost of caring for each child is met and that there is clarity over what and whom the payments are for.



# Management

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 1, 4, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 32**

There is sound management of the fostering service. More work needs to be done to ensure that all staff (qualified and unqualified) are able to effectively support and supervise carers. Caseloads are high in some areas of the service and this is putting a strain on some workers. Despite this there is a positive view of the service from carers and workers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There is a good Statement of Purpose (but see comments about caravans under "Staying Safe"). The newly produced Children's Guides are good. The one for older children still needs to be distributed.

Carers and staff stated that they value the management of the fostering service in general and the service manager in particular. Carer's surgeries are greatly appreciated and the ability of carers to contact the service manager directly was identified as very positive. The manager monitors the service and produces regulation 42 reports.

The fostering service employs a mix of qualified staff (FPSWs) and unqualified staff (CSWs). Some concerns were raised by carers about inexperienced or unqualified staff not having sufficient knowledge to support new carers or carers with complex cases. However the vast majority of carers felt that their CSW/FPSW supported them well and worked hard to help them. Some examples were found where the lack of experience of a worker had had a detrimental effect upon a case. In the last year there have been some developments to provide unqualified staff with appropriate levels of work and responsibility. The fostering service manager must ensure that this is further developed to ensure that staff have the knowledge, experience and supervision to provide appropriate support and supervision of cases, and that the value and potential of all staff is maximised.

There is an aim to reduce caseloads of CSW/FPSWs to around sixteen cases for full time workers. At the time of the inspection a number of workers (qualified and unqualified) reported significantly higher caseloads, which they are struggling to manage. Despite this staff remain positive about the service and their jobs.

Recruitment and approval of carers is working well, there were some reports of delays in the process, but these seem to be historic, or due to exceptional circumstances.

One area of concern relating to the approval of carers was noted. A carer who was initially allowed to foster a young person under the emergency procedures (regulation 38 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002), subsequently fostered a number of other young people before they were approved. Regulation 34 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 states that other than under regulation 38 a child may only be placed with a foster carer if they are approved. The fostering service manager must ensure that such a situation does not arise again.

The service does act as a fair and competent employer. However it is of concern that there is a perception among some carers that if they raised concerns about the practice of placing social workers or fostering service staff they may receive unfairly negative comments for their annual reviews, or not

receive as many placements. Some CSW/FPSWs supported this view in part. It is recognised that in some cases the reluctance of carers to whistle blow may be due to historic events, or misconceptions

Difficulties in the relationships between the fostering service and the placing social workers were identified during last year's inspection. The fostering service has undertaken some work to address this, but there remain difficulties in some areas. The fostering service manager is aware of these problems and is working to address them. The fostering service manager must ensure that efforts continue to ensure that all carers feel able to whistle blow.

Appraisals of staff are taking place in most cases, but in some teams they still need to happen. Some staff reported that there was not a clear induction and training programme for them when they started work in the fostering service. The fostering service manager must ensure that there is appropriate induction and foundation training for new staff. This matter also links with appraisals when training needs can be identified and the needs of unqualified and inexperienced staff.

Annual reviews of carers are now happening in the vast majority of cases. Some have not yet had their review of this year due a backlog, but they are being prioritised.

Carers are being supervised, but in the majority of cases looked at, the supervision was not happening at the agreed frequency. The National Minimum Standards make it clear that only qualified staff should supervise carers. In Norfolk's fostering service unqualified staff are used. If the fostering service wishes to continue with this arrangement, the fostering service manager must ensure that all staff are provided with the training and oversight to meet the requirements of Standard 22. Foster carer handbooks are good and it is to be commended that Norfolk Children's Services are funding a post from Fostering Network for a support and mediation worker in Norfolk.

There is a good training programme, which makes use of experienced carers as mentors and trainers. Issues of accessibility of courses were identified by some carers. It is acknowledged that Norfolk is a large county and providing local training can be problematic. It is recommended that efforts continue to provide training, which is accessible to carers, and to encourage carers to attend training.

Appropriate case records for children and administrative records are kept. Planned developments for children's records should bring positive benefits.

Norfolk Fostering service uses offices located around the County. All of these offices have secure storage for records. In some offices there is insufficient administrative back up and office equipment (IT) to enable staff to carry out

their duties in an efficient and effective manner, although the situation has improved since last year's inspection. In particular the offices at the Oaks (Norwich) and Greyfriars (Kings Lynn) are extremely crowded. It is recommended that the fostering service consider ways of addressing these matters.

There has been improvement in the supervision and support of family and friends as carers. This includes a new support group for these carers and acceptance that they should receive services in the same way as other carers. The approval of family and friends who act as emergency carers should be completed within 6 weeks, which is a very tight time scale. Sessional workers are used so that the approval process can begin as soon as possible.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale. Where there is no score against a standard it has not been looked at during this inspection.

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

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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	2

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	2
<b>8</b>	2
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	1
<b>30</b>	1

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	3
<b>31</b>	X

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	2

<b>ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	3
<b>29</b>	2

<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	2
<b>2</b>	3
<b>4</b>	3
<b>5</b>	X
<b>16</b>	X
<b>17</b>	2
<b>18</b>	2
<b>19</b>	2
<b>20</b>	X
<b>21</b>	3
<b>22</b>	2
<b>23</b>	3
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	3
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	12	17	The fostering service manager must ensure that efforts continue to provide this training and that carers are strongly encouraged to attend.	Ongoing
2.	6	29	The fostering service manager must ensure that all foster homes are checked annually to ensure that they continue to be suitable.	with immediate effect upon receipt of this report
3.	1	3	The fostering service manager must ensure that the Statement of Purpose clearly identifies how the caravans are to be used, and that a separate health and safety checklist is produced for caravans in order to ensure that the particular risks of living in a caravan are addressed.	31 July 2005
4.	8	34	The fostering service manager must ensure that until the Looked After Children paperwork is replaced, the additional information required by regulation 34 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and standard 8 of the National Minimum Standards, is recorded separately.	31 July 2005
5.	15	20	The fostering service manager must ensure that recruitment	with immediate

			checks as detailed in schedule 1 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are met in all cases of staff recruitment. Responses to CRB checks should be kept until they can be seen by CSCI.	effect upon receipt of this report
6.	15 and 30	20	The fostering service manager must ensure that all foster panel members have CRB checks and that evidence of these checks are kept until CSCI have had the opportunity to see them as part of the inspection process.	with immediate effect upon receipt of this report
7.	11	3	The fostering service manager must ensure that action is taken to make all children aware of how to make a complaint.	31 July 2005
8.	15, 17 and 22	19	The fostering service manager must ensure that there is further development to ensure that staff have the knowledge, experience and supervision to provide appropriate support and supervision of cases, and that the value and potential of all staff is maximised.	30 September 2005
9.	17	34	The fostering service manager must ensure that a situation where children are placed with an unapproved carer does not arise again.	with immediate effect upon receipt of this report
10.	18	3	The fostering service manager must ensure that efforts continue to ensure that all carers feel able to whistle blow.	Ongoing
11.	19	21	The fostering service manager must ensure that there is appropriate induction and foundation training for new staff.	30 September 2005
12.	19 and 22	21	the fostering service manager must ensure that all staff are provided with the training and oversight to meet the requirements of Standard 22.	30 September 2005
13.				

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	12	it is recommended that the fostering service is mindful of the need to include issues such as how to access health services in the induction for CSW/FPSWs.
2.	11	It is recommended that children and young people are consulted about the running of the service and that this information is fed into the reviews of the quality of care as set out in regulation 34 of The Fostering Service Regulations 2002.
3.	17	It is recommended that a policy be developed for those young people in foster care who on reaching eighteen years of age remain in the foster home, or visit on a regular basis.
4.	29	It is recommended that payments are paid promptly and that the review of payments ensures that the full cost of caring for each child is met and that there is clarity over what and who the payments are for.
5.	17	It is recommended that efforts continue to provide training, which is accessible to carers, and to encourage carers to attend training.
6.	26	It is recommended that the fostering service considers ways of addressing the issues of accommodation identified in this report.



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