

Credo Care Limited

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC035250
Inspection date	29 October 2007
Inspector	Lindy Latreille
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Credo Care 12 High Street Lydd ROMNEY MARSH Kent TN29 9AJ
Telephone number	0870 241 4285
Email	enquiries@credocare.co.uk
Registered person	Credo Care Limited
Registered manager	Gregory Nicholls
Responsible individual	Steven Robert Damien Mead
Date of last inspection	30 October 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

Credo specialises in foster care to children and young people with disabilities. A small number of short breaks placements are made from external local authorities. A small team of qualified and experienced staff works with children, foster carers and birth families to achieve secure and positive placements. The service is based in Lydd and works predominantly in Kent and is developing services towards South West London. The Agency is embarking on staffing an office in Leicestershire; as yet this is not registered. Information on the service and previous reports are available from the Agency.

Summary

The inspection was carried out at short notice. The registered manager facilitated the inspection process fully. Staff and foster carers are able to give detailed accounts of their roles and responsibilities within the organisation. Successful matching provides stable placements for young people with complex needs and there have been no placement disruptions in the past three years. Documentation evidences that the service is well managed and organised, and provides good outcomes for young people with complex needs.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

A review of the financial department has taken place and is now managed by the Director of Finance, an experienced accountant especially in fostering taxation. Accounts are scrutinised by an external firm of Accountants before being presented to the board. The Director of Finance is involved in assisting the foster carers in their initial training attending the 'Skills to Foster' course and provides a comprehensive handout for the foster carers.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

All health information is collated and relayed to foster carers. There are good communications between the Agency and their carers; accidents and incidents being reported in a timely way. Medication is recorded and the hard copy collected at supervision. Some records do not identify all of the following: the year, start date, purpose, route, duration or disposal if stopped mid course by the general practitioner or community nurse; but some do. Health care is contained in a holistic document 'All about Me' and able to move with the young person if they were to be placed elsewhere. This information is individual and detailed to give a good overview of each young person. There is no record of screening for health conditions related to young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) heritage. Monthly progress reports, written by the supervising social workers (SSW), contain update information and are part of the registered manager's quality audit. Ceiling tracking for hoisting is in place for the health and safety of the young people and their carers. Many of the young people are seen very frequently for their complex medical needs and for some, in discussion with placing social workers (PSW), the young people are not subjected to annual medicals as their progress is constantly well observed. At present foster carers do not use body maps to note unexplained injuries, though reporting and taking action is timely. Visits made to fostering household confirm a high level of knowledge and practice. This ensures consistency in the delivery of care for the young people, who

experience extremely complex health needs, in a homely and domestic environment. Foster carers are trained in first aid and this is reviewed annually. Other training supports carers' knowledge of health care. Feedback from PSW is positive and includes, 'The carers provide an exceptionally high level of physical and emotional support'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The registered manager is experienced and qualified to carry out the functions of a registered manager. Foster carers comment positively on the development of the Agency under his leadership. The fostering households are inspected annually with regard to health and safety. Households visited are comfortable and organised to meet the complex needs of the young people placed. All equipment is routinely maintained. Where appropriate, to meet the young people's medical needs, hospital equipment is in place. The carers' vehicles are routinely checked for compliance. Health and safety audits are carried out annually. The foster carers' handbook has considerable information and is empathically written to encourage carers to be aware of the young people's emotional needs when often their health needs are necessarily regarded first. The matching is managed by one member of staff from initial enquiries to confirmed placement. No emergency placements are carried out but a placement may be managed quickly to meet the needs of the young person, when all documentation is in place. Matters concerning safeguarding are referred to meet procedural requirements and notified to Ofsted. Minutes of meetings evidence the protection of any young person and other agencies involved. All the staff and foster carers receive training in safeguarding and the prevention and awareness of bullying on an 18 month training programme. Foster care agreements confirm that corporal punishment is not acceptable and safe caring guidelines are in place for each young person. Due to their complex needs no young people has been absent without permission. Feedback from PSW's says 'The carers are always extremely vigilant around safety issues.' All recruitment checks are in place. No telephone contact is made at present to referees, though this was done in past times. Qualified staff are registered with the General Social Care Council (GSCC) and pin numbers are in place for qualified nurses. All Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out every two years, in preference to the required three year cycle. When assessment work is completed by a student social worker there is no evidence that this is supervised by a qualified social worker. Panel meetings are held mostly quarterly. The minutes show that the panel functions within requirements. The written recorded minutes do not include all the discussion and questions raised with each applicant and it is not possible to always understand the reasons for the recommendations made. The Panel chair is aware that when next recruiting it is essential to balance the gender profile, recruit a foster carer and someone with experience of being in care. The Agency decision maker is a director of the Agency and experienced in fostering matters.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Foster carers are aware through training that they have a role to support the ethnicity of each young person. As the young people are mostly constrained by complex disabilities the Agency is mindful of their exposure to discriminatory practice. Fostering households visited demonstrated their advocacy on behalf of the young people in their care in matters of health, education and adult services. The support for contact in the fostering households demonstrated a value for the young people's heritage. Working for the achieved accreditation with The National Autistic

Society (NAS) has brought about significant developments by the autism specialist member of staff to meet the educational needs for foster carers and the daily needs of the young people on the spectrum. Arrangements are in place for some young people to attend school for part of the week to maximise achievement and the attendance has shown a considerable improvement. On the files sampled, though the personal action plans (PEP's) and individual education plans (IEP's) had been requested many times the current ones were not in place. Reports from schools are positive in their support of, and achievement by, the young people. Feedback from PSW's includes '.....is well stimulated within the placement' A small number of short-breaks are planned. These are young people living at home who need a tailored placement whilst their family take some respite. In such instances the parental responsibility remains with the parent at all times during the placement. Prior to confirming the placement, the Agency confirms the date that the PSW will visit during the first seven days, as required by regulation. Other short breaks are arranged for foster carers in the Agency to have holiday cover in a well managed and organised manner which meet the needs of the young people placed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Where necessary the Agency supervises contact, otherwise it is managed by the fostering households. Visits to foster carers confirmed planned contact arrangements and some meetings were re-located to facilitate the birth family. Evidence that the foster carers update the Agency following contact is on file. Contact arrangements are on the standing agenda for the Looked after Children (LAC) reviews of each young person. Foster carers are offered training in the management of 'Good Contact' as part of the 18 month rolling programme. Life story work, another valuable training course, involves birth family members where possible. The Agency has identified that they are not able to evidence much consultation with the young people. A pictorial questionnaire is available but most young people are too challenged with their complexity of additional needs to produce an effective outcome. A new strategy is to be put in place, once all permissions are granted, of recording the young people and the outcomes will be used at each foster carer's annual review. During visits to fostering households carers confirm that they consult with the young people and are able to explain the choices that the young people make in the daily routine of each day, such as clothing, food or drink or activities. At present these choices are not recorded. Training in 'Makaton for Children' is available as part of the rolling programme, many foster carers are also proficient in the picture recognition communication system (PECS). The Agency works closely with the placing authorities in regard to the funding of each young person prior to their move to adult services when they reach the age of majority. To expedite this work an independent advocate offers support. Records show that discussion is recorded as to whether other young people should be supported by advocates and the decisions recorded with reasons. Feedback from PSW's includes 'Credo Care support individual needs by supporting carers'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of purpose is available for any enquiries. A DVD is in place as a children's guide; work is commencing to re-make this with increased modernity. Staff are enthusiastic about

their work and demonstrated team work during the inspection. Monthly staff meetings are detailed and recorded. Training for qualified and administrative staff takes place with foster carers. Staff confirm that it enables them to have a greater understanding of other people's roles. All office staff have contracts and training portfolios. Specialist training to support the widening knowledge of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), some attended in the foster carer's home, is given by the agency's specialist. The staff team is expanding as the service grows. Retention is good, staff confirm that supervision meets their needs. Staff are pleased to be starting identified training to support their information technology development, funded by the Agency. Foster carers speak of feeling well supported and listened to through supervision and support groups. Assessments seen demonstrate thorough procedures resulting in good outcomes for children and young people. Feedback from PSW includes 'The level of communication is good and support available when needed'. Foster carers have recently had their respite increased to three weeks. This is managed through short breaks with other carers of the Agency, thus ensuring consistency for the young people. The annual reviews of each foster carer are timely in the files sampled. Each foster carer is given a very comprehensive hand book which explains tasks and also the necessary psychology to support the young people. Case records are orderly and well maintained. The registered manager routinely signs as part of his completed quality audit. All files are securely stored. Administrative records are relevant and useful, which staff find maximises their time management. The Agency are the only fostering service in the United Kingdom that has received accreditation with The National Autistic Society (NAS) and in March 2007 received their first successful review. The Panel report says 'Credo Care is a very innovative, cutting edge service and the Accreditation Department would welcome the service writing a paper to be published on the Accreditation website.' The Agency has also achieved a repeat of the Investors in People (IIP) post recognition review, awarded in October 2007. The finance department has been overhauled and accounts presented to the board are scrutinised by an external company of accountants. Complaints are logged appropriately and there are none found against the Agency, including allegations. Feedback from inspection questionnaires by seven PSW and two foster carers are all strongly positive of the Agency's management. CRB's are renewed each two years for foster carers and staff. The registered manager produces a quarterly report to meet the Regulation 42 requirements, these are detained and review all aspects of the service.

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of panel meetings detail discussions to support the decision making process. NMS 30

- ensure that telephone contact is made on recruitment referees to verify the detail of the reference. NMS15
- ensure that work done by student social workers is evidenced as supervised. NMS 15
- ensure the awareness and recording of choices offered to the young people. NMS 11

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.