



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**Dorset County Council Fostering Team**

**Princes House  
Princes Road  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1TP**

*Lead Inspector*  
Sophie Barton

*Announced Inspection*  
28th February 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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** Dorset County Council

**Name of registered manager (if applicable)** Mr Graham Jones

**Type of registration** Local Auth Fostering Service

**Category(ies) of registration, with number of places**

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

None

**Date of last inspection** 7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> /17<sup>th</sup> March 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

Dorset County Council Fostering Service is managed within the overall placement resource service. The teams operate from two sites reflecting the wide geographical span of the Local Authority area. The manager of the Fostering team is responsible for the fostering work undertaken by two senior practitioners, ten fostering social workers, and two social work assistants. One of the senior practitioners is primarily responsible for the development of the Shared Care Service for children with a disability. Since 2004 the adoption and permanence team with its own manager has been structurally separated from the mainstream fostering team.

The fostering service workers are organised to cover different geographical areas and have a link role with the Local Social Services Office in each area. In this link role they have the opportunity to develop relationships with the local childcare teams, to be aware of the children who might need placements, to identify local placements, and to supervise and support the carers in that locality. They also have the opportunity to use local knowledge and links in the recruitment of new carers. Support groups for carers are held locally. There is also a support group for the children of foster carers.

Three of the social workers have specific responsibility for assessments and training. There is a rolling programme of pre-approval training of foster carers organised in different localities. Two workers are responsible for the Project and Assessment foster care provision, a specific scheme offering increased support to carers who look after young people with complex needs and behaviours. These workers are supervised by a senior practitioner who also has responsibility for monitoring agency placements. One other worker undertakes reviews of foster carers to provide some independence into the reviewing process.

The Turnaround fostering scheme is also located within the Dorset fostering service. It is a Treatment Foster Care programme. The scheme has its own manager and a multi-disciplinary team with separate administrative support. The Turnaround scheme was separately inspected in October 2004, but is now included in this inspection.

# SUMMARY

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

The fostering service was provided with two weeks notice of the inspection. The inspection was carried out over four days by two inspectors on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006. During this time four carers were visited and five children seen. An inspector also met with a group of Turnaround carers, had a group meeting with the fostering team, spoke privately with eight team members, interviewed the LAC nurse, TASCA representative, Panel Chair, Training Officer and all three managers. The Registered Manager for the fostering service also met with inspectors at the start of the inspection. Recruitment files were checked as were a number of foster carer and children's case files, including those where complaints or allegations had been made.

At the time of writing the report questionnaires had been received from 52 foster carers, 24 children and 2 placing officers (the Commission sent questionnaires to 6 Placing Officers).

The inspectors were fully assisted by all members of the fostering service in carrying out the inspection, including carers and children making themselves available for interview.

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

The inspectors noted that carers 'case tracked' were competent and skilled, and that children were placed in nurturing environments. Very positive comments were made about individual family placement officers in the fostering team by carers ("family placement officer is very supportive", "support from family placement officer is excellent", "excellent support officer"). On the whole, the files evidenced that carers are well supported, and provided with lots of information and advice. The team are well qualified and experienced and are committed to the service and to meeting the needs of the children. The team have actively collated all necessary assessments and plans about children requiring placements, providing a good level of information to carers.

Good practice was noted in relation to several carers providing a high level of support in promoting contact between the child and their family. Contact issues are prioritised when considering matching and in support given to carers to assist with contact.

The fees paid to carers have been reviewed, and a number of initiatives implemented to show value to carers continued work and support.

The children's questionnaires received were all very positive about the service. Many comments were made about what's the best thing about fostering, and no negative comments were made about foster carers. Comments included "they are great", "it is safe", "security", "I am happy here", "given lots of support", and "getting looked after well". Of great importance is that 90% of children stated that their carers ask their opinions.

Generally the inspectors found more evidence of the service being "good" and "adequate" than any "poor" practice.

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

At the last inspection 3 requirements were made and 12 recommendations (plus 9 specific requirements for the Turnaround Scheme). All but two of these have been addressed, therefore providing clear evidence that the service has made efforts to positively address the previously identified shortfalls. The manager of the fostering service has redeveloped forms and protocols around health and safety, safe care, matching and risk assessments. This has ensured that the service is proactive and effective at matching children with suitable carers. Risk assessments and safe care guidelines are now consistently completed which safeguard the children in placements. The Carers Handbook is now completed and available to carers and provides them with the necessary information and guidance to promote the welfare of the children.

The training of carers is also now being prioritised, with NVQ 3 and post-approval training being organised for this year.

There have been three new appointments to the main fostering team, allowing for statutory work to be undertaken. However caseloads do remain high and staffing levels need to be continually reviewed. Only 30% of foster carers think the staffing of the service is sufficient.

The fostering service is attempting to recruit more carers from different ethnic minority groups, and have produced posters in different key languages.

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

Practice needs to improve in how allegations and complaints are investigated and recorded. This will then ensure that appropriate action is taken and monitored. There is a need to improve the outcomes for children in relation to education and health. Of the children 'case tracked' a significant delay was noted in a child receiving specialist health support, and a number of children were receiving inadequate educational input. The service must develop strategies and guidance to ensure that action is taken to address these unmet needs.

Placements made were not always consistent with the carer's terms of approval. Reviews were also delayed following changes in circumstances. The inspectors are confident that this has now been addressed but the manager continues to need to monitor this, including the need for unannounced visits.

Although the initial matching of placements was very good for short term fostering, the significant lack of long-term carers meant that children were often in unstable placements, and for many children this was damaging to their wellbeing. The inspectors are aware however of the national shortage of long term carers for teenagers. The management of all three services also need to work more closely with the Fostering Panel to ensure it is able to fulfil its regulatory function of quality assurance and monitoring.

Together with the need for strategic input for education, health and consultation, there needs to be protocols for ensuring that young people are supported in preparing for adult hood. There is currently a significant shortage of Pathway Plans being implemented for young people. The service has yet to have any strategy for involving young people in its service planning or delivery.

Although eleven recommendations were made the service is continuing to meet the majority of the minimum standards. Most of the shortfalls did not reflect significantly on the positive outcomes being achieved for children. The inspectors are confident that these shortfalls will be addressed proactively which would then ensure that the service would be providing an all round good level of care to the children.

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

There are good systems in place to ensure the health needs of children are assessed and monitored, but some inconsistency in ensuring specialist health needs are met.

## EVIDENCE:

There are two 'looked after children' nurses employed by Dorset Social Care and Health Directorate. The inspector spoke with one of these nurses. The nurse confirmed that she carries out an initial health assessment for each new child looked after by Dorset, followed by regular reviews. Foster carers stated that the initial health assessment is carried out promptly and with consideration given to the child's wishes. Family Placement Officers confirmed that the links with the nurses are good and that they are accessible, especially in the East of the County.

In relation to the children referred to the Turnaround service the nurse confirmed that she has had little liaison with the team, carers or young people. The Turnaround carers also confirmed that a nurse has not seen all children. The children from the Turnaround Scheme however have direct input from the teams' psychologist who also has close links with the CAMHS service.

The statutory review documents seen for children made notes about the health of the child, monitoring their needs and any health input needed. There is also a Clinical Psychologist who offers clinics to workers and carers, to discuss any specialist emotional and psychological needs a child has. In discussion with family placement officers the availability of the psychologist varied. In the West of the County the inspector was informed that one carer did not receive clinical psychology input when needed. Psychology support to carers from the East was said to be accessible.

On the children's files kept by the fostering service there was no copy made of the health assessment, and therefore monitoring of the health needs of children with particular carers was difficult. In discussion with one young person and their foster carers, it was highlighted that there has been a significant delay in accessing specialist psychiatric services. This has impacted negatively on the young person. There was no evidence provided that the fostering service has actively tried to chase up the health referral. Other children that the inspector case tracked had received the health input required, including services from CAMHS and substance misuse workers. Carers confirmed that for this young person the health services he had received had made a positive contribution to his welfare.

The majority of questionnaires received from children stated that they have hobbies and take part in activities. Examples given were swimming lessons, ski lessons, playing rugby, bike rides, and playing football. Many mentioned that foster carers provided healthy food.

# 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):**

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

The manager and staff are suitable and qualified, with clear knowledge and understanding of how to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. There are good foster carers, where children have safe, healthy and nurturing environments.

The fostering service proactively and effectively carries out matching considerations for children, ensuring children are initially placed in well-suited and positive placements.

The fostering service has systems and guidelines in place to protect children from abuse. However practice has sometimes been poor in managing allegations in an effective way.

Improvement is needed in the membership and functioning role of the panel, so it can better promote the welfare of children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The family placement officers are qualified social workers with experience of working with looked after children, and have training in fostering support and assessment. In the fostering team there are ten family placement officers and two social work assistants who work closely with the qualified workers. The

recruitment personnel files seen of new workers evidenced that records were kept of workers previous employment details, qualifications, written references, verbal checks made of references, and criminal record bureau checks undertaken. However there was no proof of identity kept on all personnel files and proof of qualifications were missing. The fostering team manager stated that these details are kept at the personnel office at County Hall. The manager reported that there is a system set up for monitoring when CRB checks need to be renewed for workers within the fostering team. The 'responsible person' for the fostering service also needs to ensure their CRB check is renewed.

The recruitment and assessment of foster carers follows good practice procedures. Files evidenced that all statutory checks were undertaken, and references sought.

The inspectors visited four foster carers, and examined eight carer's files. The homes seen were suitable and comfortable. The children seen stated that their bedrooms were nice and provided privacy. The files showed that health and safety assessments and safe care assessments are undertaken regularly, and carers provide MOT and insurance certificates for their cars. The proformas for 'safer caring' and 'health and safety check list' have been developed further to ensure a more comprehensive assessment and record is made. In relation to the Turnaround scheme the manager has considered the previous recommendation made by the Commission and stated that the bedroom space available for the children has been assessed as adequate.

The fostering team is proactive about matching and introducing children to suitable carers. The fostering team have developed fostering request forms, which include matching needs and risks. The working procedures are that this referral form must be completed in full by placing social workers before the referral is accepted. In discussion with workers these procedures are followed. On four carers files seen there were completed short term fostering request forms, additional matching information forms, and risk assessments. This ensures that the team have sufficient information to consider a placement. On examination of children's files there were two incidence of a planned placement. On both these occasions the children had been introduced to the carers prior to moving there. In discussion with the Turnaround carers there was less evidence of good matching due to the restricted number of carers.

(See standard 17 under Management which relates to the lack of long term carers and how this affects permanence planning)

The inspectors also noted good practice in relation to the fostering team actively ensuring the necessary 'looked after children' paperwork is obtained to assist with matching. 85% of carers who sent in questionnaires stated the service is good at letting them know about things concerning the child.

The inspector spoke to the Panel Chair and examined the minutes of the last two panel sessions. The membership of the panel includes two independent members, two social workers one of which is the deputy chairperson, a medical advisor and three elected members. An independent person who has experience of being in care has just been appointed. The service has yet to appoint a person with an educational background. The panel have clear guidance and tools to assist with making quality decisions about approvals. The inspector was shown evidence of the panel providing a quality assurance function relating to assessments of carers. Management information is provided to the panel. However for the main fostering team the information about new carers, allegations and complaints etc is only provided 6 monthly. For the Turnaround Scheme it has been less frequent. The inspector also noted that information relating to a serious allegation about a carer and a complaint had not been passed on to Panel.

In discussion with the fostering team manager, there are systems in place to ensure that any allegations against carers are investigated by the child care teams. On examination of two files this has been the case. However, both files seen showed little evidence that the family placement officer had liaised with the child care teams. In both case the child care teams have apparently decided no further action needed in relation to child protection. There was no written evidence seen of this decision making. In both cases the action agreed necessary by the family placement officer had not been carried out. Further to this in two cases where the panel had requested further information relating to safety issues (one environmental and one about access to pornography on the computer) this had not been given and no evidence on file that these safety issues had been assessed by a worker.

The inspectors were informed that foster carers had requested training on sexual abuse. The training officer confirmed that the training planned for this year includes child protection and abuse, disclosures and sexual health and relationships. The carers' handbook includes details on agreed discipline measures, use of sanctions, safe care, protocol for a missing child, Internet access, and a bullying policy. According to management information there have been no incidences of bullying since the last inspection.

Out of the twenty-four children who completed the questionnaires, only one stated that they have been restrained, and although thought it was not done properly they did not get hurt.

# 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 was not fully assessed at this inspection)**

The fostering service values diversity, with gender, ethnicity, culture and disability being well considered when planning placements.

Although the fostering team are committed to improving the educational attainment for children, there needs to be a more strategic focus on improving educational services available to children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The carers and children's files seen evidenced that the matching considerations for placements includes information on the ethnicity, gender and culture of the children. Foster carer assessments also detail areas of diversity and how carers will respond to children from different ethnic groups or cultural backgrounds. The pre-approval training for carers includes anti-discriminatory practice. Two files examined highlighted concerns where carers were said to have made prejudicial remarks. These had been addressed by the family placement officers, but it has highlighted a shortfall in relation to diversity training post approval (see Standard 23).

In discussion with workers there were no concerns highlighted about suitable placements for children from ethnic minority groups. The team has recognised however the different ethnic groups living in Dorset and completed a recruitment poster in different languages (Spanish, Polish and Bangladesh). This is good practice.

There have been many changes to the shared care scheme. The inspectors were informed by the manager and workers that the shared care scheme in the east of the county has not been effective, with lack of carers and limited support given. There have recently been three new workers employed. This standard therefore will be assessed more fully at the next inspection.

In visits to four carers, two children in these placements had achieved positive educational success. Two young people had not received much educational support, with one receiving only five hours each week. In discussion with the Turnaround carers they stated that educational input was limited and that they were not aware of any strategic/formal action being taken to improve the educational support given to the children. The fostering team members articulated commitment and good practice in supporting the carers in educational issues. However, workers confirmed that the majority of the children placed with project carers are out of school, and only approximately seven hours of education input provided each week. The inspector was also informed of children who have been out of school for over a year. The carers who were visited all agreed that the LAC education link teacher is available and has had contact with the children. Family Placement workers also agreed that contact with the link teacher is good, but stated that there are limited resources.

The fostering service has not set up, or arranged with foster carers, for children out of school to be involved in structured occupational activities.



# **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**

Contact with family and friends is promoted ensuring young people maintain these links where appropriate.

Consultation with children, their families and foster carers is adequate, but it would be beneficial to have a more formalised approach to obtaining views from children.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Contact arrangements form part of the placement matching consideration. Evidence was seen on file showing how the family placement officer had considered the need for a carer to be near the child's family, provide transport and supervise contact. Three children spoken with stated how the carers help them to see their family. One case in particular was very positive, with the carers assisting with contact in another country. Another arrangement for one child involves the carers being very flexible in providing transport. All carers spoken with showed commitment to supporting the child's contact with their family, and awareness of the emotional support needed.

The inspectors noted some areas where the service promotes consultation with children. The fostering team manager has produced a child friendly children's guide, enabling young children to learn more about the fostering service. This has yet to be sent to children. Indeed 55% of children's responses stated that they have not been given a Guide or leaflet about the service.

Carers have been provided with training in 'Total Respect' and communicating with young people.

Dorset Social Care and Health Directorate have a service level agreement with an advocacy service, with the looked after children aged 10+ having access to an independent advocate.

However there lacks anything proactive or formal in relation to consultation. There are no children's groups and no strategy for the involvement of children and young people into service planning, policy or delivery. The foster carer reviews seen did not routinely include feedback from all the children placed with the carers. On examination of eight carer files, recorded written evidence of children's views was only seen twice.

In discussion with family placement officers, carers and children all confirmed that children are not asked when or where to have their statutory review or who is to be invited. Carer's responses in the questionnaires confirmed that only 34% of carers have been asked their opinion about the fostering service.

The questionnaires from children were more positive however regarding being consulted. 90% stated that their carers ask their opinions and ideas. 81% confirmed that they are asked their opinions about the foster carers. This dropped to 62% stating that they have been asked how to make the service better.

# 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)

**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 the following standard(s):**

### **14 and 29**

There is a lack of planning for preparing young people for adulthood, with limited resources or help to young people.

Allowances and expenses are sufficient and ensure that carers can provide adequate transport and material goods for the child.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Files evidence that carers claim for mileage and other expenses. The service has recently introduced loyalty bonuses, financial awards for attending training and a gift allowance to the carer's own children. The TASCA representative stated that the fee levels are acceptable compared with national comparisons. Six questionnaires from foster carers commented that payments are late or slow, and this will be monitored by the Commission.

The Turnaround carers were concerned that their fees will not be increased annually. This will also be monitored by the Commission.

The children seen confirmed that they are given money for clothes, outings, leisure activities and pocket money.

Four foster carers visited had four young people living with these carers who were over 15 years old. Only one had a pathway plan. In discussion with the carers they all confirmed that the young person would stay with them post 16. Family Placement Officers confirmed that the Post Care service has limited resources. Comments were made by several workers that there is a significant shortage of semi-independent houses / supported lodgings and that the service

would benefit from more of these. The supervision case notes of carers did not make many references to encouraging and developing independent skills of the young people. A training day however had been provided to carers on Pathway Planning.

# 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, and 24 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, 22, 23, 24, 25**

The fostering team has qualified workers who provide valued support to carers. However, the numbers of staff and carers employed is not sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the service.

There is a clear management structure, but improvement is needed to ensure that staff are organised efficiently and supported consistently.

Induction training for carers is good and foundation training is now better planned to ensure carers can develop their skills further.

Case records for children are comprehensive, giving an understanding of the child's life events and ensuring the appropriate information for carers is held.

The administrative files have improved, however the collation of key information regarding complaints / allegations remains poor.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The inspectors spoke at length to team members, managers and foster carers. These discussions highlighted that the workers and foster carers are knowledgeable and understanding to the needs of children looked after. The caseloads held by the fostering and permanence team family placement officer's average about 30 carers, but with one worker supervising 45. The workers and manager stated that these caseloads are large and affect the workers ability to carry out statutory visits. Only 34% of carers who responded think that the service is staffed sufficiently.

The service decided to set up a separate adoption and permanence team two years ago, to better provide a more specialised support to children in long term placements. However due to a lack of workers in the adoption and permanence team, the majority of long term cases have not transferred from the fostering team.

The team members confirmed that the specialised roles now delegated to team members have been beneficial. Three named team members are now responsible for recruitment, assessment, training and foster carer reviews. All team members spoken with stated that the team is managed well, and that they felt supported. However, comments were made about the negative impact of the split of the team into two area offices. This results in some management decision delays, but has not resulted in any poor practice coming to the attention of inspectors. The induction of new workers could be improved as it was said to have no clear programme, timetable or training.

Since the last inspection difficulties with administration remain. There has been temporary staff covering in the east of the region, and team members confirmed that this has meant that the administration systems have not been effective. A new permanent worker has however just been appointed. There is said to be good administrative support in the west office but a lack of computers continues to limit the ability of workers to complete necessary records.

The large majority of foster carer annual reviews are up to date, with two or three outstanding due to exceptional circumstances. The case files also evidenced that the majority of workers in the fostering team are undertaking regular statutory announced supervision visits to carers. There is a delay of several months of these being recorded on file in some cases. Also a random case chosen from the permanence team and two from the Turnaround Scheme showed that carer supervision visits have not been regularly undertaken. In relation to Turnaround this was due to the family placement officer vacancy. Case records showed that statutory unannounced visits have not been carried out on many carers. The manager is aware of this and developed a monitoring tool for supervision.

In general however supervision of carers is good. There were many individual positive comments made about the support given by family placement officers. Overall the questionnaires received stated that they feel supported, with only 10.6% saying they are not supported well enough (27.7% supported very well, 12.8% quite well, and 48.9% OK). Of most importance is that 97.4% of the responses confirmed that the carers felt listened to. Negative comments about their work with Dorset Social Care and Health related to the childcare social workers not the fostering officers.

Each carer's file contained a foster carer agreement and foster placement agreement.

Two out of four carers 'case tracked' by the inspectors had children placed with them for long-term placements although panel had yet to approve this status. In one case it took 15 months to go to panel to be approved for the right status. There had also been a considerable delay in approving a foster carers partner who was significantly involved in the foster caring. These were however positive placements for the young people.

Files did provide clear case notes of supervision visits, and records of meetings. However, information relating to complaints and allegations continue to be limited. In relation to two complaints there was no record of the investigation or outcome on the carers file. Complaints made to the Turnaround Scheme have not been collated with the complaints relating to the rest of the service.

The children's files contained the necessary 'looked after children' paperwork. There continues to be however little evidence of children being actively encouraged to comment or view on the information written about them (carers diaries, reviews, Turnaround reports).

There are a number of children placed with agency carers. A senior practitioner in the team has the responsibility for monitoring the quality of these placements. The manager confirmed that Form F's and foster carer reviews are routinely scrutinised for independent agency placements. The administrators

have also begun to collate inspection reports and statements of purpose for independent agencies used.

In discussion with carers and team members, and by examining some children's files, it was evidenced that there is a significant lack of long term carers. The inspectors were informed of at least three children who have been disadvantaged and their behaviour deteriorated because of no suitable long-term placement for them. The fostering manager is aware of this. A recruitment leaflet for foster carers has recently been sent to households in Dorset.

The inspectors met with the training officer. She evidenced that a foundation training course is being planned for carers. This will include child protection, youth offending, advocacy, parenting skills, and substance misuse. The training programme for this year also includes Life Story Work, Sexual Health, Team Teach and Pathway Planning. Carers have now been given training portfolios to collate certificates and show evidence of competence and skills (Continuous Professional Development Portfolio). The inspectors were also informed that all carers are shortly to be notified of the opportunity to do NVQ 3. The fostering service is planning on supporting approximately 12 carers this year to do the course.

Carers agreed that training opportunities were provided. However three Turnaround Carers could not attend a recent training course, as there was no childcare provided. The manager informed the inspector however that assistance for child care, travel and an attendance fee is paid to carers.

The training for prospective carers includes 9 sessions and is linked to the Fostering Network training pack. Speakers are arranged from the NSPCC, Child Psychology and Education. There is no direct training for new or existing carers on equal opportunities and diversity awareness.



# 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>	2

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

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	2
<b>31</b>	X

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	2

<b>ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	2
<b>29</b>	3

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? NO

**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	FS13	16	The fostering service must provide suitable and efficient education for children not attending school.	01/08/06
2	FS17	33	The fostering service must recruit more long term carers to ensure that children are placed with the most suitable carers.	01/09/06
3	FS25	12	The fostering service must keep clear written records on the carers files of any allegation of abuse or neglect and of the action taken in response.	01/06/06

## 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	<p>There needs to be better practice following allegation or complaints against carers by the family placement officers. Records should be clear and action taken promptly.</p> <p>Complaints and allegations made concerning children and carers in the Turnaround Scheme should be collated and monitored by the fostering manager.</p>
2	FS11	<p>There should be a clear strategy for involvement of children and young people in service planning, policy and delivery.</p> <p>The fostering team should continue to ensure that reviews of foster carers include the views of any child placed with the carers.</p> <p>The fostering service should ensure that children and the foster carers are consulted first about the time and venue of the children's statutory reviews.</p>
3	FS12	<p>The fostering service should be more proactive in ensuring the specialist health needs of the children are met.</p> <p>Children's files should evidence that a health assessment has been undertaken and that the carers are aware of any health needs.</p>
4	FS13	<p>Children's files should evidence that children have a Personal Education Plan and that the carers have received a copy.</p>
5	FS14	<p>The fostering service should ensure that young people are prepared to move to semi/independent living.</p>
6	FS16	<p>New workers should have a suitable induction, with a clear programme and training.</p> <p>There should be adequate office equipment to allow workers to carry out their duties in an efficient manner.</p>
7	FS17	<p>Caseloads should be reviewed and changed where necessary to ensure that all statutory work is completed in a suitable way.</p>
8	FS22	<p>Unannounced visits to foster carers should take place at least once a year.</p>

		Better systems need to be arranged to ensure that carers approval status is consistent with the placement plan for the child.
9	FS23	Post approval training should include anti-discriminatory and diversity training.
10	FS25	Carers' files should include a clear record of complaints including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.  Children should be encouraged to access their records, make additions and comments and record personal statements.
11	FS30	The independent members of the panel should include someone with expertise in education.  The panel should receive more regular management information about the service.  When Panel recommend that the service undertake further checks or work and inform panel of the outcome, they should specify the timescale for this.

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