



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Kingston Upon Hull City Council Fostering Service

**Social Services, Gleneagles Centre
East Carr Road
Hull
HU8 9LB**

Lead Inspector
Janet Lamb

Announced
12 September 2005 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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Kingston upon Hull Fostering Service
Address	Social Services, Gleneagles Centre East Carr Road Hull East Yorkshire HU8 9LB
Telephone number	01482 798653
Fax number	01482 712438
Email address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Kingston Upon Hull City Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Heather Clare
Type of registration	Local Authority Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	NA
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	NA

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 01/10/04

Brief Description of the Service:

The Kingston upon Hull City Council, Social Services Department has a dedicated fostering service. The main offices of the fostering service, Gleneagles Centre and Aneurin Bevan Lodge are located in the east and west of the city of Hull, respectively. However, a range of venues are utilised to facilitate local support groups, panel meetings and training for foster carers. There are future plans in operation to relocate the service in a more central position of the city. The stated purpose of the service is to provide care for children and young people who are looked after by the local authority and whose needs are best met in a family environment. Foster care is provided via a number of distinct fostering schemes, including sibling group carers, family network carers, adolescent and long-term scheme carers, short break carers, respite carers and mainstream carers. The fostering service also has a service level agreement with Barnardo's who provide a specialist service offering short breaks and long term care to children and young people with disabilities. An Adoption and Fostering Manager, with overall responsibility for adoption and fostering, manages the fostering service. She is assisted by three Fostering Managers, who are responsible for supervising a large team of Senior Fostering Social Workers and Fostering Social Workers, along with support and administration staff and sessional workers. There are also specialist workers employed to work on a contracted basis as necessary.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection of the Hull City Council Fostering Service took place over 3 months, and included a pre visit to discuss the inspection with the Adoption and Fostering Manager and staff. Interviews with the three Fostering Managers, Senior Fostering Social Workers, Fostering Social Workers, Foster Carers and Foster Children took place later.

A sample survey of carers, children and parents was also done, in the form of three different types of questionnaire. Other stakeholders such as children and young people involved in the 'Platform Project' with Rights And Participation Project (RAPP), providing training to pre-approved carers with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Fostering service, were also consulted.

A carers' support group meeting was attended. A panel meeting was attended and the 'panel chair' was interviewed. A visit was also made to the Short Breaks and Family and Friends sections of the service. An invitation was also taken up to attend the Council's 'Celebrating Success,' an annual achievement award ceremony for recognising the efforts of children in care, where one young person in foster care was interviewed.

In an effort to seek wider consultation of carers and children and young people, a request was made to include the CSCI address and the Regulation Inspector's e-mail address on the Hull City Council Fostering Service websites for carers and children. These websites had not been completed by the time the inspection finished, however.

What the service does well:

Children and young people are treated with respect, are consulted at every opportunity about their care, are encouraged to maintain good health and attend education, and are offered a wide variety of recreational activities. Carers are well supported, fairly well informed, and their efforts are appropriately recognised. Children and young people benefit from a well-run service, which is always developing and seeking to improve delivery. They benefit from a service, which is forward-looking, dynamic and inclusive.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The organisational structure of the service has improved and evolved with the demand to modernise, expand and change. The efficiency of the service has improved because of the redefining of roles and responsibilities within the organisation. Documentation and information for carers has improved,

marketing and recruitment practices have expanded and developed, and networking with other agencies and stakeholders has become more expansive and effective.

What they could do better:

The service could make attending support groups and training sessions more attractive, and use support groups as another means of informing and developing carers. It could ensure schemes such as payment for skills for example, is disseminated more evenly and effectively throughout the carer population. It could enhance its already excellent consultation processes, for example, to include children and young people on its assessment and approval of carers. It could work more swiftly at getting information out to carers, which has been reviewed and changed.

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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- 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 outcomes for standard(s) 12 only.

Children and young people in foster care have their health and development promoted very well.

EVIDENCE:

Recruitment of foster carers involves thorough assessment for suitability to care, and following approval to care includes receiving training in first aid and health issues, and providing prospective carers with information on how to promote the health of children and young people in their care.

Information in the carers' handbook on carers' responsibilities to ensure children are registered with a GP etc., as in standard 12.6, is general, and in the placement agreement for individual children, is more specific. Placement plans detail each child's individual health needs and requirements and provide the carer with background and current health issues.

It becomes a two way process once children are placed, and carers come up for review. Carers are then expected to keep the fostering service informed of any developments, in order for the reviewing panel to determine whether or not a carer can be recommended for approval to continue or for any changes.

Carers spoken to had mixed views on the level and quality of social workers' information given to them about children's health, but were more positive about the information received from the fostering service. Children and young people's questionnaires showed they were positive about the help and support they get to eat well, exercise and seek medical attention.

Links with health care professionals include a medical advisor on the fostering panels, access to a clinical psychologist and health coordinators, and details of any local specialist health services in and around the city.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3, 6, 8, 9 and 15.

Children and young people in foster care are kept safe from abuse and neglect and are well protected by the suitability of the fostering managers and the suitability of carers, as well as protected by the systems in place.

EVIDENCE:

The Adoption and Fostering Manager and the three service Managers are appropriately qualified and experienced to manage the service. All foster carers are thoroughly vetted, assessed and trained to provide a service of care, and receive supervision appropriate to their needs as carers. All evidence is held in staff recruitment files (not seen at this inspection) and foster carer's files in the form of assessment and training record documents.

Carers have different levels of experience, qualities and skills to offer and expressed these in questionnaires and in interviews. Carers receive a handbook, which explains all of the requirements made of them, and contains policies and procedures on such as corporal punishment, safe caring, promoting good health etc. Their homes are also assessed for safety, space, sleeping arrangements and suitability, as part of the fostering assessment.

Children and young people are only fostered in placements, where the fostering team believe the match to be appropriate and all of this is recorded in children and young people and carers' files, but sometimes placements break down and some questionnaires highlighted this.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 7, 13 and 31.

Children and young people in foster care enjoy good opportunities for education and recreation.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service provides training and instruction on “Difference and Diversity” to carers at the pre-approval stage of their application, and holds cultural days for carers and children and young people to attend throughout the year. The service has links with the Bangladeshi community in Hull via one of its sessional workers, and encourages carers to attend support groups, learn about other cultures and share experiences. All fostering social workers attend the Council’s corporate equality and diversity training. The service is also trying to recruit more people from Hull’s ethnic minority groups.

All carers are instructed on the importance of maintaining children and young people in school, and supported by fostering social workers to ensure school is attended. The Council has its own incentive scheme to encourage educational attainment amongst ‘looked after children’ and holds an annual award ceremony in celebration of their success. The Inspector was invited to this ceremony and encountered many children and young people from other care settings as well as fostering, who had been nominated for various awards. The occasion was a great success and a real personal esteem builder. Carers also attend school functions and open nights for children they foster, and many help children to keep records of their time in school and their achievements. Information came from questionnaires and interviews.

The service provides a 'short breaks' function, which is coordinated from Aneurin Bevan Lodge and managed by a separate Team Manager. Interview with the Team Manager revealed carers providing short breaks are recruited and trained in line with the service's recruitment and approval policies and procedures and vetted as rigorously as mainstream carers. They are given very clear information prior to approval and afterwards, on ensuring the main responsibility for any child or young person remains with their parents. This is also in the carers' handbook and the fostering statement of purpose. Short break foster carers tend to establish strong bonds and working relationships with parents because of the nature of the role they play, and therefore placement agreements may also contain specific agreements between carers and parents. Permissions for foster children to undertake any activity or receive any service outside of fostering are always sought from parents on a case-by-case basis.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 10 and 11.

Children and young people have very good opportunities to make positive contributions to the service of care they receive.

EVIDENCE:

Carers are supported to encourage children and young people to maintain contact with family and friends where appropriate to their development. Carers have information in documents; handbook and children's placement agreements, and information received from social workers and fostering social workers. All of this information is in line with the fostering service policy on contact.

In practice there are sometimes difficulties with consistency of information to carers, though. There are written arrangements and agreements for contact, which aid successful facilitation of contact, but sometimes social workers make changes without proper consultation of children and carers. Generally children responding in questionnaires and interviewed felt they are given lots of support and encouragement to see family members and friends if appropriate.

The fostering service promotes consultation of children and young people through a variety of ways; individual checks on children by fostering social workers, surveys, use of e-mail communication, the complaint procedure, special events and activities such as those held in the summertime, connections with RAPP and Safe Choices, and the monitoring and supervision of carers. The service is also hoping to launch two new websites in the very near future, which will enable carers and children to make comments, suggestions and complaints on a regular basis.

In January 2005 a foster carers' consultation group was established, initially to introduce the 'payment for skills' programme, but is now used to offer carers an arena in which to contribute towards and facilitate general development of service delivery. All of these systems are recorded and documented.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 29 only.

Children and young people have a relatively good level of economic wellbeing via the allowances and expenses paid to carers.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service now makes general payments to carers, which meet the Fostering Network recommendations, provides certain expenses and is also making great progress on the 'payments for skills' programme. All carers are being invited to develop a portfolio of the skills, experience and qualifications they have and evidence of how these have been used, to be assessed for the payment for skills programme, permission for which was granted to the service recently. As a result of payments and expenses children and young people experience benefits from carers having a disposable income.

Carers interviewed or spoken to at a support group meeting did not have any concerns about current payments, but there was a little anxiety expressed over the portfolio building and over the possible loss of enhanced payments for children with special needs in the interim months, if the payment for skills information and assessment is not done before March 2006. Management assured carers they would be supported by fostering social workers and would soon acquire the information to easily complete the task of compiling a portfolio. Payment changes would need to be discussed individually with each carer.

Management

The intended outcomes 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 cares 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 standard(s) 17, 21 and 24.

Children and young people in fostering benefit from a relatively adequate number of experienced and qualified staff, that have good strategies for supporting foster carers. Children and young people have good records maintained on their behalf.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is now working to almost full capacity in terms of employed staffing, and has reorganised the service in view of the future plans to develop and improve the service overall, and this in turn has made more efficient use of the workforce. The Adoption and Fostering Manager and Fostering Managers hold records of staff qualifications and training undertaken.

Support of carers from fostering social workers takes the form of monitoring visits, telephone calls for information sharing, assistance facilitating contact, and assistance with finance and expense claims. The service has reviewed its documents for recording supervision since the last inspection. Sickness and holiday absence will always have an impact on staffing levels and support to carers, but where possible this support is taken over by one of the three Managers. Comments from carers were generally positive on the subject of support and in some extreme cases where breakdowns had been experienced in relationships between carers and children's social workers, the support from the fostering social workers and their Managers has been excellent.

Children and young people's main case files are held at each social work team office for the area in which the child lives (these were not inspected), and are now accessible on the Hull City Council's Social Services Department new information technology system called 'Care First.' The main input on case files comes from children and young people's social workers, with fostering social workers having access to read information.

Foster carers also maintain basic files for children and young people, the contents of which they encourage children to keep being a life history, photographs of significant people, correspondence from significant people, information on health issues, diary notes, school achievements and reports, activities undertaken, etc.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	4

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

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

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.				

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.		

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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