



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Bury Social Services - Fostering**

**18-20 St Mary`s Place  
Bury  
BL9 0DZ**

*Lead Inspector*  
Lynn O Driscoll

*Announced Inspection*  
11<sup>th</sup> OCT, 7<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>-23rd Nov & 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> 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

<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

<b>Name of service</b>	Bury Social Services - Fostering
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<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Diana Powell
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      11th October 2005

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

The fostering service recruits, assesses, trains and supports carers to provide a wide range of services to looked after children and their families including the short break scheme which offers planned and time limited interventions aiming to keep young people out of the system, respite care, short term and permanent placements, family and friend carers and a home from home scheme which provides regular planned short breaks to disabled children and young people.

# SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection which took place over eight days. During this time a training session was observed, files were read, staff were interviewed, visits to children and carers were made, a discussion took place at a carers support group and a panel was observed.

A few weeks before the visit to the service questionnaires were sent to young people, carers and social workers and their replies are included in this report.

The manager also completed two documents called a "*data set*" and an "*Annual Quality Assurance Assessment*", which gave the inspector lots of useful information about the service now and the plans for making it even better in the future.

## What the service does well:

Most of the children and young people the inspector met and/ or returned questionnaires said they were very happy and settled with their carers. Comments included "*we like it here*" and "*I feel better and happy*". One young person visited happily lives with her Grandparents, brother and sister and has respite on her own where she "*loves going*"-" *I like feeding the chickens and walking the dog and being read to*"

This service continues to be well managed and the social work staff feel really supported. Bury is seen as a good place to work and the Manager said, "*the few that have left want/do come back*"

There is a good range of support and training on offer to carers. Replies from carer's questionnaires included "*we have an excellent link worker and very supportive LAC social workers*", "*The service offers me support which is always ongoing and I have been on numerous courses*". "*They give me support and advice and put me in the right direction if help is needed*" and "*we do feel they value us as carers and are approachable*".

Carers stay working for Bury. Examples include one who has just retired after 42 years and two others who have been carers for 18 and 26 years. The service now only recruits to meet specific needs to try to avoid carers having vacancies.

The team is committed to always trying to improve upon an already good service. They use the inspection to help this ongoing process and the service responds immediately to any requirements or recommendations made. One carer wrote "*the fostering service has come on in leaps and bounds*". An independent person who has experience of many Local Authorities told the

Inspector *"My experience of Bury is that they offer a very good children in need service"*.

The Home From Home Scheme continues to provide a good service to disabled children and their families.

The service as a whole is good at promoting and supporting education. One carer wrote *"we are given full access to the LAC teachers who give us advice and support and will visit us"* Many of the children and young people are doing really well in School or College. One carer said, *"she got 5 GCSE's -she has done very very well. She is at College now-I am so chuffed"*. At another young person's review it was minuted that she was *"doing really well at School and is making new friends all the time. School are really pleased with her progress"*.

Social workers were asked what the fostering service does best to get good outcomes for children and young people. One wrote *"liaise and work alongside other involved agencies"* *"good package of support which assist carers to look after children effectively"* *"thorough assessments and consideration is given to matching the needs of the young person with the skills of the carer"* *"support groups and regular training for foster carers"* and *"local placements that support the young people's education and relationships with family and friends"*

The members on the fostering panel are very knowledgeable about childcare.

There is a choice of placements for children under 11 years of age and there have been no family and friends breakdowns in the last twelve months.

Carers homes visited were clean and comfortable and the children and young people all liked their bedrooms. One young person was eager to show the inspector her bedroom which was painted in her favourite colour of lilac with co-ordinated bedding and was full of toys and all her certificates were displayed on the wall.

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

Just like the last inspection, there have been lots of developments in the last twelve months. This service does not stay still. It is always looking at ways of improving.

Most of the social workers who returned questionnaires felt that the service has got even better in the last twelve months.

A new worker joined the team in August to continue to improve the support to family and friends carers. The short break service has really developed in the

last twelve months and is especially meeting the needs of young people with ADHD.

A group for young people of secondary age has been set up called The VOICE. New forms have been produced to get the views of children/young people at carer's reviews. A new complaints procedure is in place and new guidance for young people leaving care.

The panel recently moved premises so that carers could start attending from November. This went well and carers said they "*felt fine-comfortable and relaxed.*" There is also a new panel chair since the last inspection who has lots of experience and knowledge and does not work for Bury so she can be completely "*independent*" and make sure needs are met.

The panel members and the family and friends workers had a good grasp of "*special guardianship orders*" and this is really being encouraged in Bury.

The foster care agreement has been changed so it now includes all the details it must have in it by law.

Young people in placements outside Bury continues to decrease.

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

On paper two young people appeared less happy in their placement. One wrote "*I am not exactly treated like royalty*". This needs checking out by her social worker who must visit regularly. Another identified social worker has still not visited three young people in their respite placements to check that they feel safe and happy.

Some of the negative responses from carers to the above question also related to social workers and to delays in seeing psychologists, which the manager of the fostering service has agreed to discuss with her colleagues in the wider service.

In regard to the fostering service the main issue was payment to carers and one social worker stated that some carers do not take up the offers of training. The Inspector acknowledges that both these issues are currently being addressed and there is likely to be some major changes in the next few months which will be explored at the next inspection.

All staff and panel members must have their CRB renewed every three years. Staff files must include all the information set out in Schedule 1 in the Regulations.

It is definitely getting better, but Bury still need carers for teenagers.



Supervising social workers need to make sure that all carers have an up to date safe caring policy in place. Not all the young people had signed key documents including their care plans. Not all carers knew that they could read their own files. Extracts from panel minutes, held on individual carers files, showing the discussions that took place and then leading to a recommendation for approval, need to be dated.

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

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

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

12

The outcomes in this area are good. This judgement was reached using all available evidence including 8 days at the service.

There are good arrangements in place to ensure children and young people in foster care remain fit and healthy.

## EVIDENCE:

Of the ten questionnaires returned from young people, 4 felt they *“sometimes”* get support and advice about being healthy, 4 said they *“usually”* do and 2 ticked *“always”*. Examples given included, *“my carer gives us salads and veg-I really like cucumber”*, and, *“I am always told to put some fruit in my packed lunch”*.

Carers were asked how well the fostering service supports them in helping the children they care for to be healthy and have healthy lifestyles. In response 1 ticked *“excellent”*, 2 *“good”* and 3 *“adequate”*. Comments included, *“we work closely with the LAC nurse”* *“Regular medical checks are given to children”* *“Checks are made to ensure children have a doctor, dentist, eye tests etc as required”* and *“Advice is given on healthy eating and lifestyle to all foster carers”*.

4 social workers ticked *“excellent”* 5 *“good”* 1 *“adequate”* but one did not even reply to the question *“How well does the fostering service enable children placed to be healthy and have healthy lifestyles?”* One social worker wrote *“foster carers actively encourage a healthy lifestyle, diet and exercise”* and another confirmed in writing that *“carers work well with both GP’s and LAC services”*.

Prior to the visit to the service the Manager completed an "Annual Quality Assurance Assessment" (AQAA) in detail and under this outcome gave a significant number of ways the service promotes the health and emotional well being of children in foster care. Central to this is access for looked after children and their carers to the specialist LAC team which includes a nurse, psychologist and a specialist in substance misuse and access to the CAMHS outreach worker.

The foster carers handbook contains advice on promoting healthy lifestyles and a section on drugs. The fostering service have also recently contacted a nutritionist from the PCT who has provided further literature and will attend a future foster carer support group.

The health assessments for young people eleven and over include screening for substance misuse and birthday packs are given to older young people which includes information on sexual health.

Ongoing training is available to carers on a number of health issues including first aid, depression and self harm, attachment and self esteem and HIV, Hep b and sexual health. The service is also organising a specific course for carers who take babies born to mothers who misuse drugs/alcohol.

The fostering service will fund fees and subscriptions to sports activities, and looked after children can all go swimming for free. One sibling group, for example, have dance and drama lessons together, which they really enjoy. One young woman told the inspector "*drama is very good-and I have performed two dances which went really well-it's really fun-I really enjoy it*". Other examples were ballet lessons, gym membership and karate classes. To date the manager has not refused any requests for additional funding.

Another young person visited plays in a football team. He trains every Tuesday and has matches every Sunday and he was rightly proud to recently receive a trophy for "*man of the match*". Another young person met during this inspection "*enjoys walking and swimming*"

Monitoring health needs takes place during supervisory visits, children/ young people's statutory reviews and in carer's annual reviews.

The sample of children's files read and visits to carer's homes on this occasion evidenced that holistic health needs are identified and met. The files read evidenced that immunisations and statutory medicals were up to date. All the young people met during this inspection were registered with a doctor and a dentist and there was documentary evidence that they receive treatment as and when needed.

One carer told the inspector that the LAC nurse visits the home regularly to offer advice on enuresis which is really appreciated. For another young person

met there has been positive outcomes in respect to personal hygiene and in ensuring she received the bereavement counselling she needed.

One carer, the inspector visited, was particularly proactive in ensuring one of the young people in her care received the podiatry and physiotherapy treatment she required. Two carers discussed at panel were also reported to *"actively promote each child's physical and emotional needs"*.

Areas identified for development in the next twelve months which may be explored at future inspections includes, improving support to kinship carers in respect of attendance at the LAC initial health assessments and the implementation of the healthy care programme.

# 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 and 30

Quality in the outcome area is good. The judgement has been made using available evidence including 8 days at the service.

Overall there are good arrangements in place to ensure fostered children and all members of the carer's household remain safe, but a basic safeguard is ensuring all staff files and full panel members, hold the required information and CRB's are renewed every three years. Suitable safe caring policies should be in place in every household and children's social workers must visit carers homes and see the child on their own *at least* as often as is statutorily required.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Manager of the service is suitably qualified and very experienced and is totally committed to offering a good quality service. Her roles and responsibilities are clear and she continues to undertake them efficiently and effectively. As an example, the Inspector acknowledges that the requirement made at the last inspection to revise the foster carer agreement in line with the Regulations and distribute an amended copy to every carer was actioned within one week of the visit. The AQAA and data set were also completed in detail and proved a tremendous aid to the inspection process which is consistently taken very seriously by this manager and used constructively.

Her file was examined at the last Inspection to find that all the required safeguarding documentation was in place.

The homes, visited as part of this inspection, were all warm, clean and comfortable. Young people's bedrooms were seen and found to be age appropriately decorated and furnished and individualised with their own treasured possessions.

The foster carer handbook has a section on health and safety and guidance on the appropriate ways of managing challenging behaviours. Health and safety training is provided to carers.

An annual health and safety checklist is completed on all carers households prior to their annual review. These were seen on individual files and found to be up to date.

The Inspector was satisfied from reading files and from discussions with young people, carers and staff that the assessed needs of the young people visited were being met and some good matches were found. Moreover the increase in kinship care has clearly ensured excellent matches especially in respect to ethnicity, culture, religion and language. (See also the section entitled "*Enjoying and Achieving*") A social worker told the panel that one carer does "*a fantastic job with teenagers-she gives the most challenging young people a chance*". Grandparents visited told the Inspector that there had been proper and gradual introductions to the children's respite carers which they feel made a huge difference to the success of these placements and has therefore been a tremendous support to them.

There have been two child protection courses run for carers in the last twelve months and 35 carers have attended. The data set confirms that there have been no allegations made against carers in the last twelve months and no incidents of restraint. The AQAA states that the safeguarding board sub group intends to produce enhanced standards for the safety of children and young people.

Not all the carers visited were clear about specific safe caring in their own homes. Most understood the health and safety requirements, but those examined were not tailored to individual young people's needs. Others were not on file or in the home.

The young people's questionnaire asked if they were being bullied. All except one replied "no". The identified young person wrote "*don't know*". At the end of the questionnaire she wrote "*I get blamed for a lot of things*". This is the same young person who is not being visited regularly by the allocated social worker.

Of the ten young people who returned questionnaires, 9 confirmed in writing that they *"always"* feel well cared for where they are living now. Comments included *"I feel safe and happy"* and *"they care for me a lot and I love living here"*. One identified young person ticked *"sometimes"* and commented that she felt that the carer liked the other children better. Again it was agreed that this should be explored with her social worker who must visit more regularly.

Social workers were asked how well the fostering service makes sure the children are well cared for. In response 2 ticked *"excellent"* and 7 ticked *"good"*. Two did not answer this question but of those one gave examples of regular training for carers, visits from linkworkers, liaison with other professionals and a stable team. Another social worker commented, *"thorough checks are completed during the assessment and these are taken to panel to endorse"*.

One social worker confirmed in writing that one young person now enjoys *"a secure home environment where she feels settled and included within the family group"* Another wrote that the carer *"offered security for the child during a period of upheaval"*.

Staff files on new workers since the last inspection and panel members files were examined to find one identified member of staff required a new CRB, evidence of DIPSW qualification, a recent photograph and positive proof of ID showing change of name by marriage. One panel member's CRB was also out of date which the Manager confirmed had been actioned and another was due in December. The service needs to make sure that the system ensures sufficient time for the renewing of CRB's every three years.

The panel was observed as part of this inspection. It was quorate and included the representation required in the Regulations. Since the last inspection an independent chair has been appointed who is highly qualified, has substantial child care experience and is child focussed. Another very recent positive development has been the opportunity for applicants to attend the panel and the venue has been changed to enable this. Guidance will be sent out to all prospective carers and all people who present at panel will be asked to complete an evaluation form.

Since the last inspection the panel have had specific training on special guardianship orders and on matching considerations.

It was clear that the members had read their papers prior to the panel as relevant questions were asked and the expertise was evident. In stark contrast there appeared to be confusion from some social workers presenting and the majority of items had to be deferred. This was discussed with the chair who had in turn raised it with the relevant managers.



The chair was interviewed as part of this inspection and was very satisfied with the quality assurance systems in place to enable her to undertake her role effectively. Formally this includes quarterly meetings with managers, first reviews being discussed and an annual report being presented to panel. It was also evident that she contacts them immediately if she has any concerns and as importantly she finds them to be *"very responsive"*. She told the inspector *"Managers here are not at all defensive. They will listen and either an explanation is given or they will hold their hands up and will sort it out"*.

# 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

Quality in this outcome area is good. The judgement has been made using all available evidence including an 8 day visit to the service.

Overall there are good arrangements in place for enjoying and achieving. The service values diversity and actively promotes educational opportunities and achievements. The short break scheme continues to offer a good service to disabled children and their families.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Carers were asked how well they felt the fostering service addresses issues of equality and diversity. In response 1 ticked "excellent", 4 "good" and 1 "adequate". Examples given included, working with carers to meet individual needs, recruiting carers of different ethnic backgrounds, converting a home so that they could care for disabled children and "excellent training available and a pair of ears if we need some advise".

The same question was asked in the questionnaire to social workers and 1 ticked "excellent", 6 ticked "good", 1 "adequate", 1 "inadequate" and two did not answer at all. One social spoke of one sibling placement that was able to meet the needs of the young people in terms of ethnicity and culture. Another confirmed in writing that one young person is supported and encouraged by her carers to explore her heritage and culture.

The AQQA states that equality and diversity issues are included in the pre and post approval training for carers and *"they underpin all our work with carers"*. It reads *"wherever possible we place children with carers of the same culture and ethnicity"*. Additional support includes the loan of multi ethnic books and toys, the provision of specialist equipment to ensure the mobility/independence of children with disabilities and extra payments to attend, for example, Koran lessons and the Vietnamese Centre in Manchester.

The increase in kinship care has clearly ensured excellent matches in respect to ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

In July 2005 the Home From Home Scheme for disabled children transferred to the Disability service to ensure carers had a greater access to specialist advice.

The development of the Short Break Scheme over the last twelve months has bridged two much needed gaps, namely time limited focussed intervention with teenagers and/or with children with ADHD.

Of the ten questionnaires returned from young people 50% said that they *"always"* receive the right help so that they can be successful in education. Another four replied that they *"usually"* do and only one ticked *"sometimes"*. A number said that they get help with their homework from their carers.

Carers were asked how well the fostering service supports them in helping the children they care for in achieving educationally. In response, 1 ticked *"excellent"*, 3 *"good"* and 2 *"adequate"*. The LAC teachers were described as *"very supportive and approachable"*.

Social workers were asked to rate how well the fostering service supports the children in achieving academically and in response 2 ticked *"excellent"* and 8 ticked good. One social worker did not answer this question. The one comment was as follows, *"foster carers are encouraged to access training and to support education. Family placement workers are aware of how to access learning mentors and teachers for looked after children"*.

The carer's handbook makes it clear that the service will pay for school uniforms when a child/young person starts a new school and for two holidays during their period of education.

Children and young people are provided with laptops or computers. They also have access to specialist tuition as required, for example additional English lessons and tutors are specifically employed to help young people prepare for GCSE's.

The service will fund computer courses for carers and two specific training sessions on promoting education have been on offer to carers in the last twelve months delivered by LAC teachers. 14 took up this opportunity. LAC

teachers also attend support groups to offer advice and to answer any specific questions on educational issues. In July a Connexions worker attended the support group and information about the services they provide was included in the August newsletter sent to all carers.

The data set confirms that all school age children and young people in foster care of school have an educational placement and overall attendance is good. Secondly on the 4/12/06 Connexions reported in writing that *"94% of all LAC school leavers were in employment, education or training at the end of November 2006. This exceeds last year's figures of 82% demonstrating how well our services are working in partnership with one another"*.

One identified young woman who only came to this country two years ago and could not speak English has achieved A\*-C grades in all ten GCSE's which is an excellent outcome. Another young person discussed at panel who prior to living with family and friends carers was not attending school, is now at College and *"doing really well"*. Other family and friends carers were described as *"dedicated to the children's educational attainments"* and one teacher has found significant changes to one child since moving to a family and friends placement stating *"she has really settled down at school. She is cleaner, tidier and is smiling a lot more. She is also more confident that she has been"*.

One young person visited was described as *"doing remarkably well at School"*. Another came in very excited from School because she had received a merit in geography and the carer was observed to give her the praise she wanted and deserved. Records state *"she is no longer SEN as she has made so much progress"*.

The AQQA states *"year on year there has been an improvement in attainment at GCSE"* and they now intend to address the fact that the SATS results have not improved at the same rate.

The Home From Home Co-ordinator was interviewed as part of this Inspection which evidenced that she knows all her 16 carers really well and the needs of the children and young people placed with them and thereby she can ensure good matches. She assesses, is involved in the training and provides ongoing support to all the carers. She also visits every child in placement at least once or twice a year and *"lots during the introductions"*. One particular carer provides respite for seven children with moving and handling needs and the Local Authority built an extension on the home to accommodate this. She told the Inspector *"they all provide excellent care-I have no concerns about any of my carers-parents really appreciate the support and children like going which is confirmed in their reviews. They are happy with the service they are getting"*.



## **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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using all available evidence including an 8 day visit to the service.

Overall the opportunities for Looked After Children to make positive contributions are good but social workers must regularly visit children and young people in carer's homes and speak to them on their own.

The service actively promote appropriate contact in line with legal directions and preferences.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Training to carers emphasises the importance of promoting contact and working in partnership with parents. The AQQA states that the family support service is currently recruiting specialist workers who will be trained in promoting contact.

There was good evidence on one file that children's wishes and feelings were being taken into account over contact arrangements. Some carers visited were supervising contact in their own home, taking large sibling groups out on activities together and/or providing overnight stays for siblings. The specific arrangements are included in each placement agreement and the service pays any transport costs. There is also a letterbox scheme to enable children and young people to maintain written contact with their families.

The questionnaires sent to young people asked if they were helped to think about their future. The responses to this ranged from one replying "never", 5

"sometimes" and 4 "always". They were also asked if carers listened to them and took notice of their opinions. In response, 4 ticked "always", 4 "usually" and 2 "sometimes".

The same question was asked about their social workers and 4 ticked "always", 2 "usually" and 4 "sometimes". It is of concern that one young person wrote "I don't get to see my social worker very often". (See also the section on "Staying Safe") Positive comments included, "I talk to my social worker about a number of things and she has listened to me and helped me".

9 out of the 10 young people confirmed in writing that they "always" knew who to speak to if they had a personal problem. Only one ticked "usually". Examples given were, parents, the nurse at school, social workers, carers and an advocate.

9 out of 10 young people knew how to make a complaint. Again it was one of the two young people who appeared less happy in their placement who did not know how to complain which needs addressing.

Carers were asked to rate the fostering service at involving children and young people in decisions about their day to day lives. In response 1 ticked "excellent", 3 "good" and 2 "adequate". The two additional comments were both positive, "All the young people I have cared for have been involved/consulted about their care" and "All the children in our care have regular visits from their social worker and the children's views are always shared at reviews".

Social workers were asked the same question and of the eleven that returned a questionnaire 1 ticked "excellent", 6 "good" 2 "adequate" and two did not answer. No additional comments were made to aid clarity.

They were also asked to rate the fostering service at involving the looked after children they cared for in decisions about how the fostering service is run. In response 50% ticked "good" and 50% "adequate". The two comments clarified that the young people have been asked to contribute but they are "rather reluctant to complete forms or attend meetings no matter how much encouragement they receive".

The responses from social workers to this same question were, 1 "excellent", 3 "good" 5 "adequate" and again two did not answer this particular question. Further comments included childrens' involvement in reviews, support groups and "various events organised throughout the year".

There are a number of established ways in which young people's views are heard which include consultation forms for statutory reviews, their carer's annual review and on leaving a placement, encouragement and support to attend and participate in their own reviews, access to BIVAS, an independent

advocacy service and to learning mentors who will act as advocates in school settings.

The AQAA states that as a direct result of listening to children, very recently there have been two new groups set up, one for carers' own children and one for looked after young people of secondary school age called The VOICE. Further the intention is that independent reviewing officers will consult with this group to look at ways of improving the involvement of children and young people in their reviews and they are going to reinstate the practice of seeing children and young people on their own prior to their review.



# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

14 and 29

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement is made using all available evidence including an 8 day visit to the service.

There are good arrangements in place for preparing young people for adulthood.

The Inspector acknowledges that the fostering service intends to significantly improve the fees and allowances to carers by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

## EVIDENCE:

The carers handbook includes a section on preparation for independence, an ongoing training course is on offer and extra mile workers regularly come to carer's support groups. The data set states that 6 out of the 8 young people of fifteen years and over have a pathway place in place. Continuing care or supported living arrangements for young people over the age of eighteen who are in employment, education or training have been established with the Extra Mile service.

Some carers were quite dissatisfied with current payments and/or the delays in receiving them. Comments included,

*"Birthday allowances do not cover what teenagers want. I couldn't buy her the IPOD she asked for and all her friends had and it broke my heart-but I just couldn't afford it".*

*"Christmas payment is horrendous especially for teenagers-every year I have to spend a lot of money out of my own pocket. Realistically you can only buy one present-who gives a child one present?"* and,

"*The money we get never covers what you buy*". This particular carer said at one point she was struggling financially and had to borrow from her sister.

Another carer who involves young people in lots of activities during their stays as part of the placement agreement told the Inspector that she can be seven weeks before she gets her money and was forced to borrow money from her father. She said "*I can easily have spent £50 per week-which is a lot of money-delays happen so many times-it's also difficult to judge if payments are correct-I shouldn't be mithered about payments-it's getting ridiculous*". One carer visited has experienced delays in payment at the start of a new placement.

The Inspector was informed that there has been a recent problem with the IT system resulting in some payments being delays, but more experienced carers knew they could contact the finance officer direct if they were experiencing any problems at all and they confirmed that she always efficiently sorts them out. The Supervising Social Workers at the support group the Inspector attended agreed to do an article about this in the next carer's newsletter.

The weekly allowances currently paid to carers ranges from £58.10-£98.68 but these were purposely not examined in any detail on this occasion, in the knowledge that significant improvements are currently being considered. Ideally the manager would have wanted the restructuring of the boarding-out allowances and foster carers fees already resolved but they were awaiting the Government Guidance. A paper is being presented to Councillors in February with the intention to implement in April. The Manager assured the Inspector that if the proposals are agreed every carer will be financially better off. The outcomes will be examined in detail at 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, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

17, 21, 24, 25, 26 and 32. (Standards 1, 4, 5, 18, 19, 20 were assessed at the last inspection and were found to be met in full and Standards 2, 16 and 23 were exceeded)

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement is made using all available evidence including an 8 day visit to the service.

This service is well managed by a suitably qualified and experienced individual who is very efficient and constantly seeks to improve upon the service offered. Staff and carers receive good support and training opportunities.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The service is currently only recruiting according to need, namely for teenagers, home from home carers and short break carers. There is placement choice for under 11's and the use of outside placements for teenagers continues to decrease as their needs are being met in house from carers who have received additional training and financial support. The majority of disabled children are also successfully placed with Bury carers. As an example, there was placement choice at the time of this Inspection for a young person with Downs Syndrome and displaying sexualised behaviour. Outside specialist placements are still needed for those with severe physical disabilities.

Carer's questionnaires asked them to describe how well they were supported by the fostering service in caring for the children and young people they look after. 1 ticked "excellent", 3 "good" and 2 "adequate". Examples given included regular calls and visits, reviews with link worker and manager and a variety of training courses. One carer spoken to, described her supervising social worker as "so supportive" and another was described as "providing good support-she is on the ball-but I've never met the child's social worker".

The daytime support group was described as "brilliant".

In response to the question, "How good is the fostering service at ensuring that you meet the needs of the children and young people placed with you?", 1 ticked "excellent", 3 "good" and 2 "adequate". Key personnel identified were link workers, the manager, social workers and extra mile workers.

The service continues to offer an excellent range of courses to carers which cover all the outcomes for children and young people. Experienced carers are involved in the training of new carers which is recognised good practice and a buddying system is in place to provide ongoing support.

The data set states that there are 4 carers with an NVQ level 3 in caring for children and young people, five who are currently undertaking this qualification and eleven carers who hold other relevant qualifications.

There is a policy and procedural document in place entitled "Recording with care" and the Inspector observed a training session for carers on recording. During visits diaries were seen and found to be up to date with appropriate entries and all carers were clear about their expectation to keep memorabilia.

All documentation was stored securely. Overall the children's files examined were in good order with the exception that a significant number of young people had not signed key documentation, including care plans which the manager of the fostering service agreed to pass on to her colleagues to address.

There have been four complaints since the last inspection; one from a young person, two from carers and one from another professional. The records were examined and found to be in good order. They clearly evidenced that all four complaints were taken seriously, fully investigated, outcomes reached and actions identified to improve services in the future.

Some of the carers said that they were not aware that they could access their own files. In response since this inspection the manager has included an item in the newsletter and has reminded carers that this is detailed in their handbook.

There have been further delays with the relocation of the family placement team who continue to work in cramped conditions.

The Family and Friends service is continuing to develop and the carers visited were satisfied with the support afforded them. For one this included an educational psychologist, a LAC nurse, intervention from the FAST team and monthly respite.

Bury is also actively promoting the benefits of special guardianship orders and several examples of creative packages of support, both financially and practically were discussed.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	4
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	3
<b>9</b>	2
<b>15</b>	2
<b>30</b>	3

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	3

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

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

<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>	X
<b>17</b>	3
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>20</b>	X
<b>21</b>	4
<b>22</b>	X
<b>23</b>	X
<b>24</b>	2
<b>25</b>	3
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X
<b>32</b>	3

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS15	20 Schedule 1	Staff files, including panel members, must include all the required information as specified in Schedule 1 and CRB's should be renewed every three years.	31/01/07
2.	FS9	35	The Responsible Authority must visit children in foster placements in line with statutory frequencies and speak to them on their own to ensure their welfare continues to be promoted and safeguarded.	31/01/07
3.	FS24	34	All key documentation must be signed by all relevant parties to evidence that they understand and agree to the plans.	31/01/07

**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
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1.	FS9	Safe caring policies should be in every carer's home and understood by all members of the household. These may vary to meet the identified needs and specific behaviours of individual children/ young people. Once produced they should be agreed by the child's social worker and there should be documentary evidence that they have been fully explained to and understood by the child(ren)in placement.
2.	FS29	The service should ensure that payments to carers are made promptly.
3.	FS26	That adequate space is provided within the present premise to allow the staff team to work efficiently and effectively or that a realistic timescale is reached on a move to another premises.



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