



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Wiltshire County Council Fostering Service

**County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8LE**

Lead Inspector
Martin Davis

Announced Inspection
7th November 2005 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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

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

Name of registered manager (if applicable)

Type of registration Local Auth Fostering Service

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 08/10/04

Brief Description of the Service:

The Fostering Service is a core component of the Children and Education Department within Wiltshire County Council. The stated aims of the Department's work with children in need is to promote the well-being and development of each child throughout childhood by; ensuring secure care, protecting children from harm, respecting and promoting cultural ties and identity and promoting life chances by supporting and enabling parents and extended family to care for their own children wherever possible. Where these aims cannot be met within a child's own family and alternative care is needed, the fostering service aims to ensure that all children looked after by the authority receive the best possible care and attention to meet their individual needs.

Fostering services are provided by the three family placement area teams and via the Family Support Disabled Children Team. As of September 2005 the service had 156 foster carers with 143 children in placement.

The Family Placement Teams are responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training, support and supervision of foster carers and adopters. They deal with placement requests from fieldwork colleagues, matching individual needs, as far as possible. The teams provide a duty service to respond to emergency placement requests during office hours. Family Placement Officers generally do not hold specialised roles in terms of fostering or adoption, although some staff members had developed specialist expertise in particular areas of work.

The Family Support Disabled Children Team provides short-break foster carers across the county. This team is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training, support and supervision of these carers and deal with all referrals for short break services for disabled children

SUMMARY

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

Wiltshire County Council Fostering Service had been subject to two full-audit inspections in 2004. It was agreed that this inspection would be more limited focusing upon three specific areas of practice; the Remand Fostering Scheme, the Family Support Disabled Children Team and the use of non-qualified staff to support a number foster carers within the 'mainstream' teams.

The inspection was completed in two and a half days. Inspector's tracked three foster carers, had contact with both placing social workers and support workers. Senior managers were interviewed; children and carer's case files were read. The Council provided supporting documents prior to the inspection.

What the service does well:

The service provides quality foster care placements to meet a range of needs. The Bail and Remand Scheme has been successful in recruiting new carers who have provided a high number of placements in challenging circumstances, the fact that no carer has resigned from the scheme and that no remands to secure accommodation have been required is a considerable success.

The stability of foster placements offered by the Family Support Disabled Children Team and the quality of relationship that these carers strive to develop with birth family members is a key to the success of these placements. This stability is mirrored by the stability of staffing within this team; carers report that this is something that they particularly value.

The fostering service promotes and prioritises the role of its Foster Panel. In this way the Foster Panel can be seen to be at the heart of the service and as such is well positioned to comment upon the quality of services that are provided.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Carers reported that in recent months the quality of information they have received at the start of placements has improved, despite concerns identified through case tracking within one placement, on the whole the service appears to ensure that information is shared appropriately.

Review of medication policy and guidance has clarified foster carer responsibilities. Extending the role of the Looked After Children's Nurse to

cover the whole of the county has the potential to improve health outcomes as long as this worker is not overwhelmed by the size of the task.

The Council has renewed its commitment to place children with foster carers who live within or close to the child's own community wherever this is possible. Greater placement choice may be required to achieve this and systems will need to be developed to measure performance in this area.

The Council had recently approved the introduction of a competency linked fee structure for all foster carers. As a result those carers who demonstrate particular skills will be paid a higher fee. This should enable the service to compete with local independent fostering agencies more successfully.

The fostering service is now fully staffed and as a result it has not had to employ sessional or other temporary employees. This has led to greater consistency particularly in relation to the support and supervision of carers.

What they could do better:

Placement choice remains limited. The service still has over 70 few foster carers than in 1998 and only 37.5% of children looked after are placed with the in-house carers. The council has taken measures to secure access to a greater number of foster placements but must ensure that growth in this area is maintained in the longer-term if it is to ensure adequate placement choice.

Access to appropriate training for foster carers remains an area of concern. The potential solution identified at the last inspection has not led to sustained improvements and if the service wants to improve the skills base of existing carers and prevent further loss of carers to independent fostering agencies then it must prioritise this area.

Whilst recruitment systems are generally robust greater care must be taken to ensure that foster panel members are subject to the appropriate checks before they participate on panel and that three yearly CRB checks are undertaken for all staff.

Whilst there have been noticeable improvements in the operation of the Family Support Disabled Children Team further improvements are likely to be achieved if this team is more closely integrated within the mainstream fostering service so that it can keep pace with general fostering service developments.

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 service has responded positively to previous inspection findings and has continued to develop this area of practice so that it now better promotes and protects the health and development of children placed with foster carers. Carer training remains a key area for improvement, particularly in the Family Support Disabled Children Team.

EVIDENCE:

The latest Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Wiltshire County Council reports that there are good outcomes for most children but that there are shortfalls in meeting the health needs of looked after children, and that the health needs of this group are not well met in comparison with similar councils in the South West. This assessment did acknowledge the benefits for children looked after in the South of the County as a result of having a designated Looked After Children's nurse. Since the APA this designated nurse role has been extended to cover the whole of the County, the effectiveness of this measure has yet to be assessed.

Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have improved as a result of increased staffing in this team and improved referral systems for children looked after.

Within the fostering service a specific medication policy has been developed along with medication recording sheets for foster carers. The 'old style' placement agreement form (DO1) that was criticised at the last inspection is no longer used for any placements and carers reported improvements in information sharing at the point of placement.

Carers are expected to record health issues in diary sheets, copies of which are shared with placing social workers, the quality of these reports varied considerably and in some cases had not been completed for significant periods.

Limited health care records were found on file in the Family Support Disabled Children Team however the children's profiles written by birth parents and shared with foster carers included more detailed health information.

In tracked cases in the Family Support Disabled Children Team there was limited evidence to confirm that foster carers had received appropriate training and had been certified as competent to carry out required health care tasks.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

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

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

3,6,8,9,15,30

In the last two years, following an internal review of the fostering service, the profile and role of foster panel has been extended, it is now in a better position to fulfil its quality assurance function and to protect both children and carer's. In general the recruitment processes for both manager's and social work staff are robust, however greater care is needed to ensure that CRB checks are renewed on a three yearly basis and to ensure that all appropriate checks are in place for panel members prior to them joining panel if the required safeguards are to be adhered to. Lack of placement choice poses an ongoing challenge.

EVIDENCE:

suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; these procedures require receipt of all appropriate references prior to appointment. There is a system to update CRB checks on a three yearly basis, however gaps were found here.

Foster home's visited were furnished and decorated to a good standard. Each child had their own bedroom that they had been encouraged to personalise. 80% of placing social workers reported that foster carers looked after the child placed "Very well" and the remaining 20% said that the child was looked after "Quite well". Health and Safety checks are completed on an annual basis and

written guidance on a foster carer's health and safety responsibilities are included in the Foster Care Handbook.

A rigorous process is now in place to assess the appropriateness of any application for an exemption to the usual fostering limit, this includes reference to foster panel and a review by foster panel every six months where a long-term exemption is agreed. It is recommended that policy guidance be amended to clarify that Family Placement Team Manager's can not agree exemptions pending consideration by foster panel, and to confirm that where an Independent Fostering Agency or another local authority applies for an exemption, that the exemption will be monitored and reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

Within the Council's Looked After Children Policy there is a commitment to placing children within their local community, however the service had yet to develop reliable systems to measure performance in this area.

Placing social workers had recently been reminded of their responsibilities to ensure Placement Plans are completed at the point of placement, carers reported improvements in information sharing at the point of placement, however gaps were found through case tracking. In one case a carer had not received a copy of a Placement Plan and subsequently had been unable to tell an emergency duty social worker the address of the child's parent when the child failed to return from contact. The ability of the service to adequately match children to foster placements continues to be affected by limited placement choice, this is further reported in NMS 17 under the Management heading of this report. The county-wide family placement duty system continues to process referrals for emergency placements, at the last inspection it was recommended that carer profiles be developed to help duty officers when matching placements, 40% of profiles have now been completed.

A rigorous system is in place to deal with remand foster placements referrals, a series of risk assessments are used including a new risk assessment model that is used when little is known about a young person remanded by the court. Remand foster carers may be used for 'mainstream' placements, it is reported that this led to one near-miss where the courts were considering remand to foster care but no placements were available as non-remand placements had been made with these carers.

The service has effective processes in place to deal with concerns about foster care practice, the Head of Service and Head of Safer Care continue to meet regularly to monitor practice. The Head of Service takes responsibility for PoCAL referrals where the Council considers these to be appropriate. All foster carers are expected to complete 'Safe Care' policies to reflect their individual circumstances however one Bail and Remand carer's policy did not reflect actual care practice.

All posts within the Family Placement Teams are now filled; as a result there has not been a need to employ sessional workers. In general the recruitment processes are robust however the system designed to ensure that Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed every three years has not been completely reliable. Unqualified staff are not involved in the assessment and approval of foster carers but have in some cases taken over responsibility for carer support and supervision. Whilst there are benefits here, including additional support for carer's birth children, greater care must be taken to ensure that safeguards are in place across the service so that each worker has their practice supervised appropriately.

The Foster Panel has now been established in line with the regulations. The service has successfully recruited, as a member, an adult who had previously been a looked after child, and another who was an independent foster carer. It is positive that the service now refers every application for exemption or variation of a carer's approval to Foster Panel as well as each carer's third annual review. As a result Foster Panel has access to a wide range of information on which to fulfil its quality assurance function. It is recommended to the service that the Foster Panel formalises this function and produces an annual report to inform business planning. As the current Chair of Panel has direct line management responsibilities for the fostering service, in the longer-term it would be appropriate for the service to identify a more independent chairperson. Panel member's recruitment files were inspected, these did not include all the information required, in one case there was no evidence of CRB check or references.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

7,13,31

The fostering service continues to prioritise recruitment of Black and minority ethnic carer's; diversity issues are a central theme in carer and staff training. The Family Support Disabled Children Team works in partnership with parents when providing fostering services, it needs to further clarify how it will support and supervise carers so that parents and others are fully informed and can monitor these arrangements. The service manager should continue to develop her monitoring systems for educational attainment and attendance and use these to inform service developments leading to improved outcomes for children looked after.

EVIDENCE:

Day two of the foster carer preparation course focuses upon young people's identity, culture and heritage. An inspector previously observed part of this training and found this to be of a high standard. Data supplied showed that 14 out of a total of 311 children looked after are black or from a minority ethnic group. In the past 12 months a further 2 Black/British carers have been recruited and the fostering service recruitment strategy continues to prioritise recruitment of carer's who are black or from other minority ethnic groups. Where trans-racial placements have been made additional supports have been provided including BAAF training for carers and support workers. Carer annual review forms have been amended so that ethnicity of both child and carer is recorded and prompts discussion of the specific support needs in trans-racial placements. Preparation training for carers in the Family Support Disabled Children Team has been revised so that greater attention is paid to disability

issues. FPO's in this team liaise with other professionals to ensure that adequate equipment is provided.

The foster carer's role in school contact is agreed at the initial planning meeting and there is an expectation that this is then detailed in the placement agreement, further guidance is offered in the Foster Carer Handbook. FPO's monitor educational matters during supervision visits and there is an expectation that carer's record information on diary sheets that are shared with placing social workers. The Family Placement Service Manager plans to develop a system to monitor the educational attainment and attendance of young people in foster placements and use this to inform service developments. This is particularly important given the findings of the Council's Annual Performance Assessment that reports that following two years of improvement there has been an increase in absence from school amongst children looked after and that the attainment levels reached by children who are looked after by the Council is low in comparison with the majority of similar councils.

The Family Support Disabled Children Team provides a range of services to disabled children and their families including respite foster placements. The children have severe or profound disabilities, mostly learning disabilities, but some children have physical disabilities and complex health-care needs. A particular feature of this scheme is the significant relationship that develops between the foster carer and a child's parents, many of these placements continue for many years. The service encourages high levels of autonomy so that carers and parents will often negotiate placement dates within limits set by the service. Within this framework the service must clearly agree and set out in the Statement of Purpose and Foster Care Agreement the minimum level of supervision that these placements require, so that carer's, the young people and their parents are fully aware of the safeguards that are in place.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

10,11

The fostering service works hard to ensure that children placed maintain contact with their birth family and others, however limited placement choice sometimes leads to a child being placed outside of their local community. The service should develop systems to monitor the distance a child is placed from their community so that more effective recruitment strategies may be devised. Consultation with children looked after is an area of strength although more needs to be done to ensure that disabled and younger children have their views heard.

EVIDENCE:

The service provides written guidance for foster carers regarding contact arrangements. When considering a potential placement contact arrangements are discussed with carers. Due to limited placement choice in some circumstances children are placed a considerable distance from home, in these cases additional support is offered. Foster carer preparation training stresses the importance of foster carers helping a child to maintain appropriate contact and discusses the skills required of carers. These skills are then assessed through the Form F process and FPO's use this information when making placement matches. Foster carer daily record sheets include a section for carer's to record their assessment of the impact of contact; these record sheets were not used consistently in all cases tracked.

The council's Annual Performance Assessment reports that children looked after and their carers are consulted on procedures and provision. Inspectors were shown evidence of the work that the Children's Rights Officer has done to promote consultation with children looked after, but were told that there had been little progress in developing systems to promote consultation with younger children and disabled children. 93% of young people reported via the pre-inspection questionnaire that their foster carer asked for their opinions. 57% of children reported that the fostering service asked them their opinion on matters affecting them; this is a significant improvement on the findings at the last inspection.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

14,29

In general foster carers were satisfied with financial arrangements, the Council continues to make developments in this area. The ability of the fostering service to prepare young people for adulthood would appear to be limited by problems in allocation of after care services.

EVIDENCE:

The extent to which the fostering service ensures that young people develop the skills necessary for independent living was not fully assessed due to the specific targets of this inspection. However one young person raised concerns via the pre-inspection questionnaire regarding the quality of service she had received from the After Care Team. This issue was discussed with the Children's Rights Officer who informed the inspector that allocation of personal advisors throughout Wiltshire had been problematic. Additional data supplied showed that of the 190 young people eligible 95 had been allocated a personal advisor.

Foster Carer allowances are now in line with the Fostering Network's recommended minimum. Proposals for a new competency based payments scheme have been agreed by Councillor's, the service anticipates that this will lead to improved carer retention and recruitment. Bail and Remand Carers raised concerns about the length of time it had taken the Council to agree an annual cost of living increase to their payments. To avoid a repeat of this incident next year it would be helpful for the service to clarify whether these carers, and others, are entitled to this annual increase and if they are the way in which this will be calculated.

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):

1,4,17,19,20,21,22,23,24,25

Management restructuring in recent years has led to higher levels of day-to-day supervision of the fostering service and has enabled service development to accelerate. It would appear that the Family Support Disabled Children Team remains on the fringes of the service and so does not benefit fully from the experience of the other areas of the service. The service is now fully staffed for the first time since inspection by the Commission, this has led to improved consistency across the service and to a general improvement in the quality of service provided. Foster carers were concerned about the limited training

available to them, no progress had been made in this area in the last twelve months and the service had failed to keep pace with the local IFA's in this regard, This may have an impact upon carer retention in the longer-term. The service must guard against this as limited placement availability is already a cause for concern.

EVIDENCE:

The Statement of Purpose was last updated in September 2005, it now includes a summary of the new management structure and information relating to the Family Support Disabled Children Team has been revised. Policy and procedural guidance are in place; minor amendments to the exemptions policy is advised. A draft Children's Guide is nearing completion. The Children's Rights Officer has worked with a group of children looked after to design a magazine style guide that presents information the group considers key. A fact sheet will support this guide; a draft of this was not available at the time of the inspection.

The Family Placement Service Manager has begun to develop a system to monitor the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations. Whilst it is too early to identify any trends or patterns this manager did comment on her surprise at the number of notifications received. The manager intends to produce an interim report analysing this information prior to the end of the financial year, the Commission has requested a copy of this. This report will be used to inform service planning. There are clear lines of accountability and greater levels of day-to-day management as a result of the restructuring that has taken place, staff reported that this had led to practice improvements. Communication between 'mainstream' and disabled children's services remains a problematic area so that the Family Support Disabled Children Team does not benefit fully from the service development groups that have been established within the main fostering service. A possible solution would be for the manager of this team to be included in the monthly manager's meeting convened by the service manager.

18% of children looked after by the council are accommodated in residential homes, this proportion has doubled since 2000/1, and only 37.5% are placed with the Council's own foster carers. Historically the Council has lost carers to independent fostering agencies, more recently this situation has stabilised and there has been a small growth in numbers of carers. Overall however numbers remain down on figures from the late 1990's (230 carers in 1998 compared with 156 in 2005) so that the service is unable to meet the demand for placements. It is anticipated that a revised fee for skills payments scheme may aid carer recruitment and retention. Further, through a contract with an independent fostering agency, the council is looking to secure thirty additional placements within the county over the next three years.

Each family placement team is now fully staffed, and the service no longer needs to employ sessional workers. However the service has chosen to use non-social work qualified to support and supervise some foster placements. Each of these workers have achieved or are completing an NVQ 3 award in Children and Young People, they carry relatively small caseloads and are not required to undertake assessment work. In a tracked case the carer's were satisfied with the level and quality of support provided by a non-social work qualified worker and this worker had been closely supervised and supported. However the service has not revised support worker job descriptions or person specifications to reflect these additional responsibilities and hadn't adopted a consistent approach to supervision of these workers caseloads across the service. These workers had been unable to access relevant professional training, including supporting carer's, as the training department had informed them that other applicants had been given higher priority.

The staff appraisal scheme identifies the training and development needs of staff involved in fostering work; staff confirmed that they are attending specific training in response to needs identified through appraisal. Two members of staff have completed the Post Qualifying Child Care Award, backfill arrangements and a financial incentive are offered.

The frequency of staff supervision within the Family Support Disabled Children Team is now appropriate, however without a formal agenda regular scrutiny of professional development and training needs can become lost. As noted earlier the supervision for one non-social worker qualified member of staff was good, this included clear casework discussion and planning.

The strategy for working with carers is set out in the Foster Carer Handbook and is in line with the relevant National Minimum Standards but should now be updated to include information regarding the Crisis Support Team and Bail and Remand Fostering. The service now ensures that disruption meetings are held following the premature ending of placements, Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) have responsibility for chairing these meetings, the Council should consider providing relevant training to IRO's in relation to this responsibility. The Family Support Disabled Children Team has developed a new carer annual review form, this provides more detailed information on which to review performance however it does not require workers to specify the level of contact they have had with carers or to confirm that an unannounced visit has taken place, therefore a useful monitoring function is not included.

High levels of good quality support have been provided for Bail and Remand Carer's. The way in which the scheme is jointly funded has enabled support needs to be met without delay so reassuring carers that their needs are a priority. It is significant that all of the current carer's were recruited from outside of the existing pool of foster carers, and that since the scheme's inception no remands to secure accommodation have been required.

The service has revised its Foster Care Agreement and this now complies with the regulations, in one tracked case a child had been placed outside of the carers approval as recorded on the Agreement. A system needs to be developed to ensure that Agreements are updated to reflect any amendments to a carer's terms of approval. In general carer's appeared to receive appropriate levels of support and supervision, but as stated the Family Support Disabled Children Team should clarify the minimum level of contact that social workers are required to maintain with carers and this should include at least one unannounced visit to the carer each year. This team should also develop carer profiles to be shared with the in-house out-of-hours service.

A support group for foster carer's own children has been established in south Wiltshire and there are plans to replicate this in the north, an additional module has been added to the Skills to Foster Course to which applicants own children are invited. More relevant preparation training is now available to all new applicants to the fostering scheme run by the Family Support Disabled Children Team, but case tracking showed that the training needs of existing carers were not always identified through annual review and in cases where this had been evidence could not be found on file to confirm that training had taken place. The service does not have a training pathway for foster carers, a limited rolling programme of training is available but carers criticised the content, lack of venue choice and timing of some of this training. In the last twelve months the service has lost the benefit of having a dedicated worker within the training department. The lack of specific managing behaviour training, particularly for Bail and Remand carers is a cause of concern, the inspector was told that this training had not been provided as the Council first wished to identify a trainer that would be able to provide training to all children's services. Subsequent information received confirms that countywide training has been agreed and that the first staff trainers have completed the course. However the delay in providing this training, particularly to Bail and Remand carers, has potentially left carers and children vulnerable.

Internal guidance establishes the format of carer's case files and allows for information about children in placement to be included in Module 6. The Service Manager expects this module to contain relevant LAC paperwork including Placement Plans 1 and 2, Essential Information and Review reports, in the majority of tracked cases this information was in place. Facilities exist in each office to ensure that case files and other information can be stored confidentially.

The current Foster Carer Register does not comply with the Regulations, as it does not include the specific terms of each carer's registration. The Council does not currently have a separate register of emergency/immediate placements that is required to have to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations.

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 | 2 |

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

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

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

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

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

YES

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 | FS22FS15 | 19, 21 | Ensure that there are appropriate supervision arrangements for unqualified staff who are required to support and supervise foster carers | 31/03/06 |
| 2 | FS30 | 20 (1) (a) | No panel member should be allowed to begin work until all checks at a satisfactory level have been completed | 28/02/06 |
| 3 | FS21 | 17 (1) | The Family Support Disabled Children Team must agree and set out in the Statement of Purpose and Foster Care Agreement the minimum level of supervision that foster placements require. | 31/03/06 |
| 4 | FS1 | 3 (3) | The Fostering Service must provide a Children's Guide and make a copy available to every child placed with foster carers | 30/04/06 |
| 5 | FS17 | 33 (b) | Foster carer recruitment must be prioritised to ensure that suitable placement matching can take place | 30/04/06 |
| 6 | FS15 | 21 (b) | Revise Support Worker Job Description and Person Specification so that these outline key responsibilities and competence required | 31/03/06 |

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|---|------|--------------------------|---|----------|
| 7 | FS23 | 13, 17 (1), 17 (2) | The fostering service provider shall provide foster parents with such training as appears necessary. To include; behaviour management training and training identified and agreed through a carer's annual review | 30/04/06 |
| 8 | FS25 | 31 | The Foster Care Register must be amended so that it complies with the Regulations and a separate Register of Emergency/Immediate Placements must be established | 31/03/06 |
| 9 | FS8 | 34 (3) | Before making a placement the council must enter in to a written foster placement agreement with the foster carer | 28/02/06 |

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

| No. | Refer to Standard | Good Practice Recommendations |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1 | FS12FS23 | Foster carers should receive training and have their competence verified before being allowed to perform "permitted" health care tasks |
| 2 | FS3FS15 | Staff CRB checks should be renewed on a three-yearly basis |
| 3 | FS8 | Ensure that Family Placement Duty Officers have access to foster carers profiles when making placements, including profiles from the Family Support Disabled Children Team |
| 4 | FS8 | Amend policy guidance relating to exemptions so that this confirms that Family Placement Team Manager's do not have the authority to grant exemptions, and to confirm that long-term applications from IFA's and other local authorities for an exemption will be subject to a six-monthly review by foster panel |
| 5 | FS13 | The Family Placement Service Manager should develop a system to monitor the educational attainment and attendance of young people in foster placements and use this to inform service developments. |
| 6 | FS11 | Further develop systems to promote consultation with younger children and disabled children. |

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|----|------|---|
| 7 | FS10 | The service should develop systems to monitor the distance a child is placed from its community |
| 8 | FS29 | Clarify whether foster carer's are entitled to an annual cost of living increase to fees paid |
| 9 | FS31 | Improve communication between the Family Support Disabled Children's Team and the 'mainstream' fostering service |
| 10 | FS19 | Ensure that Support Workers have access to the most relevant professional training, including supporting foster carer training |
| 11 | FS22 | Include in the Family Support Disabled Children Team foster carer annual review form confirmation of the number of announced and unannounced supervision visits made |
| 12 | FS22 | Ensure that Foster Care Agreements are updated whenever a carer's terms of approval are amended |
| 13 | FS22 | The Family Support Disabled Children Team should ensure that each foster carer receives one unannounced supervision visit each year |
| 14 | FS9 | Each carer should have an up-to-date safe care policy that is shared with the placing social worker and explained to the child |
| 15 | FS14 | The Council should allocate a personal advisor to every young person that requires this service |
| 16 | FS12 | Each foster carer should be provided with a written health record for each child placed in their care; this should be updated during the placement and should move with the child |

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