



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Milton Keynes Council Fostering Service

**Saxon Court
502 Avebury Boulevard
Milton Keynes
Bucks, MK9 3HS**

Lead Inspector
Rob
Smith

Announced
7 - 9 November 2005 09:30 a.m.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Milton Keynes Council Fostering Service
Address	Saxon Court, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK9 3HS
Telephone number	01908 691691
Fax number	01908253251
Email address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	N/A
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Pat Callear
Type of registration	Local Authority Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	N/A
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 25 October 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

This was an inspection of the fostering service run by Milton Keynes Council which is a unitary authority covering the town of Milton Keynes and its immediate environs. The service was supporting approximately 100 foster care placements at the time of this inspection, covering a range of specific functions. These included short, longer term and permanent fostering placements and a short break fostering scheme for children with disabilities. A significant number of the short and longer term placements were family and friends placements, where children were placed with members of their extended family. The fostering manager and staff team were centrally located in Milton Keynes, sharing office space with the main social services teams of the local authority.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection was carried out over a period of three days. The inspection activities covered comprised:

- Examination of pre-inspection information submitted by the fostering service manager
- Interviews with the fostering manager, development officer, senior children's service manager, two fostering team staff and attendance at a fostering team meeting
- Observation of fostering panel and examination of fostering panel minutes
- Letters inviting comment sent to all foster children aged over eight and to all foster carers
- Scrutiny of a sample of staff, carer and children's files
- Visits to five foster carer households
- Attendance at a looked after children's awards event

What the service does well:

The fostering service provided an overall very good quality of service with particular strengths in the following areas:

- The fostering team was very stable, widely experienced in family placement work and well managed by the fostering manager.
- Very good systems were in place to assess and monitor the health of children in placement
- Prompt and thorough attention was paid to any welfare concerns arising with regard to children in placement.
- Good systems were in place to support and supervise foster carers in their work
- The fostering panel was working consistently and effectively
- The service provided good assessments of, and support for, family and friends placements

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service had addressed appropriately all the requirements and recommendations of the last inspection and continued to sustain the overall high standards of service delivery noted at the last inspection.

Further progress had been made in integrating the Family Link carers into mainstream fostering expectations with particular regard to child protection training.

A new improved foster carers' handbook had been produced

What they could do better:

This inspection did not identify any areas of particular concern under the standards that were inspected on this occasion. The following areas were however the subject of good practice recommendation:

- the need for continuing attention to be paid to managing smoothly the planning for older young people leaving care;
- the obtaining of more detailed documentation on the agency staff used by the service to ensure managers were fully informed in their decision-making as to their use; and
- the need for a review of the current staffing levels in the fostering team in the light of increasing work demands and for consideration of the establishment of specific dedicated administrative support.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

The fostering service, in conjunction with other corporate services for looked after children, promoted the health of looked after children very well.

EVIDENCE:

As part of overall services for looked after children the fostering service had excellent links with local child health and paediatric services to provide good initial screening and ongoing monitoring of looked after children's health. The inspector was informed that this aspect of health care support had been recognised by a Clinical Governance Award in the last year.

The local authority employed a specialist nurse for looked after children, who was spoken with as part of this inspection. She acted as a key liaison between social care and health services and as an ongoing source of information and advice for foster carers and fostering service staff. Attendance at regular weekly fostering team meetings also ensured a good oversight of new admission to the care system, backed up by formal systems for notification to health services of all new admissions to the care system. This was further supported by the attendance of the specialist nurse at the regular weekly update/allocation meetings held by the fostering team.

The inspector had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Health Assessment team for looked after children. This confirmed the good links with social care services and an excellent level of monitoring of the quality of initial health assessments. These assessments now incorporated an initial health care plan identifying both ongoing regular health screening needs and requirements for any more specialist input or assessment. Ongoing health care needs continued to be monitored through statutory care reviews to which children and carers contributed in respect of many issues including that of health.

Older young people were supplied with a copy of HealthFax a document designed to provide a personal and portable record of health care needs and treatment as well as information on key health issues.

Foster carers spoken with in the course of this inspection confirmed that, as and when needed, specialist advice, training or equipment was provided by the fostering service to meet the needs of placed children. This was particularly relevant for Family Link carers supporting children with disabilities.

The fostering service had good links with the local department for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (DECAPS) for both fast track referrals for individual children and for offering advice and support to carers.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

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

The senior management of the service met the expectation of the standards and regulation in terms of their fitness to carry on the service.

The thorough processes for preparation, assessment and approval of carers helped ensure they were suitable for the role of foster carer.

Within the limits of the fostering resources available the service worked hard to ensure appropriate matching of children and carers.

The rigorous approach of the service to the prevention, and response to any concerns, of possible abuse helped ensure children in placement were appropriately protected.

Clear recruitment and vetting processes helped ensure only suitable people were engaged to work for the purposes of the service.

The fostering panel was well run and contributed fully to helping ensure the safety of children in placements.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering manager had remained unchanged since the last inspection and was an appropriately qualified and experienced person to carry out this role. A formal management qualification had been gained since the last inspection and the certificate seen during this inspection.

Scrutiny of a sample of carers files, recent assessments and observation at panel confirmed that thorough assessments of potential carers and their households were carried out covering all the various checks and references required under the regulations and standards. The panel played an appropriate role in verifying and where necessary challenging aspects of assessments.

The physical safety and appropriateness of carer households was formally checked at assessment and household reviews, as well as more informally in the context of visits to, and supervision of, carers. Evidence of this was seen on the sample of carer files seen during the inspection. Carers were provided with guidance on health and safety matters and safe caring approaches as part of preparation training and via opportunities for further training in areas such as safe care, health and safety etc. The carer households seen during the inspection did not pose any evident health and safety concerns.

Feedback from carers visited confirmed the fostering service paid good attention to respecting the approval terms of carers, although the pressure on resources led to occasional requests to carers to work outside their approval terms, most usually on a short-term basis. A formal process was in place by which such exemptions needed approval from a senior manager, as well as obviously the agreement of the carer concerned. Longer-term exemptions were considered by the fostering panel and the panel had now also begun to monitor the more short-term exemptions to gain an overview of the needs and circumstances prompting such requests.

The fostering team paid good attention to the matching requirements for individual placements as far as was possible given the range of current carers and the short notice with which many placements had to be made. Longer-term permanency placements were subject to more formal matching assessments and approval by panel. To date these approvals had been undertaken by the adoption and permanency panel but due to re-organisation within the service the fostering panel would now be taking on permanency matching approval for long-term fostering placements.

The preparation and post approval training for carers included appropriate attention to matters of safety and child protection. Targeted child protection training had been rolled out for family link carers in response to the recommendations of the last inspection. Clear guidance on child protection procedures and management of disclosures was included in the new carers' handbook. Placed young people were provided with written advice on who to contact both in and outside the fostering service if they had concerns about any aspects of their care.

Where concerns were raised about the welfare of children in placement the service ensured prompt assessment and investigation of concerns via separate established child protection referral systems in the local authority. A sample of records of recent concerns was examined during this inspection and confirmed that appropriate steps had been taken to safeguard the immediate and longer-term welfare of children in placement and to ensure full investigation of concerns where necessary. None of the concerns raised had necessitated full child protection investigations.

Appropriate recruitment processes and related record-keeping were in place evidencing a thorough approach to the recruitment and vetting of staff employed by the local authority, in line with the expectations of the standards and regulations. The inspector was informed that some previous confusion about the obtaining of CRB clearances for administrative staff working for the service had now been resolved and that these checks would now be put underway. This will be checked up upon at the next inspection.

Occasional use was being made of agency social work staff to support the team. Confirmation of appropriate checks having been carried out was received in writing from the agency concerned. However the actual sighting of supporting evidence, for example references, on a consistent basis by the fostering manager may be advisable, as the production of these documents for the purposes of the inspection raised issues in relation to agency staff used that the fostering manager had been previously unaware of.

The fostering team had remained largely unchanged since the last inspection and contained a wealth of knowledge, qualification and experience in both general childcare work and, more specifically, in family placement work. Assessments were only carried out by appropriately qualified staff.

The morning session of a fostering panel was observed and file papers and minutes of the previous panel were also scrutinised. This evidence confirmed the panel was appropriately constituted and run effectively, providing good consistent scrutiny of initial approvals and household reviews. The panel membership was largely unchanged from the last inspection the group was evidently becoming more confident in its role. As already noted, a new area of work in terms of approval of permanent fostering placements was now being taken on, which was recognised to be a significant new challenge. The fostering manager indicated further training input was being arranged.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 7,13,31

The service was committed to addressing issue of diversity in relation to recruitment and support of carers and support of children's placements.

The service provided appropriate guidance and support to ensure placed children's educational achievement was promoted.

The respite care services provided maintained an appropriate recognition of parents' ongoing primary caring role.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service operated within the local authority's overall commitment to, and development of, diversity policies and resources. Fostering service carer recruitment initiatives sought, wherever possible to attract carers from an increasingly wider range of cultural and minority ethnic backgrounds to try to ensure appropriate placement matching. Figures provided by the fostering services indicated that currently some 7% of carers were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Staff spoken with indicated that where transracial placements were made initial placement planning would identify any additional resources required to support carers and the child in placement.

Aside from issues of ethnicity the service encouraged recruitment of carers from diverse backgrounds including single people, heterosexual and same sex couples and peoples with disabilities. A same sex couple was, coincidentally, newly approved at the panel observed during inspection. Preparation groups

for carers addressed issues of diversity and ongoing training in this area had also been provided in the past year.

Feedback from the fostering manager indicated that only a very small number of placed children were not in some form of formal education, with the majority of these in full time school. Education support and monitoring of progress was provided via the education service for looked after children and also explored at statutory care reviews. Standard practice in Milton Keynes was also to ensure looked after children had ready access to computer facilities for the purposes of study.

One area of concern highlighted by the service itself were the resources for support of carers whose placed children, although in formal education, did not have a fulltime place at school or college, with consequently greater demands on the time of carers. The fostering manager indicated that resolutions were being explored with education colleagues and that in the meantime respite support from other carers or support by sessional fostering staff was used to support such placements.

Subsequent to the inspection the inspector attended an awards evening celebrating the progress of Milton Keynes looked after children. This provided good evidence of the service's, and foster carers', commitment to supporting and recognising educational progress.

The main short-term respite facility offered by the fostering service to families was the Family Link service aimed at support for families with children with disabilities. Care was provided on both a daycare and overnight basis. Evidence from a sample Family Link carer file and discussion with a carer visited confirmed that appropriate attention was paid to maintaining the core role of parents as primary carers and decision -makers. This was also confirmed in telephone contact with one parent making use of the Family Link service.

Although not strictly pertinent to the focus of the standard on short-term breaks it was reassuring to note the continuing integration of the Family Link service into the mainstream of fostering expectations, in terms of support, supervision and training. Some resistance to this process was still faced from some of the more established Family Link carers but the service was managing this flexibly, with, for example, delivery of child protection training on an individual basis to Family Link carers.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 10,11

Where appropriate, in terms of children’s care plans, the service ensured good support for ongoing family contact for placed children.

Young people placed with foster carers had appropriate routes to raise issues and concerns.

EVIDENCE:

Examination of files and discussion with a number of foster carers visited confirmed that where appropriate good support was offered for contact arrangements. In some stable longer-term placements this involved visits to the foster carers household. In other circumstances contact visits were often arranged in settings away from foster homes to ensure the safety and confidentiality of carer locations. Responsibilities for transport to and supervision of contact visits was negotiated with carers depending on the location and nature of risks involved. Training on contact issues was provided as part of carer training programmes. Some of the carers visited commented that occasionally short notice arrangements for, or changes to, contact plans were put in place by social workers without consideration of the impact upon care households, particularly where multiple placements and contact arrangements might be in place.

Foster children could raise concerns or issues on an individual basis with their foster carers and/or social workers. YP Inc was an established forum for looked after children, which foster children could also use to pursue individual or more

general issues about foster care. Formal complaints processes were in place for looked after young people and, as already noted, they were provided with information on who to contact outside the fostering service. Advocacy services were also now available, provided by an independent service contracted to the local authority.

Regular consultation opportunities arose for young people in the context of their statutory care reviews and also they could contribute their views to foster carer household reviews either directly, or indirectly via their social workers.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 14,29

The fostering service provided support for children leaving care although some aspects of transition planning for adulthood were not seen to work smoothly by carers.

Systems for payment of agreed allowances and expenses were satisfactory.

EVIDENCE:

The primary responsibility for planning the preparation of young people for leaving the care system rested with the local authority Options for Independence team, working alongside foster carers and other agencies supporting young people in foster care. Feedback from some of the foster carers visited was of continuing problems in establishing reliable communication and liaison with this team and of related confusion in roles and expectations of foster carers. Carers also cited patchy knowledge of benefits and financial implications, particularly for children with disabilities, who might continue to receive support from social services into adulthood.

The fostering manager indicated that training had been arranged for carers on the preparation of young people for independence and that a working party had been set up to clarify roles and responsibilities for structuring and implementing young people's leaving care Pathway plans. Further work had been undertaken on clarifying financial entitlements and responsibilities for the 16-18 year age group. The feedback from carers would seem to indicate this remains an area of developmental work that will need a continuing focus to

ensure preparation for independent living is managed in a consistent and well-informed manner.

The fostering service had an established range of allowances and expenses for which foster carers were paid, and about which they were provided with written information. The fostering manager indicated that the whole system of allowances and expenses was under scrutiny to make them simpler, more generous where appropriate, and to eliminate some inequities that had emerged. Carers visited confirmed that systems for payment of allowances generally ran very smoothly.

Management

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 2,5,16,17,21,22,23,24,25,32

The fostering service was well managed by a suitably skilled and experienced manager (Stds 2 & 5)

The fostering staff team resources were well organised and appropriately deployed to meet the increasing demands placed upon the service.

The staff team was appropriately experienced and skilled in the areas of work undertaken but the actual level of staffing resources was just adequate to meet current demands. The range and number of foster carers continued to need to expand to meet the needs of local children.

The support systems for carers were very effective with regular supervision and support and access to a range of relevant training. (Stds 21,22 & 23).

Records for children and carers were satisfactory, as were the central records required by regulation. (Stds 24 & 25)

The use of family and friends placements continued to form a core part of the service's strategy for placing looked after children.

EVIDENCE:

As already noted the fostering manager had remained unchanged since the last inspection and was suitably experienced and qualified, having recently achieved an additional qualification in management. Feedback from staff was that the workload was well managed and overseen by the fostering manager with flexible distribution of incoming work that recognised individual areas of expertise and interest, alongside any accumulating work pressures.

The fostering staff team was very stable and appropriately experienced and qualified as already noted. Observation during the inspection confirmed they clearly worked well together and adopted a flexible approach to sharing out the diverse workload of the team to ensure tasks were completed as far as possible, within expected timescales and to required standards.

The level of work covered by the team continued to increase with the advent of increased responsibilities in relation to private fostering and the continuing emphasis on the assessment and approval of family and friends fostering placements. The latter stemmed in part from the local authority's own policy drive but also from increasing numbers of court directed assessments sample of which was seen during this inspection.

While current workloads appeared just manageable with the occasional injection of agency staff resources, the inevitable overall growth in demand for recruitment, and subsequent assessment, approval and support, of new carers, alongside the impact of private fostering and family and friends work, will require, in the view of the inspector an increase in substantive fostering staffing resources in the near future, if the current high standards of service are not to be significantly undermined. It was significant that the fostering

manager was having to undertake occasional pieces of assessment work to relieve the pressure on the staff team.

As with all local authorities the fostering service was well aware of the need to continue to recruit increasing numbers of carers to meet the needs of local families and children in an extremely competitive market. The fostering service had run a number of recruitment campaigns since the last inspection and was now involved in a rolling recruitment programme. Joint initiatives with another local authority to recruit carers for specific more challenging young people had not borne fruit. A particular focus was currently on the need to attract carers for teenage children who might need to be in single placements.

Since the last inspection 28 terminations of approval had taken place for a variety of legitimate reasons, largely in the area of family and friends placements. The fostering manager indicated no carers had left to move on to independent fostering agencies, which is a positive indication of the good support offered to carers within Milton Keynes.

Administrative support for the fostering service was provided by the company with contracted-out responsibilities for provision of administrative services to the whole Council. The fostering service had to date received support via a consistent group of administrative staff from the general pool and fostering staff were complimentary about the quality of support received from the staff concerned. However this quality was largely dependent on the availability of those same administrative staff with accumulated knowledge and expertise in the particular area of family placements work. With a pool system this clearly could not be guaranteed. There is therefore a strong argument for the establishment of dedicated subgroup of administrative staff to support the work of the family placements team. A recommendation has been made to this effect.

The fostering staff team had access to good IT equipment and support.

Feedback from carers was extremely positive about the overall level of support offered to them. A good structure of support was in place for foster carers incorporating regular recorded formal supervision, as noted on the sample of files seen, and good levels of ongoing contact and advice from their family placement officers. Unannounced visits were also taking place to carers to monitor the quality of care provided. Arranging these for out of county and Family Link carers continued to be a challenge as catching the carers actually in with children could not be guaranteed. The fostering manager was advised that where such visits did prove impossible to carry out that attention should be paid to ensuring all other all other safeguards with regard to children's welfare in those placements were in place, for example statutory visits by placing social workers.

A foster carer forum was in place, although still not well attended. Membership of the Fostering Network was a standard part of the package offered to carers and there was access to formal consultation and advice from the local department of child and adolescent psychiatry (DECAPS). Planned respite breaks were available for carers alongside input from the fostering service's sessional workers if particular help were needed with individual children or circumstances. Occasional social events for carers and their own children were also organised.

A revised and much more accessible handbook for foster carers was in the process of distribution and this provided a clear framework of practice expectations, policies and procedures within which carers could safely work.

A comprehensive range of training opportunities were available to carers to supplement preparation training course inputs. A core of the training was identified as mandatory for all approved carers and a gradual process of ensuring new and existing carers undertook the required courses was underway and this was monitored as part of annual household reviews by panel. A financial incentive was now in place to encourage attendance on training, which then led to demonstrable improvements in carer competencies.

Despite this additional incentive overall take up of training, particularly by some long established and family and friends carers, was still inconsistent, with some courses being poorly attended. The fostering service was trying to address the problem by flexible delivery of training at different times, in different ways, e.g. by delivery by family placement staff on an individual basis or as part of distance learning packages. Consideration was also given to helping with transport and alternative child care arrangements. So while the fostering service could not really be faulted in its efforts it will still need to persevere with the more resistant or less available carers and continue to use household reviews as opportunities to decide whether continuing failure to undertake training does, at any stage, warrant consideration of cancellation of approval, taking into account overall balances of risk and the welfare needs of placed children.

As well as short courses the service also supported carers in gaining NVQ qualification. Eleven carers had completed their NVQ 3 and another four were currently studying for it.

Records for carers and children were generally in good order with only very minor points noted, such as the need to consistently complete file front sheets and to compile complete chronologies on all carers' files. These were issues of which the manager was already aware. A new electronic information database system was being introduced at the time of the inspection to specifically support, and hopefully rationalise record keeping and information retrieval for, the fostering service. The system will also, in theory, enable more effective tracking of various aspects of fostering activity such as the progressing of

assessments, annual reviews, renewals of checks etc. The impact and benefits of the system will be better assessed at subsequent inspections.

Central records such as the foster carer register, and records of complaints and welfare concerns were being appropriately maintained.

As already noted the fostering service continued to devote much time and effort to the assessment, approval and support of family and friends carers both as a matter of good practice and in line with a key plank of the authority's preferred placement strategy for potentially looked after young people. The sample of carer files examined, and a visit to one set of family and friends carers, confirmed that such placements were appropriately assessed, approved and supported taking into account the particular complexities often involved in such situations.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

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

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4

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

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

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	4
4	X
5	4
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	4
23	3
24	3
25	3
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	4

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.				

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	15	That copies of all relevant paperwork, including references, are requested from the supplying agency when considering use of agency staff.
2.	14	That continuing attention is paid to ensuring the planning and preparation for young people leaving care is managed effectively between social workers, foster carers and the Options for Independence team.
3.	17	That the local authority reviews the adequacy of current staffing levels within the fostering team in light of the increasing work demands placed upon it.
4.	17	That the local authority formally establishes a specific dedicated team of administrative staff to support the work of the fostering team.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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