



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**Leicestershire County Council Fostering  
Service**

**County Hall  
Leicester Road  
Glenfield  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
LE3 8RL**

*Lead Inspector*  
Trisha Gibbs

*Announced Inspection*  
22nd August 2006      09:00

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

| <b>Reader Information</b> |   |
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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](http://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](http://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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Name of service</b>  | Leicestershire County Council Fostering Service                                      |
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| <b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b> | Leicestershire County Council Social Services  |
| <b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>             | Cath Sartoris  |
| <b>Type of registration</b>                                   | Local Auth Fostering Service   |

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006

## Brief Description of the Service:

Leicestershire County Council fostering service is managed by the Service Manager Family Placements. Two Team Managers are responsible for two supervision groups of social work staff, and the day-to-day provision of the service. The groups operate from one base, recruiting and assessing prospective foster carers and maintaining an active duty point for placement requests. There are fourteen social work staff (eleven fulltime equivalent posts) and two childcare support workers. All supervising social workers are allocated a caseload of carers, for whom they provide ongoing advice, supervision and support and some have additional dedicated fostering tasks and activities. A Senior Practitioner is responsible for processing and supporting Friends and Family (Kinship) Care applications. Five administrative staff (three fulltime equivalents) provide clerical support.

At March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 242 fostering households were providing placements for 210 of Leicestershire County Council's Looked After Children. Most placements continue to be of a mainstream family care nature however there continues to be a growing number of kinship placements. The service also provides Remand, Community, and Contract Care placements, supported with a high level of contact from the foster care service and providing placements for young people presenting with very challenging or offending behaviour. In addition, the service includes a substantial group of Short Break Carers who provide flexible respite care to children who have disabilities, and a Contract Carer who provides respite care to children with profound disabilities. A Short Breaks Extra scheme is now in place to meet the needs of disabled children who have very challenging behaviours.

The foster care service undertakes the full range of fostering activities, recruiting, assessing, approving, reviewing, training and supporting carers.

# SUMMARY

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

Two Inspectors undertook this Announced Inspection over three days, taking 64 hours, and included an Inspection of the Local Authority's Private Fostering arrangements, summarised in a separate report.

Since the Fostering Service had been subject to a full Inspection in January 2006 some of the evidence from that Inspection has supported this Inspection. Inspectors visited two fostering households and looked at four carer files. In addition to speaking to supervising social workers and Team Managers in the Fostering Team, some placing social workers were telephoned. Interviews took place with the Senior Practitioner for Kinship care, the Looked After Nurse and Doctor, Social Care and Education senior representatives for Looked After Children, and the Contracts Officer. The chair of the local Foster Care Association, and the Children's Rights Officer were telephoned, and a Fostering Team Meeting attended. A number of Personnel files were looked at.

The Manager of the Fostering Service completed an Annual Quality Assurance Assessment, data sheets, and Policy and Procedure summaries prior to the Inspection and information from these documents has contributed to the evidence and judgements within this report.

## **What the service does well:**

There is an established Team of experienced workers and a low staff turnover rate.

There are good support systems in place for carers who say they feel very well supported. Carers have access to an out of hours support line.

The Fostering Services Panel is well constituted, and chaired by person who has considerable Child Care and Child Protection. A young person who has experience of being Looked After has been appointed to work within the Corporate Parenting Team and is a member of the Fostering Panel.

The use of Special Guardianship Orders has been positively implemented.

There are good systems in place to promote and support children's education. Additional financial support is available for young people and children to support them in educational and employment activities.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

There is now an appointed Contracts Officer who is developing working relationships with Independent Agencies.

Payments systems have improved and additional fees now available for more complex placements. A short breaks extra scheme has been introduced where additional challenges are presented by some children with disabilities.

A leaver's exit questionnaire has been introduced to elicit information from carers leaving the service, which could be helpful in understanding, why carers cease to foster.

A Looked After Children's Nurse and General Practitioner are implementing the new Health Assessment and consulting with carers and children in the process.

## **What they could do better:**

Safer Care Policies should be completed for all carer households and where children share bedrooms, risk assessments should be evidenced on carer files.

Carer records e.g. supervision, carer logs should consistently demonstrate how children in placement are having their needs meet.

The matching of children to placements should be more clearly evidenced by the fostering service.

The kinship care service could be more appropriately resourced.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- 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 the outcome for Standard:

### 12

The Health and Development needs of children and young people in placement are given very good attention.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## EVIDENCE:

Carers visited said that they promoted healthy lifestyles for children in placement and there was some evidence of this seen during the visits. Children were actively involved in healthy physical activities such as swimming and cycling. Children in questionnaires and those spoken to confirmed an awareness of healthy eating. 'I like chips with everything but my carer makes me eat healthy food'. One young person had been financially supported by the service to engage in a weight loss programme. Foster Carers have been provided with discount tickets to enable them to access a range of leisure and sporting activities. Children's reviews provided good discussion and information about their Health and confirmation that routine Health checks were being undertaken. Most children were in receipt of the Clayton File (Health Passport) but as noted at the Inspection earlier this year, work to encourage carers and children to fully utilise this record is ongoing.

Inspectors met with the Looked After Children's Nurse, and a General Practitioner employed by the Specialist Community Health Services who is undertaking some work with Looked After Children. The recently introduced new Health Assessment was discussed. It was noted that this assessment is significantly different to the previous Annual Medical and provided a more holistic overview of children's general health and wellbeing. Initial Health Assessments are now being undertaken by a Consultant, and subsequent reviews by Health Visitors and School Nurses. It was evident that children and

young people, social workers and carers are positively encouraged to participate in this process and that children have the opportunity to speak to Health professional alone if they wish. This was confirmed during a visit to a carer who said that the young person she cared for had responded well to the experience. It was acknowledged that the new process was not fully embedded yet, however Inspectors noted that foster carers had been well consulted, and some visited, by the Looked After Children Nurse and General Practitioner during the development of the new system and that a good level of awareness training was taking place. It was agreed that the new inclusive Health Assessment process would improve outcomes for children and young people.

Health related training is routinely provided to carers, along with a wide range of resources and information, including First Aid, Sexual Health and Substance Misuse.

## 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

### JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

#### **6, 8, and 9**

Children visited during the Inspection appeared appropriately placed and safely cared for, however written records should more clearly evidence this. Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Standards 3, 15 and 30 were fully inspected in January this year and assessed as being fully met and scored in this report accordingly. They have not been inspected on this occasion.

A Safeguarding Children Board, with an independent Chairperson, has now been established for Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland. A Safe Caring Guide has been produced and distributed to all parents and children. A new multi agency protocol for Young People Missing from Care has recently been launched (shared with two neighbouring Local Authorities) and representatives from the Fostering Service, and carers attended for this. All carers have been provided with the new protocol, and carers are offered advice and support to undertake the necessary risk assessments on missing from home incidents, from the foster care support line or Emergency Duty Team.

Four files were looked at during the Inspection. Of these, three contained general Safe Care plans, two of these were very well detailed. One was dated and none were signed. Full Health and Safety checklists had been undertaken, also updated to reflect in one instance, a swimming pool, Jacuzzi. Very good Fire Escape Plans were noted and it was evident that carers had involved children in discussing and drawing these up. No placement risk assessments were seen on files, although Managers confirmed that referrals drawn up at Duty point would represent assessment of risk, and that elements of risk would also be discussed at the Placement Agreement Meeting. In one case tracked, a young person and two children shared a bedroom. Although not all were fostered, the overall age difference between two of them was significant enough for some acknowledgement on file, albeit brief, that consideration had been given to this arrangement, and that no risk was identified and that the children were happy with the situation.

The Fostering Service has received a low number of Complaints and Allegations. These were looked at during the Inspection and were well accounted for.

Carers are provided with good training to help them look after children safely and to understand children's difficult behaviours and to more appropriately respond to these. These include Caring for the Abused Child, Attachment Training, Dealing with Allegations, Safe Care, and Managing Behaviour. Experienced Foster Carers are encouraged to assist with the delivery of training. Carers spoke very positively about training on Attachment and said how this had definitely impacted on the way they worked with children placed with them. One carer and child had received joint input from a therapist and agreed that this had been very helpful in working through some initial pressures, encountered as a result of the young person's behaviour. One carer living in another County, who finds it difficult to attend for training, is being funded to study a Psychology course, which includes a module on Attachment, through distance learning with the National College Consortium.

There was good evidence that referrals for long-term placements are subject to a matching process. These are systematically discussed at each Team Meeting when Supervising Social Workers consider carers whose skills and experience would most appropriately meet children's identified needs. There were also good examples of children in longer-term placements being introduced to placements in a planned way. One child tracked had visited for meals and overnight stays prior to moving into placement. Both told the Inspector how helpful this had been. Foster Carer front sheets note carer Approval Status and give a very brief summary of carer experience. This section could be developed to also include carer skills. Carer files also include colourful Estate Agent details about themselves, designed to give children basic information and photographs about their prospective placement, family members and pets.

Although Inspectors were again satisfied that the carers visited were competent to meet the needs of the children placed with them, it was still difficult to evidence from carer files any systematic matching of children to placement, or how potential identified shortfalls would be addressed. Placement Agreements, are referred to in Standard 8 as a source of matching consideration, however copies of these are not stored on carer files, but held with placing social workers in other locations. Referrals contain some information utilised for matching child to placement, but these were stored separately in the Duty Room. No Placement Agreement Meeting records were seen on the four files looked at. Inspectors are mindful of the pressures for placements on a Local Authority Fostering Service and of the emergency nature of most requests, but note that Standard 8 implies an expectation that the Service will provide written evidence of matching processes. The Fostering Service should continue to give consideration as to how this will be achieved. If the Placement Planning Meeting is the understood forum for this, then a record of this meeting should be on carer files.

Inspectors met with the Authority's recently appointed Contracts Officer, and discussed work being undertaken with Independent Fostering Agencies to develop good working relationships. Excellent systems have been initiated to ensure that when placements are commissioned, safe and appropriate matches are identified and monitored.

Although the Fostering Panel was not Inspected on this occasion, having been observed six months ago, it was noted that the Care Leaver appointed at that time to the Corporate Parenting Team as a Support Worker is now a participating Fostering Panel member. A good programme was provided to Panel Members for a training day in June, and this included a robust Assessment Checklist for members to refer to.

# 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)

**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 the following standard(s):**

**7, 13, 31**

Children and young people receive a good level of support from carers and the Fostering Service to achieve educationally and enjoy leisure activities. Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Young people and children are actively encouraged by carers and the Fostering Service, to pursue individual interests, sporting and leisure activities. Where necessary financial support can be provided to carers to ensure that children can attend for activities, educational outings, and after school events. There were very good examples of this happening with families visited during the Inspection, and also represented within questionnaires from carers and placing social workers. Young people spoke about their hobbies and interests, and at one home visited there was an impressive range of indoor and outdoor activities available on placement, including a very well equipped games room.

Carers involved in the short breaks scheme or who provide placements for disabled children, are offered Disability Awareness training provided by social workers from the Fostering Team and from the Disabled Children's Team. The two teams work closely together. A named supervising social worker from the Fostering Team acts as a link with the Disabled Children's Team.

The Fostering Service has now implemented a Short Breaks Extra scheme, similar to that of Contract Care, to meet the needs of disabled children who have additional challenging behaviours who need short breaks. Payment levels have been altered to reflect the demands of this role.

There are systems in place to monitor ethnic origin of carers and the County's Looked After Children population. A Black Cases Panel considers the needs of Black and Mixed Ethnicity Children and can give advice on support and additional services. Foster Children who are dual heritage can be referred to the Two Halves One Whole group run by the Family Service Unit. No children with ethnic, religious or cultural needs were tracked on this occasion, however at the Inspection six months ago, one set of carers were noted to be making a commendable effort to appropriately meet the needs of two Asylum seeking young people, taking them to the nearest Mosque and providing constructive activities and occupations during the day. The new Contracts Officer informed the Inspectors that placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People are usually commissioned from an Independent Fostering Agency where more culturally appropriate matches could be provided.

Up to date Personal Education Plans were seen for all children tracked. Looked After Children reviews gave very good attention to their education and included written reports from school personnel. Children and young people visited were all positively supported and encouraged by carers in their educational experiences and achievements and carers maintained active contact with the schools. One young person had exceeded her SATS targets, and another was being appropriately supported by her carer, to move to a new school. Another carer commented that 'the Step Up programme my child is currently part of has helped her make excellent progress'. Children's achievements, educational and otherwise, are recognised, recorded, and celebrated by the Fostering Service and Local Authority through specially organised events. Carers are provided with Education Awareness sessions.

The Inspectors met senior representatives from the Education and Social Care Department to discuss the systems in place to support the Educational achievement of Looked After Children, and were informed about initiatives and developments being implemented, to improve the school experiences and achievements of Looked After Children. There are forums whereby educational cases that have become 'stuck' can be discussed, where carers are actively included in the consideration of solutions. Where children have been excluded from school, packages of support are offered to carers and children. Inspectors were informed that 96% of PEP's are completed. The school attendance of all Leicestershire's Looked After Children is now be monitored through the Welfare Call agency. Generally the school attendance of children in foster care is good. Specialist Education Welfare Officers are tracking and working more closely with Looked After Children when they are missing school.

Data documents submitted by the Fostering Service prior to the Inspection indicated that 63% of Leicestershire County Council Looked After Children now achieve one GCSE and that the number achieving five GCSE's has increased from 21% to 53%. A young person achieving GCSE's receives financial recognition for each GCSE achieved.



# 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)

**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 the following standard(s):

### 10, 11

Children are appropriately supported to have contact with their family and friends.

Children and young people are generally well consulted.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## EVIDENCE:

Contact was appropriately managed and supported in cases looked at during the Inspection. Contact arrangements were confirmed and discussed in carer supervision records. Training is routinely provided to carers about family Contact, and placing social workers deliver training along with fostering social workers to educate and prepare carers for the potential challenges that some Contact arrangements can present.

Three children spoken to said that they were involved in and consulted about their reviews. They are actively encouraged to attend their reviews and all three did. They knew that there were Consultation Groups that they could attend if they wished, and said that they received newsletters and information about these. The Corporate Parenting Team supports a group called T2C, a 'bunch of young people in care' aged between 13-18 years who represent children in care. The group considers funding requests, undertakes special pieces of work, and have designed impressive colourful posters with eye-catching illustration and 'key messages' for social workers and schoolteachers. They meet on a weekly basis and receive some financial recognition for attending meetings.

Review records confirmed that Independent Reviewing Officers routinely check that children are aware of contact details for the Children's Rights Officer. Children whose files were looked at were also actively and positively supported by their placing social workers. One carer commented 'My experience is that children are listened to and workers take lots of time to explain about their position and why'.

During a discussion with the Children's Rights Officer, Inspectors were made aware that older children who attend the consultation group and who have experienced a number of placements in foster care have commented about the significant differences in the quality of care they have received in foster homes. The Children's Rights Officer indicated that consideration is being given to organising an age appropriate consultation event for younger children to coordinate their views in the care they receive. Inspectors advise that the Fostering Service Managers liaise with Children's Rights Officer with regard to young people's feedback. The Inspectors have also suggested that the Fostering Service should now consider how to more actively obtain feedback from children about their individual placements. Ideally this could be sought at the time of the Carer's Annual Review. Children's satisfaction is currently only briefly referred to within the placing social worker's questionnaire that requests their views on the placement.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## 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)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

### 14, 29

Young people are supported to develop independence skills and to seek employment  
Good written information is made available to carers about payments and allowances.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## EVIDENCE:

Young people spoken to and visited were being supported to develop independence skills by their carers although none were at the point of leaving care. Inspectors saw examples of young people cleaning their own bedrooms, helping with decorating, cooking washing and ironing. Some young people were in placement on a smallholding and helped to feed and care for animals, undertake practical outdoor tasks, and encouraged to contribute to daily household activities for which they were appropriately rewarded.

Departments across the Local Authority have been encouraged to offer work placements to Looked After young people and Leicestershire Carers, a group of local businesses are working in partnership in the Flying Fish project, a joint City and County venture offering Looked After Children opportunities to increase their life chances. Members offer a range of individual, team, or corporate commitment to donate, sponsor, and commit time to young people in order to promote their achievement and independence.

Leicestershire Foster Carers are provided with good clear information about payments and allowances, and are advised as to how these should be broken down.

Professional fees have been introduced to recognise the more complex tasks carried out by many carers in some cases.

# Management

## 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)
- 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

**16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 32**

Carers are well supported by an experienced well-qualified team but carer records maintained by the service could better reflect children's placements.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose provides very good detail about the aims and activity of the Fostering Service.

Children's Guides are clear, simple and age appropriate. Children and young people are also provided with other information e.g. Children's Rights Officer contact details, at time of placement.

A stable team of experienced workers and Managers, who have a very good knowledge of the fostering task, deliver the Fostering Service. The team works together to undertake assessments, support, training and supervision to carers. The team were seen to have a very good working knowledge about their resources, and the range of placements available. Staff spoken to during the Inspection, as at previous Inspections, confirmed that demand for Fostering Placements continued to be high, and this was also evident from observed discussion about placements at the Team Meeting. Managers confirmed that the Fostering Team can be 'stretched' at particular periods of time, e.g. when staff are on holiday or sick leave, because there is no capacity for cover. Placing social workers in questionnaires noted that the pressures on the fostering service resulted in there being no lack of choice in placements on offer.

The service continues to work hard to recruit carers through an imaginative range of local initiatives e.g. adverts at local cinemas, Yellow Pages, and adverts at local sports fixtures. A detailed Foster Care Recruitment Strategy has been produced that outlines recruitment targets and activity for the next year. Written material submitted for the Inspection states that over 50 new carers were recruited during 2005/06, however this was countered by a similar loss of fostering households where carers left the service for a number of reasons. A new 'leavers' questionnaire has been introduced to elicit information about why carers leave the service and to look at possible ways of appropriately reducing the carer drop out rate. Sixteen questionnaires were received from placing social workers and overall these provided good or very good feedback about the service and individual carers, but most acknowledged the pressures on placement choices for children. Some felt that placements broke down too easily and that all carers should receive essential 'in depth' training on e.g. 'Attachment' to help them understand and empathise more with children's behaviours.

Twenty-two questionnaires were received from carers, and almost without exception they rated the support provided to them as excellent or good. 'They are a friendly service, always polite even if I ring two or three times a day' 'Always on the end of a phone, and will find books and videos to help' 'I've been fostering for forty years now and have always found them helpful and supportive' 'She picks you up when you feel down' 'I've even been offered to

have my ironing done by one wonderful worker when I felt exhausted by a particularly difficult placement' Carers spoken too also reported helpful relationships with supervising social workers and access to help and support when they needed it. Some good structures are in place to support carers. The Foster Care Support Line is now established and deemed to be appreciated by carers. Carers are also contacted through this line at time of new placements, to see whether any help or advice is needed. An NVQ programme is now available to carers, and two carers can be supported in the first year. A very good rolling programme of key training is made available to carers, drawn up and coordinated by one of the Fostering Team Managers. Inspectors were concerned that this was a significant task and that the Manager appeared to be stretched to produce the quarterly carer-training programme with limited support and few financial resources. A part time fostering social worker post also supports the training programme.

Looked After Children's information is maintained by placing social workers, within the Child Care Operational Teams. Copies of Looked After Children Reviews with Care Plans, and Placement Agreement Meetings are stored on foster carer files and this information enables supervising social workers to appropriately support carers to ensure children's care plans are being adhered to, however this information was not present in some of the files looked at. Referrals for fostering placements that contain essential information are stored separately by the fostering service, and not with other child related information on file. Inspectors suggest that reference is made within the children's section of carer's files, to the separate storage of referral information. Carers receive training on keeping placement records, and Managers acknowledged that some carers needed ongoing encouragement and support to do this. Carer's supervision notes do not routinely reflect children in placement or confirm that carer logs have been checked, but this would appear to be the appropriate opportunity to look at and discuss recording issues.

The required range of Policies and Procedures are in place that relate to records, recording, confidentiality and the secure storage of records. Solid recruiting systems are in place for staff. Fostering workers receive regular supervision and annual appraisals.

Family and Friends/Kinship care continues to be an area of growth for the Fostering Service. The annual Fostering Panel report notes that, of 53 families approved as carers for 2005/06, 29 related to kinship/family care. A very good information sheet has been produced for kinship carers to explain the assessment process. Inspectors met with the Senior Practitioner responsible for all kinship care work and who detailed the positive work being undertaken within this role, however although the number of requests for kinship assessments has increased significantly, and continues to increase, there has been no increase in staffing resources to reflect this. In addition, where up until recently many assessments resulted in Residence Order applications, Special Guardianship Orders, which generate specialised assessments within

strict timeframes, have replaced these as a more appropriate option in most cases. As well as incoming assessment work the Senior Practitioner supports and reviews approximately twenty approved families. The Fostering Manager indicated that it was planned for a member of staff to move across from the Fostering Team to assist with the kinship work however since this post would not be replaced this could negatively impact on the service provided by the Fostering Team and ultimately outcomes for children, especially given that there is an active ongoing recruitment campaign for new carers. Some very good efficient and systematic work has been carried out to date to respond to this area of work, but it is recognised that additional resources are necessary to support and develop this work.



# 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

| <b>BEING HEALTHY</b> |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i>   | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>12</b>            | 3            |

| <b>STAYING SAFE</b> |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i>  | <i>Score</i> |
| <b>3</b>            | 3            |
| <b>6</b>            | 3            |
| <b>8</b>            | 2            |
| <b>9</b>            | 2            |
| <b>15</b>           | 3            |
| <b>30</b>           | 3            |

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

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

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

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

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 |
|-----|----------|------------|-------------|----------------------|
|     |          |            |             |                      |

### **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.  | FS9               | Safer Care Policies should be completed for all carer households and where children share bedrooms, risk assessments should be evidenced on carer files. |
| 2   | FS24              | Carer records including supervision and carer logs should consistently demonstrate how children in placement are having their needs meet.                |
| 3   | FS8               | The matching of children to placements should be more clearly evidenced.   |

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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