

Perpetual Care/ Perpetual fostering

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
Type of Inspection	Key

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Registered manager	
Responsible individual	Tahir Khan
Date of last inspection	29 November 2007

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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

The agency is situated in offices on Chorley New Road, Bolton. The area that the agency covers is mainly in the North West of England and some areas of North Wales. The offices are situated with designated office space covering ground, first and second floor. The first and second level are accessible only via stairs. There is a reception area, training area and a number of offices within the building used by the Perpetual Care Group. The agency is registered with Ofsted to provide foster care placements for children and young people 0 to 18 short term, long term and emergency placements.

Summary

This inspection was an announced inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to see how the agency promoted and supported children and young people who are placed with foster carers recruited and approved by the agency. The agency, at the previous inspection had a number of actions and recommendations made to ensure that the care and support provided to children and young people promoted their safety and wellbeing. The agency has addressed a number of these including recruiting a manager, additional staffing and developing systems to appropriately record information. Stability within staffing over the past few months has enabled the service to focus on moving the agency forward to achieve good outcomes for children and young people. Actions and recommendations have been made during this inspection. These include greater emphasis on appropriate and accessible training for carers and also that the agency has an established gate keeping role to ensure that information presented at panel is complete to enable panel to effectively make recommendations regarding the approval and re-approval of carers. Carers feel that the agency supervising social workers provide appropriate levels of support and supervision. Children and young people are placed appropriately and carers provide a good level of support to children and young people.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The agency was registered in 2006. At the previous inspection the agency had a number of actions made to improve the service provided. Most of these actions have been addressed, however, a number remain outstanding but the agency has an action plan in place that identifies timescales that are in place to ensure that any outstanding actions are addressed within an agreed timescale. The agency has recruited a director of practice and a fostering manager. The manager is in the process of submitting an application to Ofsted to be the Registered Manager. In addition to this, the service has two full time supervising social workers and one part time supervising social worker. All are employed on permanent contracts by the agency. The agency has also recruited additional administrators to enable the agency to develop the administration procedures to comply with The Fostering Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards. Staff receive regular supervision and an appraisal system is currently being developed. Foster carers annual reviews now ensure that health and safety assessments are updated annually.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency requests health care plans and information from the placing authority. Some of the documentation received is incomplete. The agency has followed this up and in most cases, further information has been supplied. Foster carers are aware of the health care needs of the young people placed with them and in most cases have the Looked After Children (LAC) documentation detailing this. Where this information has not been supplied, carers have actively sought the information from the placing social worker. Carers are aware of what they should do if medical consent is required. All children and young people are registered with a doctor, dentist, optician and other health care professionals as identified on health care plans. Carers maintain records of medical appointments attended and these are reviewed at supervision sessions with their supervising social worker. Training for carers regarding health care, is provided by the agency at the initial training. However, updated training has not been undertaken by all carers. The agency is currently addressing this by reviewing the whole training programme for carers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency has a new manager in post who is in the process of submitting an application to Ofsted to be the Registered Manager. Carers recruited to work for the agency are assessed in accordance with the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance Form F assessment. Some, but not all of the assessments are undertaken by independent assessors contracted to undertake this work by the agency. The quality of assessments varies, not all contain in depth information and comprehensive evaluation. Previously there had been no effective management review of the standard of assessments. This has, however, been addressed by the new manager who reviews all paperwork prior to it being submitted to panel. Health and safety assessments have been undertaken as part of the initial assessment and are updated annually as part of foster carers annual review. Carers visited as part of the inspection process are providing a good standard of care, support and accommodation to the young people placed with them. Young people say that they feel safe and happy within their placements. All young people have their own rooms that they have been encouraged and supported to personalise. The carers ensure that young people have their cultural and religious needs met as well as health and physical needs. Most safe care policies have been reviewed to include details with regard to individual children and young people in relation to specific placements. Foster care agreements are in place but do not specifically relate to the young people in placement. Previously, child protection updated training had not been undertaken. This remains outstanding, however, dates for training have been identified for the coming year to ensure that all carers have undertaken recent safeguarding training. The agency are currently reviewing the training provided to carers. Training records for carers are updated and identify any outstanding training requirements. The agency has a behaviour management policy and procedure in place. This is currently being reviewed to ensure that it clearly defines and explains to young people and carers how the agency manages behaviour. Matching for children and young people is undertaken using information on the assessment and in discussion with the placing authority. The agency plan to introduce specific matching documentation to ensure that more robust and effective matches are made. Carers confirmed that they receive information about children and young people, wherever possible, prior to placement. In the event of an emergency placement being made, this information is provided within two days. The agency has a recruitment strategy in place and has appointed a director of practice, a fostering manager, two full time supervising social workers and administration staff since the last inspection. Recruitment policies and procedures are in place. Recruitment of staff is in accordance with this. The fostering agency

has a panel that meets bi-monthly or sooner if required, to address agency business. The panel comprises of individuals with a range of skills and knowledge. Membership of the panel has fluctuated in the previous six months, with a number of changes of members. The panel chair has recently been recruited and commenced in May 2008. The panel chair has experience of fostering services and chairing meetings. Due to the limited number of panel members the panel is just quorate. The agency plan to recruit additional panel members to ensure that at all times the panel is quorate and to have independent members from education and someone who has had experience of being fostered or who has had children fostered. Panel training has not been undertaken with the new panel membership. Panel minutes inspected do not clearly identify the decision of panel in all cases heard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The recruitment strategy of the company is to recruit carers from a range of diverse backgrounds to meet the cultural, religious and ethnic origins of the children and young people for whom the agency provides a service. The agency currently has 16 approved fostering households providing care and support for up to 26 young people. Carers demonstrate a good understanding of the need to promote and support the educational needs of the children and young people placed with them. This includes assisting children to obtain places in schools, if placed out of area, attending educational meetings and supporting young people with their educational needs. The agency does not provide a short break service

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Contact details and arrangements are documented on individual young peoples files. These arrangements are known to the carers and the young people. Carers are aware of the importance of contact and the impact that this has on the young people. Where appropriate, carers accompany young people at contact. Further training regarding supporting and promoting contact is planned. The agency consults with young people and carers regarding the placement. Recently, activities have been arranged to enable young people to meet as a group. The agency plans to make these regular events to enable young people to have the opportunity to meet and discuss any issues or concerns they may have.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Carers support young people to prepare for independence. Although training has not been provided regarding preparation for independence, carers have an understanding of the role of the after care workers and work in conjunction with them to ensure that young people are supported when moving on to independent living. The agency has a foster care allowance that all carers are aware of. Information regarding allowances and payments are provided in the Foster Care Handbook. Carers spoken to confirmed that payment of the allowance is paid in accordance with the details provided and are received on time.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The service has a Statement of Purpose that identifies the aims and objectives of the service. This document is reviewed on an annual basis and amended to reflect any changes to the

organisation. All carers and placing authorities are provided with a copy. The agency has recently appointed a manager who is in the process of submitting an application to Ofsted to be the Registered Manager. The agency has also appointed a director of practice and two full time supervising social workers in accordance with their annual business plan to develop and expand the service. All staff have the necessary qualifications and experience. However a training and development plan for staff is not currently in place to ensure that all staff are supported to develop their skills and knowledge. In addition to the staff, the agency contracts independent assessors to undertake foster care assessments. The level of detail in assessments is inconsistent and there is no effective 'gate keeping' to ensure that prior to submission of assessments to panel, all relevant information is obtained. This results in some information being overlooked or panel having to defer assessments until the assessments are complete. The panel are aware that they will not approve any new carers until all relevant information is available to make an informed decision. Training programmes for carers have been limited during the period of change of staff at the agency. A training programme has been developed to enable all carers to receive training to protect and safeguard the children and young people in placement. Training issues are discussed as part of the annual review for carers. Supervision for carers is provided by supervising social workers although copies of supervision notes are not always provided to carers. The agency has undergone a period of change. Whilst a manager was not in place, staff had not received regular supervision. This has now been addressed and all staff have supervision on a regular basis. Staff appraisals will be completed as part of the annual development and performance plan. The service has a complaints policy and procedure although some of the records are not clearly maintained about the outcomes of complaints. Recruitment of additional administrators has enabled the service to ensure that that systems are being developed and put into place to ensure appropriate administration records are maintained.

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
16	ensure all staff receive appropriate training and appraisal (Regulation 21 (4)(a)(b))	30 June 2008
16	ensure that all information as specified in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 is obtained for prospective foster carers (Regulation 27 (2)(a))	30 June 2008
19	ensure that appropriate training is provided for foster carers to enable them to meet the needs of the children placed (Regulation 17(1))	21 July 2008
30	ensure that panel records reflect clearly the reasons for the recommendations made (Regulation 25 (2))	21 July 2008
8	ensure that a foster placement agreement is in place for all children and young placed in accordance with Schedule 6 of The fostering service regulations 2002 (Regulation 34 (3))	17 July 2008

Recommendations

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

- ensure that carers have accessible training on health and hygiene issues and health promotion (NMS 12.5)
- ensure all carers have access to training and maintain an up to date training portfolio (NMS 16.9)
- ensure that there is a clear training and development programme for all staff including an induction programme (NMS 19.2)
- ensure that the outcome of complaints are recorded and monitored effectively (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that the Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process (NMS 30.5)
- ensure as far as possible the panel has an independent member who has an expertise in education and an independent member who has at any time been placed with foster carers or whose child has been placed with foster carers (NMS 30.8 and 30.9)
- ensure that the behaviour management policy is reviewed and updated and a copy is provided to all carers (NMS 9.4)

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.