



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Foster Care Associates**

**5 Tallys End  
Barlborough  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire  
S43 4WP**

*Lead Inspector*  
Jenny Thornton

*Announced Inspection*  
6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2006      09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Foster Care Associates
<b>Address</b>	5 Tallys End Barlborough Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 4WP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 812 188
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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Foster Care Associates Limited
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mrs Sally Melbourne
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

None

**Date of last inspection** 9th November 2004

## Brief Description of the Service:

Foster Care Associates is a nationwide fostering agency. Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region consists of a regional office in Derbyshire and six area offices in Sheffield, Doncaster, Mansfield, Leeds and Lincoln and Hull. Within each of the area teams is a manager, a team of social workers, resource workers, administrator and an Educational Liaison Officer and dedicated Therapist. The Director/manager of the service is based at the regional office in Chesterfield, together with the deputy Director, two assistant Directors and the recruitment and placement teams and administrators.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region offers a range of family placements including emergency, short term, assessment, bridging, long term and parent and child. At the time of the Inspection the Agency was supporting 210 carers and 240 children in placements.

The Agency provides recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers and all related training and support. Supervising social workers and resource workers support placements, and work closely with both foster children and carers own children. Referrals are coordinated at the Chesterfield.

# SUMMARY

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

Jenny Thornton and Sharon Treadwell undertook this Announced Inspection over four days taking 74 hours in total.

This inspection focused on the regional office at Balborough in Derbyshire, which includes the recruitment and placement teams, and the Doncaster area office. Various records were examined and 15 members of staff and senior managers of the service were interviewed. 4 foster carers and children/young people were visited and their records were checked, which helps determine how well the service is meeting their needs. The inspectors also attended the Fostering Panel and the carers' support meeting at the Doncaster office. Questionnaires were sent out to all carers, children and placing social workers.

The commitment and energy of the staff teams at all levels was truly inspirational. Every member of staff and all carers whom the inspectors met and interviewed were committed to the young people within their care. This inspection showed that the Agency provides high quality placements to children and young people.

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

The Agency provides a child centred service, and prioritises consultation and communication with children and young people. The Agency promotes young people's safety and contact with family, friends and significant others.

The Agency actively supports children's and young people's educational achievements, through the work of the Education Liaison Officer. In addition the work of the Therapists and resource workers within each area team provides invaluable support to foster carers and young people in placement.

Newsletters and information provided to young people are age appropriate and colourful and children contribute to these. The Agency provides a good range of activities and events for the whole family especially through holiday periods. The Agency also provides and subsidises two holidays a year for families.

Staff's roles are clearly defined which enables staff to focus on specific areas of work. The Agency provides good training opportunities and staff and foster carers are valued and well supported by the Agency. The Agency has a clear pre and post approval-training programme to ensure that foster carers have the appropriate skills to care for the children and young people in placements.

Considerable work goes into ensuring that young people are appropriately placed with fosters carers capable of meeting their needs. Robust procedures

are in place for the assessment of new foster carers, which ensures that appropriate people are recruited. The standard of assessments for new foster carer's are detailed.

Good systems are in place to monitor the work of the Agency and to promote consistency of practices across all areas. The Agency's documentation is regularly reviewed and updated by the Quality Assurance section and clearly references the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations.

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

The Agency has made exceptional progress in a good number of areas, which has improved the efficiency of the service and consistency of practice across all areas. The last Inspection report identified only two requirements and one recommendation, which have been met.

There have been a number of changes within the staff teams and the Agency has successfully appointed new staff to the posts. The statement of purpose has been updated to include the current staff structure.

The service was interviewing for a third assistant Director to oversee and manage the recruitment and placement teams.

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

No requirements have been identified within this report. Good practice recommendations include:

- ❑ The Agency needs to strengthen its procedures for obtaining all LAC documents from a child's social worker to enable foster carers to appropriately care for the child.
- ❑ Foster carers safe care policy needs to be signed and dated by all relevant persons and clearly show when it has been reviewed.
- ❑ All staff and foster carers need to record the full dates of their employment history, in order to show any gaps in employment.
- ❑ The completion of the matching matrix form for children and carers should be reviewed to ensure that the form is completed appropriately.

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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Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

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Management

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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 provision for children and young people's health and development is good ensuring that their health needs are met.

## EVIDENCE:

Foster carer's showed a commitment to promoting children's health needs. The carer's Handbook clearly sets out their responsibility to actively promote the good health care of children placed with them. Foster carers are required to complete a monthly progress report for each child placed, which covers health and medical matters. Children said that their health needs were being met and records supported this. Nearly all questionnaires received from children talked about carers giving them 'good and healthy food'.

Procedures were in place to obtain essential information for carers relating to young peoples' health needs. Although several carers reported delays in obtaining all essential information relating to a child's health needs; this mainly related to emergency placements. The Agency has provided for each child placed, a Health Passport booklet that carers are expected to complete, which transfers with the children when they move. The Inspectors noted that importance was given to ensuring that Health Passports are well completed, and that young people are aware of their Passport. The new respite folder and Health Passport moves with children when they are provided with respite care by the Agency. This is commendable.

A Therapy Service Manager and Therapist allocated to each of the area teams provide training and individual support to some children and foster carers. Staff and carers commented on how valuable the Therapist's input was and how quickly they were able to access support. Discussions with staff and records showed that the Therapists were doing some excellent work with

children and foster carers to sustain difficult placements and achieve positive outcomes for the children and young people. This is commendable.

One of the Agency's key objectives for this year is to improve access to health information by improving links with other health professionals. A health-working group has been set up to look at ways of achieving this. Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region intends to employ a health professional to further promote children's health and emotional needs.

The agency's current policy on smoking restricts any child under 2 years of age been placed with a foster carer who smokes. The policy on smoking was being reviewed with a view to preventing smoking in foster carers homes where any child or young person is placed.

Foster carers had received training on a good range of health matters including first aid, drug awareness, sexual health, child development, managing challenging behaviour and specific conditions and disabilities. In addition to basic training on attachment, the Therapists ran an in-depth course on attachment. Several carers commented on the value of this course.

## 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

Procedures are in place to promote young peoples safety and welfare, and staff working in the fostering team have considerable experience and skills, which safeguards young people’s interests.

### EVIDENCE:

The senior managers have considerable knowledge and skills in the field of social care and fostering to support staff, carers and young people. The Agency follows robust procedures when recruiting new staff, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Personnel files checked relating to five members were comprehensive and contained the required information and checks. The following was noted:

- ❑ Three out of five staff had recorded their employment in years only, which does not ensure that any gaps in employment history are explored.
- ❑ A check had been undertaken against the Protection of Vulnerable Children List.

Staff and carers have adopted an excellent ‘team parenting’ approach, which promotes children’s welfare. The Agency has clear procedures in place to

promote young peoples' safety and welfare. Discussions with young people and returned questionnaires maintained that young people felt safe in their foster home. Carers visited confirmed that they had attended training in Child Protection and safe care, were aware of safe caring principles. The foster carers agreement clearly set out carer's responsibilities to keep children safe and protected. Foster carers had completed a safe care policy for their home, although only 1 out of 5 policies checked had been dated and signed by all relevant persons. Staff and carers said that the safe care policy was reviewed to cover children and young people in placement, although the records did not clearly show this. Children (where appropriate) had been made aware of the safe caring policy. A copy of the carer's safe care policy is now attached to their initial and annual review report. Senior managers acknowledged the need for the safe care guidelines and policy to cover the fire escape plan.

Foster carers homes visited provided a safe and homely environment. Young people said that they felt part of the family and were encouraged to personalise their bedroom. The health and safety risk assessment process of foster carers homes has been strengthened, and risk assessments were re-assessed prior to the carer's annual approval.

Occasional unannounced visits were carried out to foster carer's homes; the findings of the visits were recorded.

From discussions with foster carers and staff it was clear that considerable work goes into ensuring that young people are appropriately placed with fosters carers capable of meeting their needs. Referrals for placement are circulated to the regional placements team, where staff confirmed that discussion of matching considerations would take place with the relevant supervising social worker prior to contacting a carer. Staff had a good knowledge of the competencies and strengths of foster carers, and matching considerations between a carer and a child were recorded on a specific matching form to support the process of matching young people to a placement, which would meet their needs. Some variations in the scoring of the matching matrix form were noted, for example on a couple of the forms staff had recorded education and health as not applicable, which was not appropriate. Senior managers planned to improve the layout of the matching form and provide training for staff to ensure that the form is suitably completed.

Foster carers said that they had a say as to who is placed with them, and whether they felt they have the skills to meet the young persons needs. Where possible young people and foster carers meet to get to know each other, prior to making a decision about whether they consider the placement is in their best interest. All newly approved foster carers were being encouraged to complete an information book about their family and home, for young people's consideration.

A dedicated worker in the placements team co-ordinates all respite placements, which staff and carers consider is beneficial. Senior managers confirmed that additional foster carers had been recruited to provide respite near to where the children lived, and to enable them to attend the same carers where possible to promote consistency of care.

Robust procedures are in place for the assessment of new foster carers, which ensures that appropriate people are recruited. Since the last inspection the Agency has appointed a Recruitment Manager who oversees and advises on recruitment of foster carers from the point of initial enquiry to approval. The Panel members confirmed that the Recruitment Manager vigorously checked all Form F assessments, which has improved the quality and consistency of information presented at Panel and assists the decision process.

The Inspector observed the Agency's Fostering Panel held at Barlborough, which serves all offices across the region. The Panel had the required composition of panel members. The Panel was well organised and suitably chaired, and the panel members maintained an appropriate level of independence. The Panel members reported that further improvements have been made to how the Panel works, which has improved the effectiveness of the Panel. Panel members are routinely provided with updates about the performance of the Agency at Panel meetings.

All new approvals, first reviews, changes to approval and de-registrations were routinely presented at the Panel. Two independent reviewing officers reviewed all other reviews, and a summary report of the recommendations from foster carers reviews was presented to the Panel. Panel members had attended a good range of training in the last year to further their knowledge and role. Reports presented at the Fostering Panel were clearly set out and were of a consistent high standard. Foster carers training and development needs were robustly linked and evaluated through the annual review process. This is to be commended.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

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

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

7, 13 and 31

The Agency provides excellent support and resources to promote the educational achievements of children and young people and help them achieve their potential.

Priority was being given to recruiting additional foster carers from a variety of backgrounds to meet the demand for placements and young people's diverse needs.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Discussions with staff and records examined showed that the matching process takes into account a child's cultural, religious, language, and disability needs, and that the service promotes diversity and equality. Foster carers who the Inspectors met showed a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of the children and young people' in their care. The pre-approval training programme for carers covered the need to promote diversity and respect other cultures and religions. The managers said that the Agency was focusing on recruiting additional foster carer's to meet the specific needs of the young people currently requiring placement.

Foster carers showed a good awareness of children's needs and a commitment to enhancing their confidence and self worth. The Agency has established various groups at a local level, which enhance children's feelings of confidence and self worth.

Young people said that they are supported to pursue a variety of leisure activities and personal interests.

The education of looked after children remains a high priority for the Agency. The Agency provides clear data on educational outcomes and attendance at school, which showed that young people placed with Foster Care Associates were achieving higher GCSE grades than the national average for Looked After Children, and in terms of the number of young people going onto further education. Virtually all children placed with the Agency were in appropriate education provision.

The region has 3-education liaison officers based within the area teams, who provide invaluable support to children and young people in Education. The education liaison officer worked closely with staff and carers in securing an appropriate school and maintaining a child in school, where there were issues relating to their behaviour. The education liaison officer attended children's statement reviews and meetings. Staff and foster carers found the support of the education liaison officer invaluable. Staff and carers had established good working relationships with the schools where the children attended. The head teachers were aware that they could access additional support from the Agency in order to maintain children/young people in school. Where children/young people were out of school for any length of time and required home tuition, the agency recruited self-employed teachers to provide educational input.

A comprehensive Education file was maintained for all children, which showed that considerable work goes into meeting the educational needs of children and young people. The inspectors were impressed with the personal and educational achievements of all children placed with carers who were visited. Completed questionnaires received from children said that their carers encouraged and helped them with their homework. The Agency is commended on their commitment to meeting the educational needs of children/young people.

The Agency's policies and procedures covered short break care. Discussions with staff and carers and returned questionnaires maintained that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met. At the time of this inspection 52% of placements were long term.

# **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

Priority is given to supporting contact arrangements with a child's family and friends to ensure that relationships are maintained where appropriate.

The level of commitment and arrangements in place for consulting with children and young people is excellent, ensuring that their views are listened to and acted upon.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers showed a commitment to supporting young people's contact with family and friends. Young people said that they have regular contact with family and friends where there are no restrictions; contact arrangements were clearly recorded. All supervised contacts had a risk assessment carried out and a contract was in place agreed by the local authority and birth family before the contact took place.

The Agency worked exceptionally hard to consult and listen to children's views, through consultation exercises, various children's forums, social activities and events. The national and local children's forums met regularly and children/young people have direct access to the chief executive and the local regional director. The children's meetings were held in all areas and included a range of activities that children/young people could join in, which focused on building their confidence and listening to their views. The Inspectors were informed of various changes that had been made to the service in response to comments received from children and young people. The Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region held an event in October in celebration of the black history



month; the afternoon included an achievement ceremony, where children/young people were presented with an award. The Agency promotes an inclusive approach towards all children within the family, and consults with carer's own birth children, providing a dedicated Sons and Daughters group. In addition the Agency organises various social events, fun days and holidays, where all members of the family including carer's birth children are invited. Last years holidays were to Centre Parcs and Butlins and the Agency subsidised the cost of the holidays.

Children/young people clearly had the opportunity to contribute to their reviews and foster carer's annual review.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region circulates a regular newsletter to all foster carers homes, which contains a good level of information and was well set out. It also produced and circulated a separate children's newsletter, 'kids unlimited', which contains a good level of articles from the children/young people. The Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region had also produced a Christmas C.D of songs recorded by several children and young people. A copy of the C.D had been sent to all foster carers homes. The Agency is commended on the initiatives in place for consulting with children and young people.

Children/young people spoken to were aware of their right to complain about the service and had received information on how to complain.

# 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

Young people receive a good level of support to develop daily living skills in preparation for adulthood and leaving care.

Good systems are in place relating to the payment of foster carers allowances, and the allowances paid to carers cover the full daily living costs of caring for a child.

### EVIDENCE:

Policies and procedures were in place relating to young people moving onto semi or independent living. A manager within the Agency was involved in developing the services available to care leavers. Foster carers showed a commitment to helping young people to develop daily living skills, and gave examples on how this was being achieved. Two young people case tracked were approaching 16 years of age and had been allocated an after care worker. All carers had access to training on leaving care.

The Agency had a written policy on fostering allowances and current allowances were well published within the prospectus and carers Handbook. Foster carers receive a weekly basic allowance. Enhanced payments are made in some circumstances and additional expenses could be claimed for e.g. travel and additional activities. Each carer has an entitlement to twenty-one days respite per year. All carers interviewed said that they felt that the allowance provided to them from the agency covered the cost of caring for each child and/or young person placed with them. Foster carer's confirmed that the allowances are paid promptly.

# 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):**

4, 17, 21, 23, 24 and 26

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region is efficiently and professionally managed, providing clear leadership and a good level of support to staff and foster carers to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire regional office moved to new premises in Derbyshire last year, and the Sheffield area team has located to a office. Due to the expansion of the services new offices were being sought for the Doncaster team. Both office premises visited were of a good standard and considered appropriate for their purpose, although the Doncaster office did not have disabled access.

Clear arrangements are in place for monitoring all aspects of the fostering service to ensure it is well managed. Foster Care Associates nationally was awarded the 'Investors in People' quality award in 2005. Senior managers had produced a clear annual plan for the service, which set out priorities for the year.

Robust procedures are in place for reporting significant and notifiable events, and a standard form was used for recording all events. Notifiable incidents are promptly reported to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Clear procedures were in place for recording and monitoring complaints received about the service. The Manager agreed to update the front sheet of complaints register to clearly show when complaints are resolved and whether they were upheld.

The fostering service has a committed team of staff with the appropriate qualifications and skills to meet carers and young people needs. The number of foster carers and children placed within Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region has continued to increase, and the compliment and skill mix of staff within the area teams has increased accordingly. The Agency now has 12 resource workers across the area teams, who provide valuable support to the carers and young people. The Agency provides an exceptional staffing structure and skill mix of staff within the teams, which includes senior managers, social workers, resource workers, a therapist and education liaison officer.

The area team visited on this inspection providing a high level of support to foster carers and young people. Foster carers spoke with high regard for the team. The senior managers manage the teams effectively in an open and positive way, and staff and carers considered that staff at all levels are very approachable. Staff worked well together and valued the level of support and supervision they received from their managers. All staff received monthly planned supervision and a good appraisal system was in place.

Systems were in place to prioritise and monitor the work within the team. There were clear lines of accountability at all levels, and staff had taken on responsibilities for specific areas of work and interests, which worked well. Staff had attended various training in the last year and reported that their

training and development needs were well supported. Four managers were undertaking a management course to further develop their skills. The Agency had funded a resource worker to attain a Social Work qualification at diploma level; and the member of staff had attained a social worker position within the Doncaster team.

The recruitment and placement teams based at the regional office have established clear procedures relating to the assessment of new foster carers and all placements. Records showed that necessary checks had been carried out to ensure that foster carers are suitable to work with children. Completed assessments of prospective foster carers were comprehensive and of a high standard. It was noted that several foster carers had recorded their employment in years only, which does not ensure that any gaps in employment history are explored. Also a check had been undertaken against the Protection of the Children Act (POCA) List. As previously stated, Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire as a region has continued to grow in terms of numbers of carers and children/young people placed. Priority was being given to recruiting further foster carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the demands on the service.

Feedback from foster carers and records examined showed that carers received a good level of support from the fostering service. Virtually all questionnaires received from carers indicated that they felt valued and well supported by the Agency. Foster carers said that the out of hour's service worked well.

Carers received regular supervision visits from their support worker, which carers found beneficial. Records of supervision visits clearly set out issues discussed, and the foster carer and support worker had signed the majority of the records. Carers confirmed that their social worker carried out occasional un-announced visits to their home.

The Agency has established a good pre-approval training programme for potential foster carers, and experienced foster carers were involved in this. Emphasis is given to ensuring that foster carers attend regular post approval training to develop their knowledge and skills. The Foster Carers Agreement and Handbook sets out the need to attend at least 4 training sessions a year. Each area team had set out a range of post approval training for carers for the year, based on the carers and children's needs. Foster carers were also encouraged to undertake a national vocational training qualification (N.V.Q.) level 3 in childcare, and 41 carers had achieved this. A further 24 foster carers were due to commence N.V.Q. training in 2006. Foster carer support groups were established in all areas to provide support to carers. Carers' files contained copies of certificates from courses they had attended. Consideration should be given to providing a training profile for all carers, which shows at a glance all training attended. The Inspectors attended the Doncaster support group, which was well attended and run. Foster carers commented on how

well the Doncaster support group worked, although questionnaires received from carers in certain areas reported that their support group did not run so well.

The level of recording on children's and carers files looked at on this inspection was of a good standard and the files were clearly set out and indexed. However there were some recognised shortfalls in the LAC documents on young people's files. The files showed that the Agency had repeatedly requested the missing documents from the children's social workers, although not all-essential information had been received. Some information on the front of the files required updated, and there was some duplication of information on the files. Senior managers planned for staff to audit the files.

Foster carers recorded a good level of information relating to young people in their care, and were required to complete a monthly progress report, which was shared with the Agency and young people's social workers. There were some inconsistencies in where foster carers recorded and kept confidential information relating to young people. A number of foster carers had received training on the importance of keeping good records, and further training was planned.

The Agency recognises that children need to have a strong identity and provides every child on placement with a memory box and camera to record their time with the carers. The Inspector's saw some excellent examples of life story work been completed with the young people.

Several carers and young people described the biggest disappointment was the changes in some children's social workers and lack of direct contact.

# 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>	4

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	4
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	3
<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>	3
<b>11</b>	4

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? No

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

**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	FS15	Potential new staff and foster carers should record the full dates of their employment history, so as identify and explore any gaps in employment history.
2	FS15	The Agency should determine its policy as to whether CRB disclosure requests for potential new staff and foster carers include a request against the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) list, in addition to the Protection Of the Children Act (POCA) list.
3	FS8	The layout and completion of the matching matrix form for children and carers should be developed to ensure that the form is completed appropriately.
4	FS9	The safe care policy for foster carers homes should be signed and dated by all relevant persons and clearly show when it has been reviewed.



5	FS24	The Agency needs to strengthen its procedures for obtaining all essential information and LAC documents from the child's social worker.
6	FS24	The Agency needs to establish a file audit system for ensuring that carers and young people's files are updated and contain all essential information.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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