

Catholic Caring Services

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC037797
Inspection date	2 November 2007
Inspector	Helen Humphreys
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Catholic Caring Services 218 Tulketh Road Ashton-on-Ribble PRESTON PR2 1ES
Telephone number	01772 732313
Email	susanswarbrick@catholiccaringservices.org.uk
Registered person	Catholic Caring Services
Registered manager	Susan Bernadette Swarbrick
Responsible individual	James Patrick Cullen
Date of last inspection	11 September 2006

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Catholic Caring Services provides a range of services to children and adults and has been in existence for over 50 years. The fostering service was established nearly ten years ago. The service currently has 27 carers with 28 children placed mainly from the north west of England. The service recruits, trains, assesses and supports carers and provides short, long term and respite placements. The service also has carers who look after children with disabilities and complex needs. The staff also undertake referred work from local authorities including step parent adoption, birth record counselling and supporting carers when allegations have been made.

Summary

This was an announced inspection and included an inspection of all the key National Minimum Standards (NMS) with the exception of 31, short breaks and 32, friends and family carers as these NMS do not apply to this agency. This is a relatively small agency which has been operating for ten years. It provides a service to local authorities and the young people in placement are making good progress and are happy with their living arrangements. The carers are very well supported and value the support they receive from the staff. The agency is well staffed by qualified, competent and loyal staff who are well supported and have access to a range of developmental opportunities. The agency is well managed by an experienced social work practitioner who has good support from the directors of the agency. The agency has recently undertaken a review of the services in order to be able to respond more appropriately to the needs of the placing authorities. The recommendations of the review have yet to be fully implemented and the developmental areas identified in this report will provide opportunity to further the work of the agency, the service it provides and to ensure that it is meeting the Regulations and NMS.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This agency has over the last few months undertaken a review of the fostering services in the anticipation that they will be more able to respond to the changing nature of referrals from placing authorities. This included a review of the recommendations made at the last inspection which was to review training for carers in the use of physical restraint and to review timings and venues for training in general. These matters have been addressed and the range and type of training for carers has been reviewed and this remains ongoing as part of the review of the service. Although the full outcome of the review has not been implemented some changes have been made. These include the appointment of, family support workers, an education support worker and a child psychologist to support carers with advice, in particular on managing difficult behaviour.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency supports and promotes the health and well being of the children placed. This is provided through training to the carers and monitoring of health care matters during supervision. Children with specific health care needs receive extra support and advice from staff and the

medical advisor to the panel. The agency has recently employed a child psychologist who will provide sessional work for the carers to give specific advice. However, the agency does not create specific health care plans or routinely ask for the health care action plans created following the health care assessments undertaken by the placing authority. The agency is currently updating all their policies and procedures during the review and is aware of the need to develop a smoking policy in line with new guidance and legislation, so that these can better support carers and provide appropriate guidance. Carers are offered first aid training via an external agency but this remains optional and there is no on-going or refresher type training. Without this training carers would not necessarily know what to do in the event of a child sustaining an accident.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency is managed by an experienced social work practitioner who has relevant qualification and skills. She is supported by a children's service manager and director both of whom have relevant qualification and experience. The arrangements for recruitment and selection of staff are appropriate and all required checks and processes had been adhered to. The carers are providing a good standard of care to the young people placed. The agency has in place safe caring policies and pet care assessments, which are child and family specific and are reviewed at the annual reviews and at the start of any new placement. Health and safety checklists are in place and these are updated at the annual review of carers. Although some unannounced visits have taken place these are not formalised and do not follow an agreed format. The arrangements for matching are good and known to all staff. The manager carefully manages all placements to ensure that the needs of the young people can be met in the placement. Placements are supported by placement planning meetings and the creation of placement agreements. The children in place are satisfied with their placements and are making good progress. Matching decisions are recorded on file. However the agency uses incorrect terminology when placing children with carers outside their approval range, although appropriate procedures are in place. Carers have been provided with appropriate child protection training although this has not been updated since the pre-approval training. There has been two child protection matters in the previous 12 months, which have been appropriately dealt with by the agency, although one has not been finally resolved as yet. This has raised some learning points for the agency which they plan to consider. Carers have been provided with training in behaviour management and provided with additional information in the carer's handbook. Incidents of a children being reported missing from home are reviewed by the manager. Issues of bullying, if any, are discussed during visits to the carers, however, carers do not receive specific training on anti-bullying strategies. The arrangements for the panel, which is shared with the adoption agency are appropriate and the panel chair is an experienced social work practitioner. The agency is currently looking to appoint a new chair in the new year. The panel membership meets the Regulations, but does not currently have a member who was previously in care. The panel minutes are appropriate and record the nature of the discussions and the outcomes of recommendations to the decision maker who is the director of the agency. The panel have plans in hand to undertake training to inform them of current good practice and to promote positive working arrangements. There is potential for the role of the agency decision maker to be come blurred as he attends the panel occasionally and would be aware of the nature of the discussions held when making decisions.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Carers are provided with training on equality and diversity during the pre-approval training but no specific further training has been provided. Carers who look after children with disabilities receive additional support through the work of the family support workers and have received additional and specific training. However, a specific matter relating to anti-discriminatory practice had not been noted or explored by either the assessor or panel during the assessment of some potential carers. Once raised with the agency they took a pro-active course of action to amend the matter and the manager agreed that there is more work to undertake in all matters relating to equality and diversity. The service promotes the education of the children placed and have recently appointed an education support worker to provide additional support and advice to carers. However, the actual remit of this work is as yet to be defined. Carers provide practical support to young people and encourage them to do well. No children have been suspended or expelled from school in the last 12 months. The agency does not formally monitor the educational achievement of the looked after children (LAC) although general progress is discussed during carer's supervision and visits. All of the children placed have a personal education plan.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The arrangements for contact are good and are known to staff, carers and young people. Contact arrangements are taken into account during matching and are discussed during carer's supervision. The agency does not currently have any formal plans for consultation with children, although various groups and activities have been tried in the past. The agency has established a carer's consultation group, although this has not formally met as yet. Children are consulted during the carer's annual reviews and prior to their own statutory reviews. Staff try to see the children placed when they visit the carers whilst mindful of the role of the placing social worker. The agency has a number of social events during the year for carers and young people providing opportunities for informal consultation. The agency has an effective complaints procedure in place and this was known to children and carers. Children were aware of how to complain, the range of people they could talk to if required and appropriate information is provided to carers and young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The agency has developed work on promoting independent living skills and older young people are supported. However, the agency recognises that this is an area for further development. The fees the agency pay is more than the Government's recommended rates and is also under review. Carers are satisfied with their payments and allowances.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall the agency is well managed. The managers and staff have undertaken a review of the service and the outcomes of this have yet to be fully implemented. There are other areas which require further development in order to meet the NMS and provide a range of carers who can meet the needs of the placing authorities. The Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide were

revised in April 2007 and are currently under review. The Children's Guide provide appropriate information for children and there is a version available for children with disabilities. However, children who were most recently placed had not received a copy. The manager undertakes a range of monitoring activities but these are not formalised in to an annual report which is used to reflect on practice and share with panel members and other interested parties. The staff in the agency have opportunities to develop new ideas and initiatives but these do not form part of an overall developmental plan which can be monitored and evaluated. The agency has sufficient staff to support the number of carers and children placed. The staff are well supported and have access to a range of training opportunities and receive supervision but have not had an appraisal for over 12 months. The staff are experienced, appropriately qualified, loyal and committed to the work of the agency. The agency has appointed family support workers to provide additional practical support, however there roles are relatively new and are not developed and not defined. The team are well supported by good administrative staff and all records and files are in good order. The agency has a number of carers who are providing a good standard of care. However, the agency is aware of the need to recruit more carers who will have specific skills. The agency are in the process of developing an affective recruitment strategy to attract more suitable carers. The standard of assessments are good with good use of analysis and staff have received appropriate training in undertaking assessments. Carers are provided with good levels of support and this is a strength of the agency. Carers receive support visits, support groups, training, out of hours telephone advice, equipment and practical help. Some carers receive regular formal supervision but the format of this is not robust enough to ensure that all matters are addressed and provide developmental opportunities for carers. The system for annual reviews are good and include consultation with birth and placed children. The agency recognises the need to develop a formal training plan and encourage more carers to attend. At present the carers are not receiving formal training in all the areas identified in the NMS. The carers, children's and administrative records are in good order, well organised and contain relevant documents and information.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
4	create a report to outline the monitoring activities of the agency and how the agency intends to improve the quality of care provided (Regulation 42 (1),(2), (3))	1 April 2008
20	ensure that staff have appraisals. (Regulation 21(4) (a))	1 April 2008

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- create health care plans on all young people (NMS 12.4)

-
- obtain the health care action plans created following the health care assessments (NMS 12.1)
 - provide appropriate training in first aid for all carers and provide opportunities for this to be updated (NMS 12.5)
 - develop the unannounced visits to carers so that they are more effective (NMS 22.6)
 - provide on-going and updated training for carers on a range of safeguarding matters (NMS 9.2)
 - appoint some one who has previously been in foster care or had children placed in foster care to the panel (NMS 30.9)
 - ensure that all matters relating to equality and diversity are understood and implemented. (NMS 7.1)
 - create formal processes to monitor the educational achievements of children (NMS 13.6)
 - ensure that all children who are of an appropriate age have a children's guide (NMS 1.5)
 - provide a robust system for supervision of carers. (NMS 22.1)
 - create a training plan to ensure that carers have the appropriate skills and knowledge required to continue to deliver a good standard of care. (NMS 23.1)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for 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)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for 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)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for 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)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.