

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

**Inspection report
Fostering services**

Pathway Care (West Wales) Ltd

Capel Dewi Hall
Capel Dewi
SA32 8AD

Date of publication – 18 November 2010

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Dates of this inspection episode:	August- September 2010
Dates of other relevant contact since last report:	
Date of previous report publication:	10 th December 2009
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Introduction

This report has been compiled following an inspection of the fostering service undertaken by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000 and associated regulations.

The primary focus of the report is to comment on the quality of life and quality of care experienced by service users (foster carers and children in placement).

The report contains information on how we inspect and what we find. This inspection focuses specifically on the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 but also takes into account the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

The report is divided into nine sections reflecting the broad areas covered by the inspection:

1. Summary of findings
2. Policies and procedures / information
3. Management and staffing of the service, (including premises and finance)
4. Provision of foster carers (including fostering panel)
5. Quality of care and safety for children placed
6. Placement of children, parts v & vi of the regulations
7. Records
8. Short term placements
9. Family and friends as carers

CSSIW inspectors are authorised to enter and inspect fostering services at any time. Inspection enables CSSIW to satisfy itself that the service should continue to operate, and for IFAs this will include satisfaction that continued registration is justified. It also ensures that all fostering services are compliant with:

- Care Standards Act 2000 and The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003, whilst taking into account the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
- The service's own statement of purpose.

At each inspection episode there are visits to the service during which CSSIW may adopt a range of different methods in its attempt to capture service user's and their relatives'/representatives' experiences. Such methods may for example include self-assessment, discussion groups, case tracking, visits to carers' homes, observation, interviews, and the use of questionnaires. At any other time throughout the year visits may also be made to the service to investigate complaints and to respond to any changes in the service.

Readers must be aware that a report is intended to reflect the findings of the inspector at a specific period in time. Readers should not conclude that the circumstances of the service will be the same at all times.

The registered/responsible person/s is/are responsible for ensuring that the fostering service operates in a way which complies with the service specific regulations.

CSSIW will comment in the general text of the inspection report on their compliance.

For those regulations which CSSIW believes to be key in bringing about change in the particular service, they will be separately and clearly identified in the requirement section.

As well as listing these key requirements from the current inspection, requirements made by CSSIW since the last inspection, which have been met and those which remain outstanding are included in this report. The reader should note that requirements made in last year's report which are not listed as outstanding have been appropriately complied with.

Where key requirements have been identified, the provider is required under regulation 42B, (Compliance Notification), to advise, in writing, the appropriate regional office of the completion of any action required by CSSIW.

The regulated service is also responsible for having in place a clear, effective and fair complaints procedure which promotes local resolution between the parties in a swift and satisfactory manner, wherever possible. The annual inspection report will include a summary of the numbers of complaints dealt with locally and their outcome.

CSSIW may also be involved in the investigation of a complaint. Where this is the case CSSIW makes publicly available a summary of that complaint. CSSIW will also include within the annual inspection report a summary of any matters it has been involved in together with any action taken by CSSIW.

Should you have concerns about anything arising from the Inspector's findings, you may discuss these with CSSIW or with the registered person.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales is required to make reports on regulated services available to the public. The report is a public document and will be available on the CSSIW web site, www.cssiw.org.uk

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Section one: Summary of findings

Pathway Care is an independent fostering agency which has been in operation since 1996 and operates in Wales and England. There are two branches of the agency based in Wales which are registered and inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW). Pathway Care (West Wales) was registered by CSSIW in July 2004. This inspection report refers to the West Wales branch of Pathway Care which is based in the village of Capel Dewi approximately four miles from Carmarthen.

The agency completed a self-assessment form (SAF) prior to the inspection, along with a comprehensive portfolio of information to inform the inspection. Questionnaires were completed by eight staff, three children in placement, seven foster carers, nine panel members and two local authority social workers.

The inspection activity comprised the following:

- Individual interview with the registered manager/director for Wales.
- Interviews with staff, including regional manager, business development manager, three supervising social workers one who is lead worker responsible for the Safe Steps service and one responsible for lead work for parenting assessments.
- Interviews with staff responsible for annual reviews and monitoring and reviewing of the quality of care of the agency.
- Observation of a managers meeting.
- Scrutiny of panel minutes.
- Visits to four foster carers with children in placement.
- Scrutiny of four foster carers' files and four children's files.
- Scrutiny of child protection and complaints records.
- Scrutiny of the regulation 42 – review of quality of care report.
- Attendance at a carers' retention group.

Information provided for the inspection indicates that Pathway Care (West Wales) Ltd are providing a fostering service with 86 approved carers, all located within West Wales, with a total of 179 approved placements.

Pathway Care is in the process of updating a large number of policies and procedures. The registered manager said that this involved the review of approximately one hundred policies and procedures and it was envisaged it will be completed by October 2010.

Through evidence presented for the inspection and discussion with staff, the West Wales team presented as well trained, suitably qualified and enthusiastic about the work they undertake. All staff spoken to said that Pathway Care is a child-centred agency and viewed matching of children as a high priority. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection spoke positively about the agency and described the agency as being well managed, with good support from their supervising social workers and availability of staff when needed.

Evidence provided for the inspection indicates that Pathway Care (West Wales) continues to operate in a child-centred, efficient and organised manner.

A detailed report about the findings of this inspection can be found below and includes five good practice recommendations with no requirements. It is not practically possible for every aspect of the operation of an agency to be observed on each visit. The absence of reference to a particular fault or issue does not mean that such a fault does not exist. It is the responsibility of the registered persons to ensure that in all respects the agency operates in accordance with the relevant laws, regulations and national minimum standards.

Section two: Policies and procedures / information

Inspector`s findings:

The agency has a generic statement of purpose which covers seven regional offices and provides comprehensive information about the services provided. This is supported by a local statement of purpose covering the West Wales region. During the inspection at the request of the inspector the agency produced the local statement of purpose through the medium of Welsh. The statement of purpose is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The agency applied for a variation to their registration during the inspection episode to provide parenting assessments as well as parent and child placements. This was set out in the statement of purpose information booklet provided to local authorities that clearly set out what 'parenting assessments' were designed to deliver.

Discussion with foster carers and questionnaires returned to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) indicated that they had received copies of the statement of purpose. It was evidenced in the children's files examined that the statement of purpose was provided to the child's parent when they were first placed with Pathway Care.

The children's guide produced by the agency was child-friendly and provided young people with clear, concise information on the organisation and the people working within it. There was space within the booklet for the young person's social worker to provide relevant contact details for the numerous people and organisations including the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the CSSIW. There were information sheets included within the booklet that allow the young person to add personal information e.g. likes/dislikes important dates and information. The children's guide was in process of being updated during the inspection episode and the agency had actively engaged children and young people in the process. The agency proposes to develop a specific Safe Steps children's guide in consultation with the young people involved in the Safe Steps programme. Some foster carers reported not having received a children's guide: these were foster carers with quite young children in placement. It was recommended by the inspector that the agency develop a children's guide in a format which was more accessible to younger children and children with disabilities.

Discussion with the registered manager and staff and evidence provided on the SAF indicated that Pathway Care was in the process of updating a large number of policies and procedures. The registered manager said that this involved the review of approximately one hundred policies and procedures and it was envisaged this would be completed by October 2010. The registered manager said that once the review of the policies and procedures was completed then the carers' handbook would be reviewed and adapted to reflect any changes. It was said that it was envisaged that this would be completed by December 2010. The registered manager said that she did not envisage any significant amendments as the carers' handbook was robust and based on best practice. Foster carers who engaged with the inspector indicated that they had a copy of the carer's handbook and viewed it as a valuable resource.

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
It is recommended that the agency develops a children's guide in a format which is more accessible to younger children and children with disabilities.	

Section three: Management and staffing of the services, (including premises and finance)

Inspector's findings:

During the last twelve months Pathway Care (West Wales) and (East Wales) teams had worked more closely together on an all Wales basis, which has resulted in changes aimed at strengthening the management structure. There had been a number of staff changes with a number of newly created posts and staff undertaking new roles in the team, which had been filled both internally and externally. The registered manager for the West Wales team was appointed as the Director of Wales in July 2010, fostering a greater alignment between the two Wales teams. The registered manager/Director for Wales has the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the management of the fostering service in an efficient and professional manner. There were clear lines of accountability and levels of delegation within the organisation.

A Head of Practice role had been created to support the Director for Wales. The person appointed started in Pathway Care at the time of inspection. He is suitably qualified and has a wealth of experience within local authority settings. A new regional manager had also been recruited to the West Wales team and is due to commence in post at the end of September, replacing the current regional manager who was undertaking a new role in the team. He had experience as a social worker and team manager within a local authority. Since July 2010, Pathway had created two new roles in West Wales of senior practitioner and placement support worker to offer additional support to specific carers. The senior practitioner was appointed via an internal promotion and took up post in July 2010. The placement support worker joined Pathway Care in August 2010. The team also consisted of a Principal Officer Quality Assurance, Business Development Manager, six family placement supporting social workers (FPSSW); one outreach worker and two administrators. Staffing levels were deemed adequate for the size of the agency. The registered manager said that Pathway Care had a clear strategy for staffing ratios and ensured that they maintained an acceptable staff/carer ratio, which was usually a 12:1 ratio (each FPSSW managing a maximum of 12 pieces of work –foster carers and form F applications). Temporary absences of staff (e.g. maternity or long-term sickness) were covered wherever possible by replacement staff. The training, quality assurance, H.R, finance and marketing departments located in Cardiff complimented the service being provided in West Wales.

Through evidence presented for the inspection and discussion with staff, the West Wales team presented as well trained, suitably qualified and enthusiastic about their work.

In the event that the registered manager was absent, cover was provided by the regional manager. Back up support was provided by the responsible individual.

The agency had procedures in place to monitor that the service was being managed efficiently and effectively. A review of quality of care, dated July 2010 (Regulation 42 report), was included with the SAF. This was a detailed report and included information under the headings prescribed in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. The report made references to consultation undertaken by the agency and evidenced that there were a number of effective forums for consulting with staff,

carers, children and local authorities. However, the agency did not include in the report what had emerged as a result of the consultation and any changes to practice as a result.

The agency was observed to operate within Pathway Care, corporate policies and procedures in relation to the recruitment and selection of staff and carers. These procedures adhered to The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. Staff personnel files were not viewed during this inspection, however the SAF recorded that all staff had been recruited according to set policies and all had a current CRB check. It was again noted that the FPSSW were experienced individuals who had appropriate qualifications to work with children. No issues were highlighted by individuals relating to staff training availability or content.

Through discussion with staff and information provided for the inspection it was evidenced that staff received regular, good quality supervision and all staff reported having received an annual appraisal. Staff meetings were scheduled on a regular basis with all staff attending. Minutes of staff meetings were recorded and kept appropriately.

Pathway Care (West Wales) fostering agency is situated in the village of Capel Dewi approximately four miles from the town of Carmarthen. Capel Dewi Hall is a large building set in its own grounds with ample parking spaces for staff and carers. The area designated for car parking is gravelled and may cause difficulty for wheelchair users, however access to the ground floor areas of the building would not be restricted for a person with a disability.

Internally the ground floor comprised reception, meeting and contact rooms. The contact room was equipped with play equipment and toys to which young people had access. All rooms could be used by foster carers and young people for meetings or for supervised contact with birth parents. The administration staff are also located on the ground floor. The upper floor is utilised as office space for staff and has restricted access to non-staff members. The storage of files was located in individual offices. All staff had their own desk space and the manager had a separate office. Staff also had access to a kitchen area on the ground floor. Insurance cover included employer and public liability, professional indemnity and covers the premises and contents. The premises is protected by a security system.

The agency was observed to have effective administrative systems that included staff having easy access to computers. It was said that appropriate measures were in place to safeguard IT systems.

All foster carers consulted with said that they had secure, locked storage facilities for confidential information to be stored. This was monitored by FPSSW and reinforced during training on record keeping. Panel members had appropriate lockable facilities in their home for the storage of panel information.

Pathway Care has a dedicated finance department that managed the payment systems. Financial records were not requested as part of this inspection process and the inspector did not evidence any issues that would suggest that the fostering agency was not financially viable. Foster carers did not raise any issues with regards to payments. Foster carers spoken to were clear about payments and funding for equipment required for looking after children. Updated information on such matters was contained in the foster carer's handbook.

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
Ensure that the review of quality of care report reports the views of children in placement, foster carers, staff and placing authorities and records any changes to practice as a result.	

Section four: Provision of foster carers (including panel)

Inspector`s findings:

Information provided for the inspection indicates that Pathway Care (West Wales) are providing a fostering service with 86 approved carers, all located within West Wales, with a total of 179 approved placements.

Evidence was observed within individual case files that potential carers applying to the agency were contacted by a supervising social worker. As with previous inspections of the service, several foster carers indicated that the decision to work for Pathway Care was due to the way in which the agency responded quickly and efficiently to their application. At the time of inspection there were eleven prospective carers undertaking the assessment process and awaiting approval.

Information provided for the inspection evidenced that Pathway Care had a thorough recruitment process from initial enquiry through to approval at foster panel. Foster carers were assessed using the new BAAF Form F1 competency based assessment template (2007 which was implemented in 2009). The assessment was undertaken by the FPSSW's and reviewed the applicants past experience, life history and family relationships to confirm their suitability to become foster carers. These included detailed and involved interviews, references, medical and CRB checks being undertaken. The assessment process was seen to take, on average, four months with between twelve and fourteen visits to applicants and family members. Prior to the assessment going to Panel the applicants were visited by a member of the Quality Assurance team to ensure all appropriate checks, including health and safety were in place.

Pathway Care provided a specialist service for young people between the ages of eight years and sixteen years. The service is designed for young people who have challenging behaviours and complex needs. The service is managed in partnership with Marlowe Child and Family Services and Pathway Care. It is an innovative programme which provides placements in a residential placement to stabilise behaviours and establish routines and boundaries. Once young people were assessed as able to function in a fostering environment a transition to specialist fostering placements with Pathway Care foster carers was undertaken. The registered manager and the lead worker for the Safe Steps programme said that when carers were recruited for the Safe Steps programme they undertook an additional three sessions with carers, to ensure that they understood the parameters and the specific demands and skills necessary for that service.

Potential carers were expected to undertake the mandatory 3-day preparation to foster training pre-approval. Both applicants were expected to attend. The course was facilitated by the Pathway Care Training Department. The course includes training on Child Protection, Attachment Issues, The Legal Framework, contact Arrangements, Children With Disabilities, Understand and Managing Challenging Behaviour and Moving Children On. Foster carers said that the training provided a sound foundation for them and was an integral part of the assessment process. Discussions with and information received from foster carers emphasised the importance of this training as it highlighted the realities of the fostering task for potential carers. On-going training to meet any individual needs was considered and provided as and when identified via supervision and annual reviews of carers.

It was evidenced through discussion with the registered manager and the member of staff responsible for 'parenting assessments' that the agency currently provides parent and child placements, where the foster carer provides a nurturing environment, but does not

assess the parenting capabilities of the parent. Pathway Care is planning to introduce The Families First Parenting Assessment programme, which can be commissioned by the local authorities. It will be managed by a specific member of staff who will undertake assessments of the parenting capacity of the parent in the parent and child placement. The service will be delivered by a team of specifically recruited parenting assessment carers, who will be differentially assessed, supported and trained and will have no other 'looked after' children in placement. Specially trained foster carers undertaking these placements will contribute to an assessment being undertaken through their observation and monitoring of a parent and child in placement. Foster carers recruited for parenting assessment work will be provided with additional training to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge needed for the task required.

Foster carers visited as part of the inspection said that they received fortnightly visits from their FPSSW's. Other support provided included regular telephone contact and availability of staff. The way in which Pathway Care supported its carers was highlighted as a particular strength of the agency.

Foster carers stated that they were aware of the out of hours on call system that was available to them and that when they had needed to use it they had found to be easily accessible.

Foster carers were reviewed on annual basis. The inspector noted on files inspected and viewing other records, that the timeliness of annual reviews being completed from when the annual review process had commenced, to signing off by senior managers was delayed by several months. This was discussed with the registered manager and the Head of Learning and Development during the inspection. The Quality Assurance Manager had been on absence on sick leave and her absence had been covered by the Head of Learning and Development, which had caused some delay. The agency was able to evidence that there had been a big improvement in the timeliness of annual reviews being undertaken and being signed off at the time of inspection. The Quality Assurance Manager has since returned to work.

The two Pathway Care Welsh regional offices shared a joint fostering panel which met every month in the Cardiff office. Panel was not observed at this inspection as sufficient information was provided via pre-inspection documentation and questionnaires completed by nine panel members, to confirm continued compliance with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2001.

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 five: Quality of care and safety for children placed

Inspector`s findings:

Pathway Care provided a diverse range of placements. Staff and foster carers consulted with described Pathway Care as a child-centred agency and said that the main strength of the agency was that the promotion of the welfare young people placed was viewed as a high priority. Foster carers said that they are well supported by the agency to provide safe environments for the children they cared for.

Files examined during the inspection evidenced that appropriate checks and clearances, as required by the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards, were conducted on all foster carers prior to any matching processes starting. There were clear procedures for the placement of children and part of the assessment process focused on the provision of suitable accommodation. Comprehensive health and safety checks were undertaken during the BAAF Form F assessment to ensure the home and immediate environment were free from any potential risk of injury or harm. Health and safety checks were re-visited during the foster carers annual review process. Foster carers confirmed that they had undertaken training in health and safety training as part of the assessment process and that health and safety training is also provided on a yearly basis, as required.

The registered manager said that they promoted best outcomes for child and young people via clear identification of desired outcome for each child and ongoing monitoring as well as proactive reporting to local authorities. The outcomes for children model which takes account of the 'Children First' and 'Every Child Matters' objectives, places greater emphasis on the joint responsibilities of the placing authority and fostering agency to ensure that every child's needs are clearly identified at the point of referral and that the outcomes for children are closely monitored and evidence.

A Safe Care policy was in place. Advice on Safe Caring was included in the Foster Carers Handbook. Information provided on the SAF said that training on Safe Care was provided as core training for foster carers. Of the seven questionnaires returned by foster carers, six confirmed that they had received training in Safe Care within the last three year. Foster carers who met with the inspector confirmed that Safe Care agreements have been completed and there was evidence of Safe Caring agreements in the files examined.

The agency had appropriate policies and procedures to help protect young people form all forms of abuse and neglect. Information provided on the SAF indicated that the agency was updating policies and procedures on Child Protection. Foster carers and staff received Child Protection training as part of core training. Discussions with foster carers and questionnaires completed confirmed that the majority of foster carers had received training in Child Protection in the last three years.

Information provided for the inspection indicated that eleven child protection concerns have been reported since the last inspection. Pathway Care had a robust system for notifying CSSIW of any child protection issues and other notifiable events as prescribed in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. Pathway Care was pro-

active in ensuring that notifications were received by CSSIW in a timely way. All incidents of suspected abuse were referred to the local authorities. The registered manager said that there had been some difficulties with one local authority not inviting them to a strategy meeting when clearly the agency should have been there. Monthly reports and quality assurance monitoring meetings were held to track all allegations and outcomes to ensure that matters were followed through appropriately and identified any trends or potential patterns.

Information provided for the inspection indicated that the agency was in process of updating their Complaint policy and procedure. The agency reported that seven complaints had been received by the agency since the last inspection. Records maintained by the agency evidence that all concerns and complaints were taken seriously and investigated with details of the complaint and outcomes being recorded.

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: Placement of children parts v & vi of the regulations

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.

Inspector's findings:

The Pathway Care West Wales region works with several local authorities throughout Wales and England. The SAF provided prior to the inspection of this service and discussions with the registered manger indicate that the All Wales Pre-Placement Agreements in line with Regulation 40 (4) of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 are being completed by the agency and all Welsh placing authorities.

Discussion with staff indicated and information on the SAF confirmed that child specific contracts (individual placement agreements) in line with Regulation 40 (5) agreements were in place.

Through the recruitment of a diverse range of foster carers, the agency continued to offer a variety of locations, family composition and experience of carers to enable a child's individual needs to be met. Placement processes were reviewed in 2008 and monitoring systems were revisited to ensure that children referred were matched as fully as possible. Two questionnaires returned by local authority social workers said that children had been well matched in the agency. The agency had clear procedures for the placement of children. All referrals for placements with this agency were made through a local authority. When seeking a placement the local authority would initially trawl the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CSSR) to identify availability of suitable carers. If there was a likely match with a Pathway Care foster carer, referrals were usually made by email, fax or telephone. When a referral was made to Pathway Care a referral matching information form was completed. Discussion with staff indicated that a careful matching process was conducted on all referrals received and staff said that matching was seen as a high priority in the agency.

Information provided for the inspection indicated that the agency had clear arrangements with local authorities about the termination of placements, which included time scales and notifications. The agency continued to pride itself on stability of placements but recognised that this could not always be achieved. The registered manager said that when maintaining a placement was not possible and a placement needed to be brought to an end the agency would do this in full consultation with the placing authority wherever possible.

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 seven: Records**Inspector`s findings:**

Pathway Care Ltd (West Wales) had written policies relating to case recording, access to information and the Data Protection Act. Foster carers had access to copies of this documentation within the foster carer handbook.

Pathway Care has been implementing a new agency wide database CASSI. The CASSI system was being embedded and the agency were in a transitional period of importing placement and carers data into the system, which meant that some information was recorded in the files and some on CASSI. The agency was confident that the next phase of development for CASSI would significantly improve the agency's ability to improve information systems.

Separate files for each foster carer and young person were in place in addition to information on CASSI. The inspector examined both the information on CASSI and the files of four foster carers and four children/young people. It was observed by the inspector that some information recorded on the files and in CASSI was sometimes different, which could lead to confusion of which was the most up to date information. The inspector recommended that there was a period of consolidation to ensure that all the information was accurate and up to date.

Pathway Care had a structured approach to ensure that any outstanding information at the time of placement was clearly identified and requested from the local authority in a robust manner. A system was in place to ensure that files were audited by managers and missing documentation was identified. Despite the agency's commitment and processes in place to request missing documents, some key documents were missing from the files. Evidence that key documents had been requested from the local authority was not in place on all the files that were examined.

Foster carers and staff spoken to during the inspection said that letters of re-approval were sent out following an annual review. One foster carers file examined did not contain any copies of re-approval notices following the foster carer's annual review.

Some of the files examined confirmed that unannounced visits had been made in the last twelve months to the foster carers. Seven foster carers questionnaires returned said that they had not had an unannounced visit in the last twelve months.

A register of foster carers was located on the agency's database. Information provided for the inspection indicated that it was updated, reviewed and maintained by the administrators on a monthly basis following foster Panel recommendation and the agency's decision maker's approval.

Life story work for young people was addressed within the foster carer's handbook. It was stated that foster carers working for this agency were aware of the importance of keeping appropriate memorabilia in relation to the young person in their care. The agency issued 'life story packs' to each young person, to help facilitate this process.

It was an expectation by the agency that all foster carers keep a daily diary in relation to the children placed and it was indicated that foster carers then completed a monthly placement report in respect of every child in placement.

All information in relation to foster carers and young people was securely stored in locked cabinets on the premises of the agency. Foster carers consulted stated that they had secure, locked storage facilities for confidential information.

The manager stated that systems were in place to ensure that relevant documentation

was returned to the responsible authority at the end of a placement. The agency was aware of the need for copies to be retained for up to 15 years in line with the requirements of Regulation 22 (2); Schedule 2 and archiving systems were in place.

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agency must continue to request LAC documents from the local authorities. Ensure that copies of requests for LAC documents are recorded on the files and processes in place are followed if not received. • Copies of letters of re-approval are to be kept on the foster carers records following an annual review. • Unannounced visits to be undertaken at least on an annual basis and recorded on the foster carer’s records. • Ensure that any recording is placed on paper files and CASSI to ensure accurate information is recorded. 	

Section eight: Short term placements

Inspector`s findings:

Pathway Care is able to provide short breaks as outlined in their statement of purpose. This however, has not been a service which has been required by local authorities in the last year.

Placements were available to provide foster carers with respite with other approved foster carers or with specific family members or friends who had undertaken a BAAF F2 assessment to care for specific children. The registered manager said that the Form F2 assessment was under review, but as a minimum a short life history of the F2 carer was required, two personal references were sought, local authority checks and CRB checks were undertaken. An assessment of their relationship with the child and the care arrangements were included in the Form F2 report.

Carers who could provide short breaks to children not known to them were assessed using the full BAAF Form F1 Competency Based Assessment process.

Discussion with staff indicated that monitoring arrangements for any short break or respite placement would be the same as offered to other placements.

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 nine: Family and friends as carers**Inspector`s findings:**

Not applicable to this fostering 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