



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Isle of Wight Authority Fostering Service

**Isle of Wight Council Headquarters
Fairlee Road
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 2EA**

Lead Inspector
Lynda Mosling

Announced Inspection
27th February 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 or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service Isle of Wight Authority Fostering Service

Address Isle of Wight Council Headquarters
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PO30 2EA

Telephone number 01983 566011

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Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Isle of Wight Council

Name of registered manager (if applicable) David Crewe

Type of registration Local Auth Fostering Service

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 17th January 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Isle of Wight Local Authority Fostering Service is currently managed by Mr David Crewe and is based at Ryde Social Services Centre in Lind Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight. The service has approximately 150 carers offering a variety of placements including long and short-term foster placements, Family Link for young people with disabilities, respite care and kinship care. At the time of the inspection there were 122 young people in foster care and an additional 14 receiving short-term breaks. The service recruits, trains, assesses and supports foster carers across the Isle of Wight. There is a dedicated fostering panel.

SUMMARY

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

The announced inspection took place over four fieldwork days and was undertaken by two inspectors. Managers, staff, carers and young people were spoken to during the inspection. Seven foster homes were visited and an additional three were spoken to. Questionnaires, randomly sent, were received from carers and young people. In addition the inspectors spoke to a range of people involved in the service for Looked After Children including an independent reviewing officer, children's rights officer, chair of the local Foster Care Association, the Looked After Children Education Scheme manager and a senior manager of children's services.

The information gathered during the inspection demonstrated that the service provides a range of foster carers who deliver good care to young people. The carers generally felt supported by the fostering service but had some concerns about the lack of social work input with the young people. Young people who were seen, and who responded to the questionnaires, said they were well looked after by their carers. However, the number of carers does not meet the demand for placements and can lead to inappropriate placements and a high number of moves for young people.

What the service does well:

The fostering service is well managed and is organised to make the best use of the skills of the staff. Staff said they felt valued and supported by the manager and their colleagues.

The team has a high proportion of qualified and experienced staff with good understanding of the needs of children looked after away from home, and the needs of their carers.

Carers feel generally well supported by the fostering team and have a range of support options to consider, including carer support groups.

Consultation with young people has been developed to provide opportunities for young people to make a difference to the services on offer. Young people are involved in the selection of staff and meet with senior managers and councillors to air their views.

There is recognition of the need to work with other agencies/disciplines to provide the best possible care to young people. Attempts to encourage corporate parenting continue.

Family and friends are considered as possible carers for young people and are supported by appropriate allowances once approved.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Systems and paperwork have improved to provide a more accountable service that responds to the needs of referred young people.

Staff report being well managed and of appreciating the strong leadership of the team. There is confidence that the issues raised within the team are shared appropriately with senior managers. This follows a period when the team were without a manager and/or unsure about management plans.

Information about young people referred for a placement has improved by the insistence of having basic information available before a referral is accepted. This information has led to carers receiving more information about a young person at the point of placement.

Collection of information about unmet need has enabled recruitment of carers to be targeted and give a clear picture to the service about the gaps in provision.

Consultation with young people has continued to improve since the last inspection. Young people now have a range of options to have their views heard.

The introduction of a consistent duty officer within the fostering team has been appreciated by those requiring placement and has improved the response to referrals.

The manager and staff have developed a recruitment strategy that is imaginative and eye catching. It is hoped that this will provide more carers to enable young people to have better choice of placement.

Support to carers has included shared lunches with staff, managers and councillors. There have also been recognition awards and appreciation shown by sending carers flowers and cards for their good work.

What they could do better:

Further attempts to meet the educational needs of young people should be made to ensure that all Looked After young people are provided with the best chance of achieving their potential, not just those in the targeted areas i.e GCSE results.

The lack of available carers compromises the ability to match young people's needs with carers. This leads to some inappropriate placements and more frequent moves for young people.

Information about carers and their families could be made available to young people prior to placement to help minimise the anxiety felt by young people entering a placement.

Whilst the work of unqualified staff is appreciated the service should be clear about the responsibility placed on these workers and the possible outcomes of this for the service as a whole.

Training for carers and social workers in negotiation skills, understanding the various roles of people involved in the looked after service could positively influence the experience of looked after children.

Whilst consultation with young people has improved, the evidence of consultation with children with disabilities could be improved. Clarity of the status of young people using Family Link would assist the service to consider its responsibilities.

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

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

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The health and development of young people fostered by the service is promoted by appropriate assessment of their needs and clear plans to meet these needs.

EVIDENCE:

The placement agreement details the young person's health needs and how these will be met. It is an expectation that all young people placed will be registered with a local GP by the first review. Young people spoken to confirmed that they can access a GP and are generally registered with the same GP as the foster family. A booklet holding the young person's health background, immunisations, appointments with specialists etc. is provided to the carer once the young person has been looked after for more than four months. Carers usually take on the task of ensuring dental, optical and audio needs are met. The arrangements for meeting the health needs of the young person is monitored at the looked after children reviews, copies of which were seen on children's files.

There is a joint funded post within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Team. This enables quicker access to the service by looked after children. Personal advisors have a specific role to address the health needs of young people, including help with information about sexual health, drug and alcohol consumption etc.

In the returned questionnaires young people said that they are 'taught about healthy eating' and provided with appropriate food. In visits to foster carers during the inspection young people talked about the food they enjoy and said that they are consulted about shopping and menus.

There is funding to provide a specialist post - nurse for Looked After Children, but recruitment efforts have not been successful so far. It is hoped that when

the post is filled there will be more monitoring of young people's health needs and that it will support the services currently on offer. A health visitor and a consultant paediatrician are members/advisors to the fostering panel. Foster carers receive training in drug awareness, sexual health etc. and are provided with useful information on health issues in the foster care handbook.

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 and 15.

The manager is appropriately qualified, competent and suitable to manage the service. The foster carers are assessed thoroughly to ensure their suitability. Matching of young people with carers is compromised by the lack of available carers. Young people are protected from abuse by a range of procedures and guidance. Staff working for the service have been recruited using appropriate methods, including checks with CRB and POCA.

EVIDENCE:

There was a period during the last 12 months when the management of the team was uncertain, following the departure of the previous manager. The team was managed by two senior practitioners until a replacement was appointed. Staff said this had been a difficult time for them. The current manager was formally appointed to the role in October 2005. He previously managed the Looked After Children team so was well known to the staff. He has the appropriate qualifications to manage the team, including the DipSW, DMS and is currently on the second year of a M.A in public sector management. In addition he has undertaken a wide range of training including child protection, direct work with children, practice teaching etc. Staff spoken to during the inspection were very positive about his management of the team. They felt systems had improved, expectations of social workers requesting placements had been made clear, and all felt supported by his leadership. The team members are confident in his ability to be heard by senior managers and

have appreciated his openness and honesty. He in turn reported 'a sharp learning curve' and of developing a much clearer view of the carer's role. He demonstrated a keenness to improve the support to carers and to push up the standards of care offered to young people.

Carers are assessed using the BAAF Form F and those seen were comprehensive. The assessment process includes preparation to foster training. Carers' files provided evidence that the appropriate checks are taken up and personal referees visited. Full information is provided to the fostering panel to enable them to make an informed recommendation about approval. First reviews and any subsequent issue affecting the carer's suitability is reported to the fostering panel for further consideration. Evidence of this was provided in the panel minutes and the list of complaints made against carers. In discussion with social workers during the inspection it was stated that the quality of care provided by foster carers is inconsistent. The manager was clear that the system to consider a carer's continuing suitability has been tightened up and that the lack of resources does not mean the team will support unsuitable carers to continue fostering. The carers visited during the inspection were providing good, child centred care. However, the shortage of carers sometimes leads to placements being made in households where there are already young people placed, without risk assessments being undertaken and without full consideration of the effect of the new placement on the existing one. Social workers voiced frustration about this situation. One young person in response to the questionnaire said 'we should be asked if we want another child placed before one is' and said 'I have to share my room with someone I hate'. It is recommended that clear records are kept regarding the consideration given and the decisions taken when placing additional foster children in the household.

In common with other local authorities there are not enough carers to meet the demand for them. This compromises the ability to match young people's needs with the carers available. The staff are all aware of the principles of good matching, and the relevant research. However, the lack of choice of carers does not allow them to put this knowledge into practice. An allocation meeting was observed during the inspection and it was clear that there is a struggle to come up with any possibilities for young people requiring placement. The element of choice is not a reality, although there was appropriate consideration of the young person's needs and how the placement may, or may not, meet these. In the end it is likely to be a case of 'giving it a try' unless there are obvious safety issues. The team now collects information about the 'unmet needs' and uses this to inform the recruitment and commissioning process. Information about young people is now more consistently provided by the child's social worker (who cannot access a placement without a completed form), but there are still gaps in the provision. One of the major issues of consideration is to keep the young person on the Isle of Wight in order to limit disruption with friends and family. When it is necessary to commission placements from independent fostering agencies

those with local resources are approached first. As placements are often made in emergencies young people may have little information about the family who is going to care for them which can add to their anxiety. The manager explained that he has tried to introduce a system where foster carers can record the important facts about their family, i.e. pets, family activities, sleeping arrangements etc. on a DVD for the young person to access prior to placement. However, this has not started as carers are not too enthusiastic about the idea. Some staff felt it would only be useful if young people had a real choice to make between carers. It is recommended that this idea be further explored as a way of lessening the anxiety felt by young people prior to a placement, given that there is often little time for face to face introductions prior to a placement. Attempts to recruit more carers have already been introduced in order to maximise choice.

Carers receive training prior to approval on protection issues. This is followed up in subsequent training. It is designed to keep their family and the young people fostered safe. Safe caring plans are individually developed and form part of the placement agreement. Some of these were seen in the sample of carers' files examined during the inspection. Policies and procedures regarding child protection are available to the fostering team and the team benefits from the experience of the manager, and other members of the team, in child protection work. Carers spoken to took child protection seriously and were able to explain what they would do if they were concerned about the young person. Those who foster some of the older young people talked about their attempts to help the young person protect themselves when they are out of the house, whilst accepting that they were unable to protect them from all risks.

Most young people who responded to the questionnaires said they were not bullied and felt the punishments given were fair. Only one young person said she was bullied and that was by the other child fostered with her. Shouting and arguments were said to be the 'worst bit' about being fostered by one young person. Another said they didn't need punishments because 'I am always good'. Foster carers said they were clear about the permissible forms of punishment, accepted and agreed with them.

Allegations of abuse are recorded and appropriate action taken. Records were seen with action notes and outcomes clearly recorded. Procedures for dealing with missing persons has been reviewed and improved.

The manager confirmed that CRB checks are taken out on all staff and carers with contact with young people. Carers' files had evidence of the appropriate checks having been undertaken and up-dated. The recruitment of staff follows a standard process used by the council. Carers and young people have recently been included in the recruitment panel. Some of the staff in the fostering team do not have a social work qualification but are supervised by a qualified worker. This led to a number of discussions about the status of social

work both within the fostering team and the children's social work teams. Managers spoken to about this are confident that they have a reasonable mix of skills in the fostering team and are constantly reviewing the mix in the other teams. A senior manager explained that there is a policy about the use of unqualified social workers. The inspectors heard from carers and young people that many of the staff doing the direct work with young people are unqualified. The same people, however, felt that consistency and understanding of the role of foster carers is more important than qualifications. Whilst this view is appreciated, the service needs to be sure of the quality of the work being undertaken with looked after children and the responsibility being placed on unqualified workers.

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 and 31.

The service values diversity and provides training for carers to increase their sensitivity to children's differences. Educational achievement is promoted but there are still gaps in the provision of education to Looked After Children. Respite care and family link services recognise the parents as the main caregivers and works closely with them.

EVIDENCE:

The service includes the promotion of diversity and anti-discriminatory practice in all of the training offered to carers. There is a link with a local agency – Language Line, to enable the service to access interpreters in a variety of languages when necessary. Advice is sought when dealing with young people and families from specific religions and ethnic minorities. Foster carers spoken to talked of 'celebrating children's differences' and demonstrated a good understanding of the specific needs of the young people placed. This included the carers providing short-term care to young people with disabilities. Carers spoke of their attempts to integrate young people into the local community whilst ensuring their individual needs and preferences are respected.

The fostering service promotes educational achievement and encourages foster carers to involve themselves with the young people's schooling. Foster carers visited said they have close contact with the schools and expect to 'act like a good parent' over school issues. Achievements are celebrated by the council at award evenings/events. However, carers and social workers spoke of a continuing problem in accessing full-time education for young people who have a history of school non-attendance or difficulties at school. Whilst efforts are made to get young people into school carers talk of situations where young

people do not have more than a few hours of education offered to them weekly. This inevitably causes additional stress to carers. This is recognised by the service and some funds have been made available to give additional allowances to carers who have young people placed without full-time education (although carers reported that the offer of these funds is inconsistent). The Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) provides support to carers and young people regarding education and whilst this was appreciated by some carers it was felt to be available mainly to those in the GCSE age group and related to improving the government targets. Carers of younger children or those caring for young people without any likelihood of achieving qualifications felt they were not a priority. Discussion with a range of professionals, including the manager of LACES, demonstrated that success in gaining a place in local schools is often reliant on good communication between the head-teacher, carer, social worker, parents and young person. It was suggested that training for carers and social workers in negotiation skills would be useful to improve this situation. The LACES team have had a difficult year and have only just become fully staffed again. This has had a detrimental effect on the planned development of the service but it is hoped that this will now get back on track. It appeared from the evidence seen that the acceptance of the importance of education is improving, but available support, and education options are still variable. It is therefore recommended that continued attempts to improve education options across the population of looked after children are made.

The service provides respite care placements for young people requiring short-breaks. There are a number of carers who provide this service alongside offering longer-term placements. A few carers provide only respite care. It was hoped that the respite care service would increase with the appointment of a specialist worker, but this has not happened and the linkwork meeting observed showed there are still a number of young people requiring short-term placements that have to be 'fitted in' to the general need for carers.

The Family Link service for young people with disabilities continues to be valued by parents and young people. Carers providing Family Link were visited during the inspection and demonstrated great commitment to the young people they were linked with. Some had been providing care to the same young person for over 10 years and had become family friends once they reached adulthood. The service works very closely with parents who are respected as the main caregivers. Carers spoken to felt well supported and said they can access training specific to the young person's needs. Those spoken to did not see themselves as 'foster carers' and some, in response to the questionnaires, expressed a frustration with the amount of bureaucracy involved. One comment made was that meetings were 'a waste of man hours'. This view is well known to the staff who try to balance the need to meet regulation with the reality of the service provided. The approval process for Family Link is thorough and the applicants are presented to the fostering panel. Records relating to Family Link were seen in a sample of carers' files.

Some of these were sparse and not up to date. However, it was noted that the service has been under pressure due to the loss of social workers from the disability team who had specific responsibility for the young people on the scheme. This has led to the fostering team taking on the responsibility for many of the tasks previously undertaken by the social workers i.e. introductions to the carers, assessments of need etc. Reviews of the placements are not happening as before and there have been some differing views about whether the young people using Family Link are Looked After Children. It is important that these issues are addressed in order to support a scheme that has shown proven benefits to young people with disabilities and their families.

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 and 11.

The service promotes contact with young people and their family and friends. Consultation with young people has continued to improve and they are now involved in many decisions including recruitment of staff.

EVIDENCE:

Young people, in their response to questionnaires, said they are able to have contact with their family and friends and said that they are helped in this by their carers. Contact arrangements form part of the placement agreement and carers spoken to were all aware of the arrangements for contact. Most carers are actively involved in arranging contact and said that they were made aware of this expectation during their preparation and assessment. Young people who are placed off of the Island find regular contact less easy. The service is aware of this and try to use local resources as far as possible. The foster care handbook covers contact and the benefits of this for young people. Young people's files record the contact arrangements and any restrictions imposed. Young people spoken to confirmed that they are in close contact with their family and most use mobile phones to maintain contact between visits. The introduction of a contact centre has provided support for contact arrangements, particularly where the contact is required to be supervised.

Consultation with young people has continued to improve during the last 12 months. There are a number of options for young people to be heard by the service. The inspectors heard from the Children's Rights Officer of some of the new initiatives. These include: CAST – Care Advocacy Support Team – a group set up to provide support for young people and give them an opportunity to have a say in how children's services are run. A corporate parenting panel which includes senior officers, council members and young people, meets

regularly to discuss issues relating to looked after children. A copy of the issues raised at the most recent meeting was shared with inspectors and included: notification of changes of social workers, changes of placements with young people often not knowing where they were moving to, choice of placements, quality of placements and the methods to talk about this, allowances and pocket money etc. The membership of the group has lessened in order for it to be more manageable and friendly. Action plans arising from these panels were seen. Feedback from young people is invited prior to all LAC reviews with the independent reviewing officers making themselves available to talk to young people individually. Young people form part of the interview panel for staff appointments. The council has also introduced a multi media computer system to help children and young people express their views and opinions. This provides an interactive questionnaire that is child friendly and uses a range of methods to receive feedback from young people. It is designed for use by children and young people over 8 years of age. The information gained can be used in children's reviews, planning etc. to ensure the young person's views are taken into consideration. Further development of ways to ensure consultation with children with communication difficulties is planned for the future. Personal advisors and carers advocate for young people in many day to day situations. Whilst these initiatives have greatly strengthened the opportunities for young people to have their say, carers and young people said there was still a problem with communication with some children's social workers. Young people spoken to said they have had frequent changes of social worker and that they 'do not know them well enough to trust them'. Carers spoke of young people being frustrated by trying to 'get hold of' their social workers. The reality for some young people is that the person they expect to 'listen to them' i.e. their social worker is not readily available and this needs to be addressed to ensure all the other efforts are seen as additional to the day to day interest in young people's views.

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):

29.

The fostering service pays carers an allowance that is agreed prior to the placement of young people. This allowance is in line with the Fostering Network recommended minimum allowances.

EVIDENCE:

With the exception of a few, carers said they received an appropriate allowance for the young people they care for. All made the point that the allowances do not meet the full cost of the care of the young people, but are what was agreed at the point of placement. Carers said their allowances are generally correct and received on time. Any dissatisfaction with allowances or expenses is taken up through the support worker and/or the child's social worker. Most carers said the allowances 'support' what they are doing rather than 'pays' for what they are doing. The arrangements are clear and set out in the information given to prospective carers. Most carers said they would not consider leaving the service to move to a higher paid agency. Previous inspections have recommended that payments be itemised so that carers are aware of what the payment relates to. This has not yet been done but is the next step planned on the new Swift IT system. The manager confirmed this would be in place prior to the next inspection.

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, 24 and 32.

Staff within the team are managed and organised to make best use of their skills. The fostering service has an adequate number of qualified and skilled staff. There is a clear strategy for working with and supporting foster carers but carers report the support to be variable outside of the fostering team. The case records for children are held by the child's social work team but the sample seen was comprehensive. The local authority promotes the consideration of use of family and friends as carers.

EVIDENCE:

Staff within the fostering team feel their skills are valued and that their role makes the best use of those skills. Within the team there are a number of projects and schemes with specialist workers. However, the staff appeared to have a strong team identity and spoke openly and generously about the skills and knowledge of their colleagues. They said they felt valued and could rely on support from each other. The team link meeting observed demonstrated a good understanding of the total responsibilities of the team. The introduction of a duty officer within the team was felt by all to be helpful both for the team and those requiring a service. The consistent approach has led to a better 'feeling of urgency' when trying to arrange placements. This was noted also by social workers outside of the team.

The fostering team has a large number of qualified and experienced staff who are competent and confident in their role. Some have been working in the same team for a number of years and have undertaken a lot of training relating to the needs of children looked after away from home. The systems within the team, including the IT system, supports the team activity. The shortage of carers is covered in Standard 8 within this report. The manager and team have come up with a range of imaginative ways to recruit more carers, including advertising on the back of car park tickets, in staff cars, and at local events. Bookmarks and leaflets have been designed and distributed at libraries, cinemas and surgeries. In an attempt to get the message across that 'all sorts of people are needed as be foster carers' the team has adopted Bertie Bassett as a mascot and had a life size 'Bertie' made up to attend recruitment events. These ideas, and others yet to be put in practice, are an attempt to improve the choice of carers for young people.

The support available to carers is clearly stated in the foster carer agreement. Each carer is allocated a supervisory/support worker from the fostering team. The carers are visited on a regular, agreed basis – usually monthly, and supervision notes are recorded and signed by the carer. These were seen in a sample of carers' files and showed that a range of issues is discussed at each visit, including management strategies and the effect of the placement on the foster carer's family. Support groups are organised in different parts of the Island and the manager of the service has a meeting with the chairs of these groups on a regular basis to consider the issues raised. He then takes these issues to the next team meeting for consideration. Carers generally felt well supported by the fostering team and comments on the completed questionnaires include: 'they do a really good job', 'I really enjoy the visits', 'I have a brilliant support worker' and 'they do the best they can'. There have been additional efforts made to help carers feel valued, these include lunches to which carers, managers and councillors are invited, cards and flowers sent to carers following difficult placements etc. These have been appreciated. However, foster carers reported feeling less supported by children's/young

people's social workers and this has a lowering effect on the service. Carers spoken to understood the pressures social workers are under but feel their lack of availability, the lack of response to contact by carers and the inconsistent visiting of the young people was to the detriment of the placement and the young people. This view was shared by some young people. Comments included: 'I don't know who my social worker is', 'I've had 4 social workers in the last 9 months and not one has said goodbye', and 'I've given up with social workers'. The inspectors heard from a range of people that there appears to be a lack of understanding of the important role of foster carers by social workers and that this leads to misunderstandings and frustrations. It is recommended that joint training looking at the various roles and responsibilities be made available to all social workers working with young people who are fostered.

Young persons' files are not kept in the fostering team but are the responsibility of the child's social worker. The sample seen showed that comprehensive records are kept. The Swift computer system allows more sharing of information between the teams. Information provided about young people at the point of referral is improving as the manager of the fostering team has insisted that basic information is available before a referral will be accepted. Carers have appreciated receiving better information although they still report some gaps in available information.

Family and friends are always considered as a possible placement for young people prior to a foster placement being sought. This demonstrates the service's understanding of the benefits of young people being placed within their family network. Where family and friends go on to be assessed as foster carers they will go through the approval process, including the completion of a Form F assessment. If approved the carers will receive the same allowance as other approved carers. Three carers who are family members were visited during the inspection. The young people spoke of their pleasure at being 'looked after by Gran' and 'remaining part of the family'. The carers said they appreciated the support and allowances as it enabled them to become carers where they may not have had the resources to do so. In one case a carer explained that she had gone on to adopt her grandchildren with the department's support. In all of the placements seen the young people were benefiting from the sense of belonging and being cared for by people that knew them and their background well. Young people were enthusiastic about their care and hopeful for the future.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

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

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

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

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS6	That clear records are kept regarding the considerations made and the decisions taken when placing additional foster children in the placement.
2.	FS8	That continued efforts are made to recruit more carers to enable better matching of young people's needs to carers.
3.	FS8	That information about carers be made available to young people prior to placement.
4.	FS15	That the Directorate consider the responsibilities held by unqualified staff and any consequences for the service.
5.	FS13	That continued attempts be made to improve the education options for young people across the Looked After Children population.
6.	FS21	That joint training is considered to look at the various roles and responsibilities of those involved in working with Looked After Children to improve relationships.
7.	FS31	That the service address the issues of status of young people on the Family Link scheme and re-assess the social

		work resources allocated to this area of work.
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