



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**Progress Childrens Services Ltd**

**Progress House  
127 Millfields Road  
Bilston  
Wolverhampton  
West Midlands  
WV4 6JG**

*Lead Inspector*  
Janet Manders

*Key Announced Inspection*  
6th November 2006      09:30

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

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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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Progress Childrens Services Ltd
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

1. Planned long term placements for children
2. Short term placements for children

**Date of last inspection** 5th December 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

Progress Fostering is part of Progress Children's Services based in the Wolverhampton area. The Fostering service has been established since 2001. Progress Fostering currently provides placements for 33 children and young people. Placements are provided by 33 approved foster carers, these foster carers represent a varied cultural, religious and linguistic background.

Progress's main focus is to provide planned long term placements, respite and bridging placements. However, they also provide some short term and same day placements if there is information available to allow appropriate matching with the foster carers.

Training is valued by the organisation and on-going courses are available in addition to the four day initial training course attended by all prospective carers.

Staff and foster carers have regular supervision and 24 hour support is available to carers. Specific arrangements have been made to meet the particular requirements of individual children, including structural alterations, aids, adaptations and personal support. Matching is identified as a crucial part of the service offered by Progress in providing supportive placements to a range of children and young people.

# SUMMARY

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

An inspector visited Progress Children's Services Fostering Service between 6<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006 to check that young people were being well cared for by the Agency and its foster carers. The inspector had discussed the arrangements for the inspection with the manager before the start of the inspection so that the manager could arrange for the inspector to meet with every one.

As part of the inspection the inspector

- Visited 2 foster carers and this meant the inspectors could talk to the 5 young people who lived with those foster carers.
- The inspector met with staff from the fostering team, the manager and the Regional Manager.
- A meeting with a group of foster carers.
- 10 young people returned questionnaires telling the inspector what they felt about living with foster carers.
- 10 social workers responsible for young people placed with foster carers returned questionnaires telling the inspector how well they felt the young people were being looked after.
- 10 foster carers returned questionnaires telling the inspector about how much support they received from the fostering team to help them look after the young people placed with them.
- Looked at files and records

## What the service does well:

- Young people are helped to be healthy and their foster carers ensure they see their doctor, dentist and optician regularly. One young person told the inspector that her foster carer helped her because "She tells me what will happen with my diabetes if I keep messing around with my food"
- Young people are placed with foster carers who are able to meet their needs and Progress help to ensure foster carers complete all the tasks needed to help young people.
- Young people are able to keep in contact with their family when this is safe.

- Young people are well supported in their education by their foster carers and one young person told the inspector that his foster carer had “supported me throughout my journey and I am really appreciative of her for that.” Another young person said, “ Progress have a new education worker, I hope she will be helpful.”
- The staff and managers work very hard to help foster carers care for young people properly.
- The foster carer’s homes where young people lived were warm and comfortable and young people felt part of the family. One young person told the inspector “My foster carer treats me the right way.” Another young person said, “ My carers are very good. They always listen to me and help me solve all my problems.”

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

- Progress has made sure that young people are placed with the right foster carers who have the right skills to look after them.
- Young people and foster carers know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with something that is happening.
- There are enough social workers to help foster carers to look after the young people placed with them.
- Progress has improved how they decide whether a foster carer is the right person to look after young people.
- Managers are clearer about what they are supposed to do.
- A Children’s Guide has been produced to help young people understand what it is like to be in foster care.

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

- Progress must make sure that foster carers are clear as to who can agree to a young person getting medical treatment.
- All information about a young person must be given to foster carers before the young person goes to live with the carers so that they can look after the young person properly.
- Progress must do all the checks on staff to make sure that they are the right person to work for Progress and will keep young people safe.

- Young people should receive a copy of the Children's Guide that helps them to understand what it is like to be placed with foster carers.
- Progress must make sure that they find a good manager to run the fostering service.
- Reviews of foster carers must be done every year to make sure that they are still OK to look after young people.
- Progress must make sure that they keep a record of all its foster carers and this shows how many young people and what age of young people they should look after.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.



# **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.

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

### 12

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The health needs of young people were well met through their foster carers, but the provision of medical information at the point of placement should be full and consistent to ensure no health needs are overlooked.

## EVIDENCE:

As reported in previous inspections the health needs of young people are well met by the Agency and foster carers. Young people confirmed that they received good health care and saw their GP, optician and dentist as required. Supervising social workers discuss and record with foster carers at every supervision session, any health issues a young person may have, including dates of dental and optical appointments. Records of accidents and illnesses are recorded by foster carers and a copy is kept on the young person's file.

The Agency has now developed a Foster Placement Agreement, which when completed ensures that there is a clear record of a young person's health and who is able to give consent for any treatment. Nonetheless, it was disappointing to note as a result of the Agency not having consistently used Foster Placement Agreements, detailed health information is not always received from placing social workers. A Foster Placement Agreement was not available on any of the files' of the 5 young people viewed by the inspector. This could put young people's health at risk. Additionally as LAC documentation had not been completed fully in all cases consent for medical treatment was still not being recorded consistently on young people's files.

The Agency has recruited an assistant psychologist to provide additional support to young people in placement. In respect of one young person visited as part of the inspection a detailed assessment had been completed by the psychologist and support strategies developed to be used by the foster carers;

details of these were seen on file. The Agency informed the inspector that they were planning to recruit a full time psychologist to ensure that young people's emotional and mental health needs are met.

The Agency also plans to recruit a health co-ordinator who will work with foster carers to encourage health living and to ensure that all young people's health needs are being met.

The Agency provides first aid training for its foster carers, however, at present it does not provide training in health and safety and this must be addressed when planning forthcoming training events.

# 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.**

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

### **3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30**

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Young people placed with foster carers are kept safe by their foster carers; however, the Agency must ensure that all appropriate checks are undertaken regarding both staff and foster carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

All foster homes visited as part of this inspection provided a high standard of accommodation for the young people placed. The Agency promotes young people's safety and has a policy that young people do not share a bedroom, however, due to the need to place 4 siblings together, 2 sisters visited as part of the inspection were sharing a bedroom. Both young people were happy with this arrangement; however, no risk assessment had been undertaken. The Agency has developed a detailed risk assessment, which when completed would cover the issue of young people sharing a bedroom, however, this risk assessment had not been completed for any of the young people visited by the inspector.

Health and safety checks are undertaken as part of the assessment of foster carers and this is reviewed as part of foster carers annual reviews. Due to changes in staff, reviews of health and safety assessments have not always

been undertaken when required. On one foster carers file, the previous worker had identified that the assessment should be reviewed after 6 months, to ensure that the assessment would then be reviewed annually as part of the foster carers annual review. The current worker had not recognised that this issue needed addressing and consequently due to the length of time between doing the initial assessment, the approval of the foster carers and the undertaking of the Foster Home Review, the assessment had not been reviewed for over a year. In some case this could be as long as 18 months due to the length of the assessment of foster carers. Fire assessments had been carried out by the fire service in some instances, and a fire escape plan drawn up by the household.

Improvements have been made to the Agency's matching process since the last inspection with all young people visited being placed with foster carers whose approval was consistent with such a placement. This has been assisted by the development of a risk assessment document, which once completed fully, should be a useful document to enable appropriate matching and to ensure the protection of young people and foster carers. Nonetheless, as previously reported placements have been made without sufficient information being obtained from the placing authority.

The inspector was informed that Progress has produced a comprehensive matching process to ensure future placements of looked after children will be appropriately matched with Progress foster carers. However, this was not in place for the placements examined by the inspector during the inspection.

The inspector and the Agency were extremely concerned that in respect of one young person his social worker did not share vital information with the Agency or foster carers regarding the young person's needs, due to concerns that the Agency and foster carer would not accept the young person if they knew all the information. The Agency had challenged the Local Authority regarding this once this came to light. It was also of concern that one foster family had only received information regarding the young person's sexualised behaviour after the placement had been made, although there was limited information regarding this on the Agency's referral form. Such information should always be shared with foster carers to ensure that they can make an informed decision regarding whether they have the skills to meet a young person's needs.

The introduction of a new referral form, the Agency's Foster Placement Agreement and a planning meeting within 72 hours should help in ensuring that in respect of all future placements that relevant information is received from the placing authority. However, none of these documents were in place nor had a planning meeting taken place. Consequently, the young person was placed with inexperienced foster carers, who although they have undertaken a lot of positive work with the young person were not equipped to meet his needs and a recent review has recommended that he should be moved to

another placement. On none of the files viewed by the inspector was there information to indicate why the particular carers were chosen for the young person.

The inspector was informed that further improvements in the matching process are planned as a Placement Coordinator is to be appointed to improve matching of young people with foster carers and to ensure all young people are placed in line with foster carers approval category.

The Agency has in place sound procedures for protecting children from abuse and neglect and foster carers are provided with training regarding child protection and safe caring. Foster carers complete safe caring plans, however, in respect of 4 siblings the safe care plan had not been updated in light of their new placement nor had any of the plans been signed by the placing social worker to confirm that they were in agreement.

There has been one matter, which was investigated under child protection procedures since the last inspection. Evidence indicated that the matter had been handled correctly by the Agency with a referral being made to the appropriate child protection team. Whilst the investigation confirmed that no further action was required, as the allegation made against the foster carers was not substantiated, it is the Agency's policy to undertake a review of the foster carers and for the matter to be presented to the Fostering Panel. This had been completed and the foster carers continued approval confirmed.

One young person told the inspector that he felt that he was being bullied. On investigation of this issue it is apparent that the Agency, his placing social worker and the foster carers are aware of this situation and are working together to address this issue.

There have been changes to the management of the Agency since the last inspection with both the regional manager and team manager being recent appointments. Both managers are experienced and appropriate checks had been undertaken in respect of them prior to commencement of employment.

It is the policy of Progress Children's Services for agency staff to be subject to the same interviewing process as permanent staff, including the completion of an application form, for written references to be sought and followed up by telephone. A number of these Agency staff later became employed by the Agency on a permanent basis. However, it was not clear in respect of some staff members when they transferred from being agency staff to permanent staff. This confusion arises as a result of the Agency recruiting staff through a recruitment agency so that they can start whilst the Agency awaits all the necessary clearances. It is important that the employment status of staff and the date of their employment with Progress Children's Services are clearly recorded on their file.

The Agency undertakes CRB checks on all of its staff. Nonetheless in the case of an independent worker this had been overlooked and a CRB had not been applied for until after the worker had commenced assessments for the Agency. In addition not all checks had been completed regarding all staff prior to employment, however, the inspector was informed that in these cases the workers had not had contact with young people and were fully supervised as part of their induction. Additionally not all elements required by Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 were included on all staff files. The inspector would also recommend that the date, the number of the CRB check, whether it was clear and at what level the check was undertaken is recorded on file. The inspector was informed that the Agency were aware that there had been gaps in their recruitment processes and had employed a human resources manager to ensure that correct procedures were followed.

Examination of the files of Panel members showed that there were gaps in the checks undertaken by the Agency, although all members had a CRB check. Where such a check had expired that member had been informed that they should not sit on Panel until the check had been undertaken.

Due to the timing of the Fostering Panel it was not possible for the inspector to observe the Fostering Panel on this occasion. The inspector read the minutes of the last three Panel meetings, in addition to the minutes on foster carers files, where their approval had been considered. Examination of these minutes raised a number of issues. None of the last 3 Panels were quorate as no social worker employed by the Agency was present. The Fostering Panel's vice chair had not attended the last 3 Panels due to other commitments and there is a question as to whether she will continue to serve on Panel. The list of Panel members provided to the inspector totalled 12; this is not permitted by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, which states that a Fostering Panel shall consist of no more than 10 members. The Agency has already noted that there have been issues regarding Panel membership and attendance and have commenced a process of examining the composition of the Fostering Panel to ensure that it accurately reflect the focus of the Agency.

The Agency must ensure that all checks and documentation are available to the Fostering Panel when an applicant is being considered for approval as a foster carer. At one Fostering Panel 5 out of 7 approvals had been made subject to the completion of statutory checks or the return of CRB's, this is not satisfactory as it does not fulfil Panel's quality assurance function.

# 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.**

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

### **7 and 13. Standard 31 is not relevant to this Agency.**

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The Agency promotes equal opportunities and education for young people. Foster carers with the support of the Agency work hard to ensure that young people's diverse needs are met.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Agency has a wide range of carers from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. However, after consideration of the type of referrals received by the Agency, a decision has been made to target recruitment at increasing the number of White British and Black African foster carers to ensure that young people's racial and cultural needs can be better met by the carer'. There was evidence that cultural and ethnicity issues had been taken into consideration when making placements with most placements being culturally, racially and religiously appropriate, where this is not the case, carers are given support to meet any gaps identified.

Previous inspections have found that foster carers and the Agency have met the needs of young people with disabilities, supporting and encouraging young people to fully participate in the local community.

The Agency provides foster carers with training in respect of diversity and the foster carers' handbook gives clear guidance as to the agency's expectations.



Evidence gained throughout the inspection indicated that young people were well supported by their foster carers in respect of their educational achievements. The Agency supports also places a high priority on supporting young people with their education. Consequently, the Agency has appointed an Educational Coordinator to work with foster carers, young people and local schools to ensure that young people receive all appropriate support. It is hoped that this appointment will ensure that foster carers are involved in planning young people's education. At the time of the inspection foster carers and the Agency did not have copies of young people's Personal Education Plans and Statement of Special Educational Needs.

To ensure the stability for young people, foster carers visited by the inspector, provided transport for the young people to and from school to enable them to remain at the same school as they attended prior to their placement with the carers.

Foster carers also encouraged a wide range of social activities to develop young people's self-esteem.

# 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.

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

### 10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The Agency promotes contact for young people and this is well supported by foster carers. Carers and the Agency encourage young people to express their views regarding their care.

## EVIDENCE:

Contact arrangements were clearly defined on all files examined by inspector. This information is clearly included in the Agency's Foster Placement Agreement, although Agreements were not seen on any of the files examined by the inspector. The Agency has developed a risk assessment for a young person's contact as part of the new referral form; however, this also had not been completed on any file examined by the inspector. It was of concern that the placing social worker divulged details of the foster carers, which if a risk assessment had been undertaken and shared with all parties may not have happened. This incident had caused distress to both the young person and the foster carers.

Young people who spoke with the inspector during the inspection stated that they were happy with the arrangements for contact with their families. Discussion with foster carers confirmed that they were aware of the importance of contact and encouraged contact where it was appropriate.

All the young people spoken to as part of the inspection felt part of the family they were placed with and stated that their foster carers listened to their views and helped them. The Agency also consults with young people as part of foster carers annual reviews. Whilst these were not seen on the foster carers files, copies were kept on the young person's file. Foster carers informed the inspector that the chair of the review usually spent time with the young people to ascertain their views regarding their foster carers, prior to the review. Nonetheless, the Agency stated that they felt that they needed to make some improvements in this area, and that there needs to be a consistent approach to obtaining young people's views.

The Agency endeavours to plan placements to allow young people to meet their foster carers prior to placement, so that they can express a view. Where this is not possible due to the emergency nature of a placement, foster carers have been encouraged to produce a welcome book for young people to see prior to placement.

Most young people are aware of how to make a complaint if necessary and the updated Children's Guides will assist this further, once they are circulated. All foster carers spoken during the inspection were also aware of how to make a complaint and how to support a young person to make a complaint if this was necessary. Records show that there have been 3 complaints made in the last year, with 2 having been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 3 and one is currently being dealt with.

Foster carers who met with the inspector stated that they feel that there had been an improvement in the amount of consultation taking place and felt that their views were being listened to and acted upon. This had been helped by the identification of two foster carer representatives who were to represent foster carers views in discussions with the management of the Agency.

# 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):

### 29

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Foster carers receive adequate and timely payments to enable them to appropriately care for young people.

## EVIDENCE:

The Agency generally provides placements for younger people; consequently the inspector did not meet with any young people who were preparing for a move into independent accommodation. This standard was therefore not inspected.

The Agency has a written policy in respect of payments made to foster carers, which is reviewed annually. After consultation with foster carers over the last year, changes were made to how payments were made to ensure that foster carers did not have to use their own financial resources to meet the needs of young people. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they were happy with the speed and level of allowances and fees paid by the Agency.

Nonetheless, one foster carer commented that they had paid for a taxi to escort a young person to school at the beginning of the placement in April 2006, as the placing social worker had not made the necessary arrangements, however, this had still not been reimbursed at the time of the inspection. The Agency should pursue this with the placing authority as a matter of urgency.

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

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

**1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 27.**

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The Agency is well managed, with steps being taken to address weaknesses in the Service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The inspector was provided with a copy of the Statement of Purpose, this is a useful and comprehensive document. It had been revised in November 2006 and reflected the current position of the Agency. The Agency has produced 2 versions of the Children's Guide, one version for young people aged 0-10years or those that are less able and one for an older age group. Both these documents are useful to young people but the Agency must now ensure that all young people receive a copy. The Agency are aware that young people have not been involved in the development of these documents and plan to review both children's guides to allow young people to contribute to them.

Since the last inspection the Agency has appointed a new Regional Manager and a new team manager. It is anticipated that the Regional Manager will become the Responsible Individual. The team manager is an Agency worker who has decided that she does not wish to be employed by the Agency on a permanent basis but has given a commitment to remain with the Agency until a permanent manager is appointed. The Agency has commenced the recruitment process for a team manager and once a manager is appointed the manager must seek registration with the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Nonetheless, both these managers are experienced and demonstrated to the inspector that they were able to identify where the Agency needed to improve its practice and had started to implement these changes.

In light of issues raised at the last inspection, the Agency has reviewed its operation within the Hemel Hempstead office and has decided to close the office. It is anticipated that the Agency will open a new office, but the inspector was informed that there would be clear lines of accountability and that the Regional Manager will not manage the new office. At the time of the inspection there were clear lines of responsibility, which were known to all staff.

Whilst the Agency does have in place a system for monitoring the operation of the Agency, this is not as robust as the Agency would wish. Such a system should ensure that it covers all areas required by Schedule 7, at the time of the inspection the review did not include information regarding unauthorised absences or measures of control used by foster carers. Notifications of significant events have been made to Commission for Social Care Inspection in a timely fashion. The Agency has developed a Conflict of interest policy, although this has not yet been circulated to staff and foster carers.

Staff are well supported by the manager with regular supervisions sessions, team meetings and detailed policies and procedures. Some of the policies and procedures require updating, however, the Agency has noted this and are ensuring that the Foster Carers' Handbook is amended. A system is in place to

enable the manager to review the quality and timeliness of assessments. She meets with the independent assessors on a regular basis, whilst the assessment is being completed. The new Human Resources Manager is planning to review the employee handbook to ensure that it is in line with current legislation.

At the time of the inspection 5 social workers were employed with the Agency on a permanent basis, with one of these workers presently being on maternity leave. Once this worker returns to work, the Agency will be fully staffed. The Agency has committed itself to ensuring that they retain these workers, as in the past the Agency has had difficulty in retaining staff. It is the responsibility of the Human Resources Manager, in conjunction with managers to develop strategies to retain staff.

The last inspection reported *"Whilst the agency has a wide range of foster carers from different ethnic, racial and religious groups, the agency has identified that it required additional foster carers from different groups to accurately reflect society and to provide racially appropriate placements for young people referred to the Agency. The manager informed the inspectors that the main gap was that the Agency did not have sufficient carers from white and Caribbean backgrounds. Work has been undertaken to address this issue, however, progress is limited due to the lack of qualified and experienced staff to undertake this work."* The inspector found that this remained the situation at this inspection, with the Agency having identified a need for more foster carers willing to provide placements for older young people, with more complex needs. In an attempt to address these gaps the Agency intend to review all foster carers approval and to recruit new foster carers who will provide the type of placement for which the Agency receives the majority of its referrals.

The quality of assessments seen by the inspector was of a good standard and included a robust analysis of the carer's skills and abilities. The Agency has identified that in the past not all assessments have been of such a high quality and has now reduced the number of independent assessors. The two independent assessors interviewed, were well experienced and had a professional approach to assessments.

The Regional Manager has developed comprehensive guidance for all staff undertaking assessments, including different assessment tools to ensure a consistent approach to assessing foster carers.

Whilst there has been a considerable turnover in staff since the last inspection, most foster carers informed the inspector that they had continued to receive a high level of support throughout this period of disruption, although one foster carer did comment that they had had 5 different supervising workers. All foster carers spoken to confirmed that they were able to access support from the Agency at any time, with staff providing out of hours support where this is

required. Nonetheless, it was disappointing to note that one couple, who had been newly approved did not receive supervision for a 4 month period, even though they had recently had a young person placed with them who had complex and challenging behaviour. The inspector was informed that after discussion with staff the document used as part of foster carers supervision sessions has been amended, and allows staff to cover appropriate areas with the foster carers in an effective way. Nonetheless, this system is not being consistently used and the manager must address this, to ensure that all foster carers receive the same level of support. Additionally there is no evidence that all foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit per year.

The Agency has recruited an independent reviewing officer to undertake foster home reviews, examination of files suggests that not all foster carers have been reviewed in the past 12 months as required. The agency has identified this gap and has taken some action to remedy this, but the situation is still not satisfactory. The Agency has a policy that the first and every alternate review is presented to Panel.

The Foster Care Agreement covers all areas required by Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. A copy of this was found on the files seen by the inspector. However, examination of the Foster Care Agreement shows that it currently does not fulfil the expectations of the Regulations. The Agreement currently states that Progress can give written notification of termination of approval and that this would have "immediate affect". This is not within the terms of the regulations in that a 28 day representation period must be given after which the agency can make the decision.

The Agency has a well developed programme of pre-approval training, where applicants have the opportunity of meeting with experienced foster carers, who are integral to the training. The last inspection reported that *"The agency has also developed its post-approval training programme so that a rolling programme of training is provided, which covers all areas required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002."* The inspector was informed that at the present time foster carers are expected to undertake 4 pieces of training every year. Carers training needs are discussed regularly during supervision sessions and at the foster home annual review; a pro-forma has been developed to record training undertaken. The inspector was informed that the Agency has made arrangements for BAAF to provide future post-approval training.

Examination of files and in discussion with foster carers it was evident that not all young people had a Foster Placement Agreement, which complied with Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Additionally, where a placing authority relies on LAC documentation, not all documentation was seen on file, nor had foster carers received copies. In respect of one young person, the foster carers had only received relevant documentation just prior to the inspection, although the young person had been placed 7 months earlier. The



inspector was shown a completed Foster Placement Agreement, which had been completed in respect of another young person. This confirmed that the Agency had amended the Foster Placement Agreement and that it now complies with Schedule 6, however, as reported earlier in this report, the Foster Placement Agreement still does not include any information as to why a young person is matched with the foster carers.

Files are kept securely by the Agency and by foster carers. Records were seen to be in good order and good practice was seen by one social worker who had ensured that there was an accurate record of a young person's Statutory Review prior to receiving full minutes from the placing authority.

Foster carers files are well organised, with a useful list of sections at the front of every file, but not all records had been signed to confirm who has written them.

The Agency keeps a Foster carer register, but evidence seen at this inspection showed that the register had not been kept up to date in respect of reviews of foster carers, nor updated in light of the change of approvals. This must be done to ensure that the Agency has an accurate record of the approval of its foster carers.

The inspector was provided with the unaudited management accounts for Progress Children's Services. This indicated that the Agency's office in Hemel Hempstead had been making a loss. It was for this reason, in addition to concerns raised at the previous inspection that the Directors had decided to close this office. All other information indicates that other parts of the Fostering Service remains financially viable.

# 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>
<b>12</b>	2

STAYING SAFE	
<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>	2
<b>30</b>	2

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

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

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

**Yes**

## 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.	FS12	34 (3)Sch 6	The Registered Person must ensure that as part of the Foster Placement Agreement arrangements for the consent to treatment and delegation of consent are clearly recorded. This must be included on all young people's files. <b>Timescale of 6.3.06 not met.</b>	10/02/07
2.	FS8	34 (3)Sch 6	The Registered Manager must ensure that before making a placement, the responsible authority enters into a written agreement (foster placement agreement), which covers all matters specified in Schedule 6 including elements of matching. <b>Timescale of 14.3.05 not met</b>	10/01/07
3.	FS9	12(1)(a)	The Fostering Service must ensure that foster carers receive all relevant information regarding to each young person placed to enable them to meet that young person's child protection needs.	10/01/07

4.	FS15	27 (1)	The Registered Person must ensure that the Agency undertakes CRB checks for staff employed prior to them commencing employment. This includes workers who are self-employed. Where the worker is an Agency worker Progress Children's Services must evidence that the recruitment agency has undertaken a CRB and record the outcome.	10/01/07
5.	FS15	22 (1)	The Registered Person must ensure that the record of persons working for the Agency includes all elements required by Schedule 1. <b>Timescale of 1.5.05 not met</b>	10/02/07
6.	FS30	20 Schedule 1	The Fostering Service must ensure that all panel members have checks carried out in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1.	10/01/07
7.	FS30	24 (3)	The Registered Person must ensure that the Fostering Panel is properly constituted as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. <b>Timescale of 12.2.06 not met</b>	10/02/07
8.	FS30	25 (1)	The Registered Person must ensure that any recommendation made by the Fostering Panel when the Panel was not quorate are re-considered by a quorate Panel. <b>Timescale of 12.2.06 not met</b>	10/02/07
9.	FS1	3 (4)	The Registered Person must ensure that the updated Children's Guide is distributed as required by Regulation 3 (4) of the Fostering Services Regulation 2002. <b>Timescale of 1.04.05 not met.</b>	10/02/07

10.	FS2	3 (6)	The Registered Person must ensure that a manager is appointed at the earliest opportunity and that once in post makes an application to the Commission for Social Care Inspection to be registered.	10/02/07
11.	FS21	29 (1)	The Registered Person must ensure that all foster carers are reviewed annually. <b>Timescale of 01.04.05 not met</b>	10/02/07
12.	FS22	29 (7)	The Registered Person must ensure that the Foster Care Agreement is amended to allow for a period of representation after a recommendation that a foster carers approval is terminated.	10/02/07
13	FS24	12 (1) (a)	The Registered Person must ensure that the Agency and foster carers receive all appropriate information from the Placing Authority to enable them to appropriately care for the young person.	10/01/07
14.	FS25	22 Sch 2	The Registered Person must ensure that the Foster Carer's register is kept up to date and covers all areas required by Schedule 2.	10/02/07

## 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.	FS12	The Registered Person should ensure that foster carers receive training in respect of health and safety issues.
2.	FS6	The Registered Person should ensure that the updated risk assessments format is used for all placements and that this covers the issues outlined in Standard 6.5.
3.	FS6	The Registered Person should ensure that a review of the safety of foster carers home is undertaken on an annual basis.
4.	FS8	The Registered Person must take all possible steps to ensure that all information is available at the time of placement.
5.	FS9	Safe caring guidelines should be written, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else in the household. A copy should be kept on file and the guidelines should be cleared with the child's social worker and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child.
6.	FS15	The Fostering Service should ensure that all staff undertaking assessments of foster carers have received appropriate training in this area.
7.	FS15	The Registered Person should ensure that the employment status and date of commencement of employment is clearly recorded on all files.
8.	FS15	The Registered Person should include the date, the number of the CRB check, whether it was clear and at what level the check was undertaken on the file of the relevant member of staff or foster carer.
9.	FS10	The Registered Person should ensure that a risk assessment as required by Standard 10.6 is undertaken prior to contact taking place and that this is recorded in writing and placed on file.

10.	FS11	The Registered Person should ensure that young people's views are sought when developing the Agency.
11.	FS29	The Registered Person should ensure that foster carers are reimbursed for payments made to enable a young person's needs to be met.
12.	FS4	The Registered Person must ensure that the Agency's system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 is robust and results in the improvement in the Service.
13.	FS4	The Registered Person should ensure that the new policy regarding conflict of interest is circulated to all staff and foster carers.
14.	FS22	The Registered Person should ensure that all foster carers are supervised in line with the Agency's policy in respect of frequency of supervision.
15.	FS22	The Registered Person should ensure that all foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit per year and that this is clearly recorded on their file.
16.	FS24	The Registered Person should ensure that all records are adequately completed and signed.

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