



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Nottingham City Council Fostering Service**

**14 Hounds Gate  
Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire  
NG1 7BE**

*Lead Inspector*  
Elaine Cray and Jane Barton

*Announced Inspection*  
6th, 7th & 8th March 2006      09:30

06/03/06

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>	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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

**Name of service** Nottingham City Council Fostering Service

**Address** 14 Hounds Gate  
Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire  
NG1 7BE

**Telephone number** 0115 915 5555

**Fax number**

**Email address**

**Provider Web address**

**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** Nottingham City Council

**Name of registered manager (if applicable)** Mrs Lynne Jane Anderson

**Type of registration** Local Auth Fostering Service

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

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      16th March 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

The Nottingham City Council fostering service is a Local Authority service that provides: -

- Emergency and short term placements
- Bridging placements
- Long term/permanent placements
- Parent and child placements
- Home from home placements
- Remand placements
- Supported lodgings
- Foster lodgings

The service's register documented 200 Approved Foster Carers and the manager for the service reported that 223 children were looked after in foster placements at the time of this inspection.

The service is based at York House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

The foster service is split into The Recruitment Team, The Assessment Team, The Home from Home Team and The Support Teams (which includes the Black Support Team which supports black foster carers).

# SUMMARY

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

This planned inspection was carried out by two inspectors, Elaine Cray and Jane Barton. Prior to the three day inspection a pre-inspection visit was made to the agency on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2006.

As part of the inspection process questionnaires were sent to various interested parties and responses were received from foster carers, children in foster placements and placing social workers. The chair of the fostering panel was interviewed as was the Independent Reviewing Officer. Representatives from the Achievement Team [education for looked after children] and a training co-ordinator were spoken with.

Unfortunately, due to sickness, the nominated manager for the fostering service was not available for the inspection. However, the manager for the adoption service, who had recently had responsibility for the fostering service, was interviewed and provided information throughout the three day inspection

A sample of four foster carers were tracked which included visiting and speaking with the children and foster carers in their own homes, interviewing the supervising social workers and the children's own social workers. In addition inspectors reviewed the children's and carer's files. Additionally, an inspector attended a training event on one of the inspection days and another inspector attended a foster carers' liaison meeting, consequently a number of foster carers' views were sought over the three day inspection.

The fostering service submitted comprehensive paperwork to the Commission for Social Care Inspection and this has informed this report.

Verbal feedback was given on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

This was a positive inspection, however two immediate requirements were set in addition to other requirements as set out in this report.

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

Inspectors identified a high level of commitment from foster carers and positive outcomes for children and young people in their care. All the young people and the foster carers spoken with were positive about their foster care experiences and the support provided by the service. The majority of questionnaires reinforced these positive perspectives.

Supervising social workers presented a good knowledge of the strengths of individual carers and of the specific needs of children and young people currently in placement.

The service has a clear expectation of the carers in relation to training and provides a variety of training opportunities, utilising staff skills as well as contracting the services of external trainers. Experience and commitment to training and development are recognised through the service's accreditation levels and payment scheme for foster carers.

File management for information relating to children, foster carers and staff was generally well organised.

Foster carers' interviews and questionnaires were very positive about the support of supervising social workers. There are a number of support networks for foster carers, including the Foster Carer's Liaison Meeting and local support groups.

Visits to foster homes assessed the home environments as being suitable and appropriate for the young people in placement.

Young people were knowledgeable about the staff who support them and their foster carers. The children spoken with and observed throughout the inspection and young people's questionnaires report a good level of satisfaction with their fostering experiences.

There were positive outcomes and opportunities for children's education and achievement, with a clear commitment from foster carers to support children with their education and to provide opportunities for a variety of activities. The service responds to the educational and recreational needs of young people in foster care and is keen to celebrate their achievements.

There were very good examples of children, foster carers and social workers being aware of and promoting ways for staying healthy, including diet, attending medical appointments and having healthy lifestyles, including plenty of exercise.

The majority of placing social workers' questionnaires reported satisfaction with the outcomes for young people, the commitment of the foster carers and the support from the fostering service.

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

Staff files have been audited and were more organised and storage for foster carers' and young people's files has been addressed. The fostering service's statement of purpose has been reviewed and recording systems have been improved.

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

The service needs to ensure that all foster carer placements have been adequately assessed and approved. The service should also further develop the Safe Caring policy and how this is practically promoted by foster carers and understood by children and young people.

Some foster carers who are not located in the Nottinghamshire area are not satisfied with the support provided by the service.

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**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

# 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 fostering service provides positive outcomes for young people's continued good health and well being.

## EVIDENCE:

The foster carer agreement describes the expectation that a child's health history is accurately recorded and that each carer has delegated responsibility for arranging health checks and treatments for the child. Foster carers' supervision notes, children's files and records maintained by foster carers demonstrated a good level of monitoring of health care needs for young people. Placing social workers were very pleased with how children were staying healthy in the care of the foster carers.

Young people expressed positive views about how carers help them stay healthy and look after themselves. For example: "having breakfast and cleaning my teeth", "eating fruit and veg" and "doing exercise". Two very young children were keen to talk about how they now eat vegetables and another young person talked about enjoying sitting down with his family and eating healthy food and the support he gets to go running.

Foster carers spoken with on this inspection and supervising social workers' records provided a good insight into the health needs of young people, including regular health checks, health issues relating to older adolescents' life styles and liaison with mental health agencies such as CAMHS. A representative from Nottingham City Sports and Leisure attended the foster carers' liaison meeting in order to discuss and promote discounted sports and leisure opportunities for foster carers and the children they look after.

# 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

Staff and foster carers presented understanding of providing a safe environment for children and young people. Child protection and recruitment, selection and approval procedures are in place, but have not been consistently applied throughout the service working. The majority of children and young people are provided with warm, safe and comfortable foster homes with trained and competent carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Four staff files were inspected and demonstrated that staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and recruited. The service operates a clear staff recruitment and selection procedure and the files inspected evidenced that all required information and checks are carried out. However, other information provided by the fostering service indicated that staff have not had their criminal backgrounds checks renewed within a three year period. The manager of the fostering service has recently been interviewed by CSCI and all required background checks have been carried out.

Homes visited on this inspection demonstrated that children and young people are provided with warm, safe and comfortable foster homes.

Interviews with the manager and staff demonstrated a clear commitment to valuing diversity and an awareness of the skills of foster carers and the needs of children. Whilst the process of matching was seen as an important part of placing children with foster carers, there was no written evidence that this process was discussed or an integral part of the referral and placing process. There was also a view that foster placement vacancies were often at a minimum and therefore the scope for matching was often compromised. Foster carers said that information about planned referrals was generally good and supervising social workers talked about the suitability of placements with the foster carers.

Discussion with the manager, staff, foster carers, young people and inspection of documents demonstrated an awareness of safeguarding the welfare of children. Foster carers had received training on aspects of protecting and safeguarding children. The service has developed "safe caring policy". However, this policy had not been transferred into individualised safe caring guidelines for each child within the foster carers' homes.

The foster carer files inspected on this inspection evidenced a thorough assessment of foster carers; with in depth assessments, detailed reports for panel, required checks, documented referee interviews and panel approval available for inspection. However, one child specific placement has not been appropriately assessed and approved and another such placement had extended past 6 months before panel approval was sought. Additionally, concerns relating to an existing foster household had not been suitably monitored, risk assessed or safeguarding decisions made.

The fostering service panel was not observed on this inspection. However, documentation and an interview with the chair of the panel indicated that panel membership is appropriate. The chair is independent of the fostering service and had an extensive experience of child welfare within social work and mental health settings. Panel minutes indicated a thorough assessment and scrutiny process.

# 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 and 13

Outcomes for children's education and achievement opportunities were promoted and well developed. The service values diversity and the individualised needs of children and young people.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Young people spoken with and additional questionnaires gave positive comments about the help and support they receive from foster carers with attending school and doing homework.

The service has a clear commitment to promoting education and opportunities to achieve for children and young people and this is reflected in the terms and conditions presented to foster carers, through supervising social workers' monitoring of placements, provision of computers for children and input from the Achievement Team. The fostering service has recently funded trips to The Deep, The Space Centre and the Natural History Museum. Additionally toy and book tokens are being distributed to children who are looked after by the fostering service.

Documentation evidenced a clear commitment by supervising social workers to ensure that placing social workers provide required documentation, that foster carers liaise with schools and contribute to the assessment of, planning for and review of young people's education needs and are able to provide young people with support, including appropriate equipment.

Foster carers demonstrated excellent approaches to promoting education, supporting young people at school and at home, liaising with schools and enabling children and young people to embrace opportunities to make progress in all aspects in their lives, including developing social skills, finding new hobbies and building self esteem and confidence.

Discussion with foster carers and interviews with the manager and staff evidenced a clear commitment to understanding and responding to the diverse needs of children and young people. The service has a commitment to providing training on diversity, providing support to black carers and children, and a placing officer reported a high level of satisfaction with the care provided to disabled children looked after by foster carers approved by the service. The service continues to make and manage a number of trans-racial placements. The manager reported that diversity training is compulsory for all foster carers and consequently issues that may arise from such placements can be addressed via this training. However, staff reported that not all foster carers have attended this compulsory training.

# **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

The service actively promotes contact with young people and their families.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Family contact arrangements were documented in each young person's file and the Looked After Children (LAC) documentation. The expectation for foster carers to promote such contact is clearly stated in the terms and conditions set down between the service and the foster carers.

Foster carers are aware of the importance of appropriate contact between young people and their birth families. Information regarding contact is regularly shared with the social worker and through the childcare review process.

Young people spoken with and who were able to have contact with birth family members were very positive about how family contact is managed; some young people chat to family on the phone, others go on home visits and some family members visit the foster carer's homes.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

29

Foster carers receive regular payments.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Experience and commitment to training and development are recognised through the service's accreditation levels and payment scheme for foster carers.

Foster carers stated that they receive regular payments from the fostering service.

# 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, 2, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 32

The agency is managed and staffed by a team of qualified and experienced professionals who supervise and support carers to appropriately meet the needs of children and young people in placement.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The service Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated but does not include the qualification and experience of staff.

The manager has extensive experience of working within and managing child care services and possesses both social work and management qualifications.

Staffing arrangements reflected a sufficient amount of staff with adequately allocated case and work loads. Staff are qualified, experienced and have appropriate skills and knowledge. Placing social workers were satisfied with the running of the fostering service and the quality of care provided to young people by the foster carers.

Staff said they receive regular supervision and good training opportunities.

The majority of foster carers were very positive about the support, training and supervision received from the agency. Foster carer records detailed regular visits by supervising social workers, with a child focused approach to the content of each visit coupled with support and development of the foster carers skills. Training records detailed a variety of training available to foster carers. However, some foster carers who are not located in the Nottinghamshire area are not satisfied with the support provided by the service.

Staff and young people's records were very well maintained, organised and appropriately secured.

# 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>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	2
<b>9</b>	1
<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>	3
<b>31</b>	X

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

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

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

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	FS1	3	Include the experience and qualifications of staff in the Statement of Purpose	01/05/06
2	FS9	11(a)	Ensure the welfare of children is safeguarded at all times – ensure that clear decisions relating to the safeguarding of children are discussed assessed and recorded.	15/03/06
3	FS15	20	Ensure background checks are renewed at the required intervals.	01/05/06
4	FS17	27	Ensure all foster carers are assessed and approved.	15/03/06
5	FS22	35	Ensure all foster carers are provided with supervision and support.	01/05/06

## 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	FS8	Provide a written proforma in order to promote and evidence the matching process between foster carers and young people.
2	FS8	Provide more consistency in providing diversity training in order to provide a basic foundation to the matching processes and consistency to the practice of trans-racial placements.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Nottingham Area Office  
Edgeley House  
Riverside Business Park  
Tottle Road  
Nottingham  
NG2 1RT

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

Web: [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

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