



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Catholic Caring Services**

**218 Tulketh Road  
Ashton  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR2 1ES**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Mrs Felicity Lacey**

*Announced Inspection*

**23rd January – 10 February 2006**

**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

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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>	Catholic Caring Services
<b>Address</b>	218 Tulketh Road Ashton Preston Lancashire PR2 1ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 732313
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	sdusanswarbrick@catholiccaringservices.o
<b>Provider Web address</b>	www.catholiccaringservices.org.uk
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Catholic Caring Services (Diocese of Lancaster) Ltd
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mrs Susan Bernadette Swarbrick
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

1. The agency shall at all times employ a suitably experienced and qualified manager who is registered with the National Care Standards Commission.

**Date of last inspection**      2nd December 2004

## Brief Description of the Service:

Catholic Caring Services fostering agency is a well established voluntary agency that provides a range of social care facilities for children and adults. The Board of Management oversees the agency and is responsible defining policies and agreeing annual budgets. The director is the responsible individual for the fostering services. The assistant director (children), and the team leader (fostering) complete the management team. There are two senior social work practitioners; 3 qualified social workers and one foster care development worker, who has many years experience as a foster carer for another agency. The fostering service provides long term, task centred, short term and pre adoption placements on behalf of local authorities.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was an announced visit. Two inspectors carried out the inspection. The inspectors visited the offices of Catholic Caring Services Fostering Agency in Preston and Barrow. Seven foster carers were visited and a number of children in placement contributed to the inspection. Social workers and support staff were interviewed during this inspection. Questionnaires were sent out to all foster carers and children in placement over the age of 8, and also to placing authority social workers. The records maintained by the agency were examined. The workings of the foster panel were observed.

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

Catholic Caring Fostering Agency provides an excellent level of support for foster carers. The recruitment and training process are thorough and effective. The foster carers and children who contributed to the inspection had many positive comments to make, a number of which are contained in the body of this report. Foster carers felt that there was a real team approach to the fostering task by the agency. The manager and staff were seen as approachable and active in their support for foster carers.

The agency is proactive in promoting the health and development of children, and foster carers felt well supported in this task. The practice of the agency ensures that the needs of children are recognised and met within suitable foster placements, and their welfare safeguarded. The agency values diversity and respects the choices of the individual. The value of education is promoted and children are supported to achieve their potential.

The children the agency supports are consulted about and contribute to the care they receive. The agency and its foster carers make excellent efforts maintain contact with families within the scope of the placement agreement.

The foster carers are in receipt of appropriate allowances and expenses. Foster carers are supported in securing additional funding for particular items.

The fostering agency is keen to develop new services in response to local needs. They are currently in the process of establishing a new service, which will provide foster placements and additional support for difficult to place children and young people.

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

As recommended at the last inspection, the policy and procedures to be followed if a child is absent from a foster carers home is considered at each placement meeting. If being missing from home is identified as an area of concern, an individual risk assessment is completed.

There are clear guidelines relating to records kept by foster carers and what happens to these at the end of placement.

The introduction of a pre panel meeting to consider applications, and identify any possible issues, has help prevent delays in decisions being made by the full panel.

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

It was apparent that in a small number of emergency placements, securing additional finance for essential items could be problematic. Consideration may be given to establishing an internal agreement by the agency, that depending on specific circumstances, it may be necessary to provide additional monies at the start of a placement to ensure that placement quality is maintained.

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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Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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 agency is proactive in promoting the health and development of children, and foster carers felt well supported in this task.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The agency provides an excellent level of support to foster carers in relation to health matters. Foster carers felt that the staff of the agency were fully involved in ensuring that the health needs of the children in placement are met. Foster carers felt that social workers were actively involved in promoting the health and development of children in placement, for example, by attending appointments and enabling access to specialist resources.

Individual health matters are addressed at the placement agreement meeting and areas of particular responsibility are identified, these were seen to be recorded in the Foster Parent Agreement. All children placed by the agency are registered with a GP. The fostering service has produced a written policy on health matters and there was evidence that children and young people are given guidance and advice on health, personal care and health promotion issues.

Training on health and hygiene issues and first aid is given pre and post approval. Basic first aid information is included in the foster carers' manual. Agency staff also have regular updates on relevant health issues, for example a recent session led by the panel health advisor gave advice on the effects of blood borne viruses.

# **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

The policies and processes of the agency ensure that children's needs are recognised and met within suitable foster placements, and their welfare safeguarded.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The responsible individual and the team leader have all required references and checks completed and are registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

The inspectors found that all foster carers visited provided good, homely and comfortable accommodation, which met the needs of the children in placement. As part of the approval process a risk assessment is conducted of the home environment, to ensure that the safety of children is promoted. Where adaptations have been needed to ensure that a child's needs continue to be met, foster carers have been supported in ensuring that funding is secured and that these are carried out. All foster carers have an unannounced visit carried out by their social worker and have an annual review. Initial training covers all health and safety issues and each carer has a copy of the agency's health and safety guidelines.

All foster carers have a safe caring assessment in place. Risk assessments in relation to children who have been abused or who have abused others are undertaken and recorded prior to any placement being made as part of the matching process. The importance of safe caring issues are highlighted during the assessment and pre approval training offered to prospective foster carers. The agency also provides additional support through membership of The Fostering Network, and all carers receive a copy of the publication 'Safer Caring'. The agency has a procedure for ensuring that a record is maintained of any allegations made (and their outcomes) against foster carers. This information is collated and monitored by the manager of the agency.

The commitment of the foster carers and their dedication to ensuring that the needs of the children they look after are met was clear. Foster carers considered the support offered by the agency was excellent, their comments included:

'...the support we received is brilliant.'

'We never feel that we are left alone to worry.'

'There is always support at the end of the phone.'

'I am confident that when I phone there is rapid response and an understanding of the issues.'

'I can contact the agency with confidence.'

Catholic Caring Services' fostering agency has an explicit policy and procedure dedicated to ensuring that a child or young person placed by them is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting their assessed needs. The team leader is responsible for facilitating discussions on potential matches with the placing agencies. The agency uses the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering's (BAAF) Forms E and F system for linking a child's assessed needs (outlined in Form E) to suitable carers (Form F). If a placement is seen to be suitable a planning meeting is arranged, which involves all relevant parties.

The inspectors found that in 3 cases short term placements had in fact turned into a long term placement, due to factors outside the control of the agency. In these cases the agency was aware of the pressures and concerns this uncertainty causes for the children and carers involved. Discussion with foster carers offered reassurance that additional support was provided in these cases, such as respite care, to allow the placement to continue.

The placement agreement comprehensively sets out the expectations of all those involved in the arrangement and contains specific reference to the elements of matching that were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement. It indicates areas where foster carers might need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and the carer.

The fostering agency has a form that sets out the policy banning any form of corporal punishment, which every carer is expected to sign. The agency ensures that foster carers keep a record of any sanctions used. The children who completed questionnaires indicated that any sanctions used were fair.

Catholic Caring Services has in place sound staff recruitment processes. These include the external advertising of vacancies in appropriate publications and appropriate short listing and interviewing methods that are underpinned by the agency's Equal Opportunities Policy. Written references are followed up by telephone enquiries and are recorded on the checklist at the front of the individual's file. Catholic Caring Services has a dedicated administrative team to deal with CRB checks. This team has set up a system to ensure that clearance is obtained every three years.

All social work staff have an appropriate professional qualification. Individual interviews and group discussions with foster carers confirmed that all staff members demonstrate a sound understanding of the fostering task, as well as the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities. The foster care development worker was seen as a source of great support and advice.

The agency has a written policy in relation to its panel, which covers decision-making when all members of the panel are not in agreement. Observation of the panel indicated that informed and open debate was conducted, which addresses pertinent issues relating to the approval and review of foster parents. All panel members had relevant experience and the membership included a medical advisor and a foster carer from another agency. The chair is independent to the agency and is highly experienced in matters of childcare. The foster care panel is organised and operates efficiently and effectively and ensures that the welfare of children is central to its business. The process of bringing approvals to panel has been improved since the last inspection, by the establishment of a pre panel meeting of the chair and the Assistant Director of Children's Services, to consider applications and identify any issues that may need further investigation. This system has ensured that full information is available when applications for approvals and assessments are presented to the panel, and avoids any unnecessary delays.

# 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

The agency values diversity and respects the choices of the individual. The value of education is promoted and children are supported to achieve their potential.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Catholic Caring Services is committed to inclusion and equality of opportunity. Foster carers are recruited from a range of social backgrounds. There are a number of single carers, who feel well supported in providing a valuable service. All foster carers spoken with felt that their contribution and life experience was valued. Placement plans demonstrated that the wishes of birth parents were respected with regard for religious and cultural needs.

Initial and subsequent training covers issues to do with the child's confidence and self-worth and ensuring respect for preservation of each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. In the foster carers' manual there is a section that outlines the carer's role in relation to equal opportunity and which includes practical information about various religions.

Discussions with children and young people and foster carers showed that they are encouraged to pursue their talents, interest and hobbies. The questionnaires completed by the children and young people described a range of activities that they were involved in including, swimming, drama, and scouts.

The value of education is emphasised during initial training, as is the need to work cooperatively, with all involved parties, to ensure children attend and benefit from school. Evidence was seen on files, and was provided by questionnaires and in discussions, that the agency is supportive of foster carers in identifying educational needs of children in placement, and ensuring these are met. In several cases where the child was experiencing difficulties at school, foster carers and agency staff worked closely together with the school to prevent a breakdown of an education placement. Examination of case files demonstrated that social workers made every effort to ensure that children remain in school, and where relevant, seek out therapeutic opportunities to assist children in working through anxieties and concerns.

# **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 practice of the agency enables the children they support to be consulted about and contribute to the care they receive, and enables the continuity of family links where appropriate.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Catholic Caring Services fostering agency demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that children are supported to maintain contact with their birth families in line with their placement plan. The foster carers spoken with said that detailed plans were made at the time of placement which addressed contact arrangements. Many of the children placed have complex relationships with their birth families, and it was evident that foster carers and the agency were actively enabling these links to continue in the best interests of the child. It was noted that there was good communication between the agency social workers, placing social workers and foster carers. The agreements regarding contact are reviewed, and there was evidence of this on the children's files. Contact is maintained through letters, phone calls and visits. Foster carers maintain a record of the outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child. The inspectors saw evidence that this was happening, and importantly that this information is taken account of and acted upon.

In discussion the children placed with the agency confirmed that they felt their views were actively sought and listened to. Children are given the opportunity to comment on their experiences of being fostered. The responses to questionnaires in the main indicated that children were encouraged to give their opinions and make decisions. Foster carers receive training, at the initial stage and on going, regarding the need to listen to children and respect their



views. The agency refers children and young people to the local Children's Right Officer. All children placed with foster carers receive the children's guide; this contains information regarding how to complain and provides a stamped addressed envelope to allow the child to make contact with the agency independently. This complaints system has been used over the past year and was responded to appropriately by the agency.

# 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

The policies and practices of the agency enable young people to be prepared for independence. The foster carers are in receipt of appropriate allowances and expenses.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering agency's social workers, through supervision, monitor and support carers to ensure that they develop the skills and knowledge necessary to help prepare young people for independent living. The children in placement are supported to make their views known through the statutory review process. The foster carers' manual includes a section on skills for independence. This outlines the agency's expectations of carers in relation to preparing young people for independent living.

Each foster carer is paid an allowance and agreed expenses in line with the Fostering Network recommendations. Evidence from carers suggested that the allowances are paid promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually and made known to all carers.

Foster carers receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child is placed. Any items required by a child which are considered to be extraordinary purchases, would be negotiated at the time of placement or as a child's needs change. It was apparent that in a small number of emergency placements securing additional finance for essential items could be problematic. It is important that a protocol is set in place and an agreement reached by the agency that depending on specific circumstances it may be necessary to provide additional monies at the start of a placement to ensure that placement quality is maintained.

# 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):**

2, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

This is a well managed agency which is very supportive of all those involved in the fostering process.

## **EVIDENCE:**

As reported at the last inspection it is evident from interviews with various staff members that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience of the family placement task within the team. It is commendable that there is a foster care development worker employed by the agency. This person has fostered for another agency for many years and visits all prospective carers, as well as being on call to all carers to offer advice and support. The provision of this level of support is highly valued by all foster carers, who see the development worker as some one who really understands the fostering task, from first hand experience.

Staffing policies and practice encourage the retention of staff. Those team members spoken with were very positive about their experience of being employed by Catholic Caring Services. The team leader continues to be enthusiastically praised as being clear thinking and effective in her leadership role. The assistant director responsible for Children's Services is actively involved in the development and expansion of the agency. The agency continues to develop work in new areas, and is currently expanding its provision through the 'Fosterability Scheme', which aims to provide placement and additional support for difficult to place children and young people. This is an innovative development and existing carers are being encouraged to consider whether they would like to be involved in this scheme, which will be backed by a full programme of training and support.

The agency uses the BAAF Form F assessment format is used in all approvals, which incorporates all of the points under items 17.6 and 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards. The standard of these assessments was excellent, giving sound evidence of the competencies of the foster carers. The agency has sound practices when conducting assessments, and maintains all information that contributes to the Form F assessment. All case files were seen to be in order.

Catholic Caring Fostering Agency continues to be inclusive in its approach, this was reflected in the view that the opinions of all people connected with the agency were equally valued and that the fostering task was very much seen as a team effort. Existing foster carers are treated as a valuable source of support and information and are regularly involved in the training of new carers.

The experience of foster carers confirmed that they were fully supported in the fostering task by Catholic Caring Services. There are excellent on call systems that provide 24-hour information, advice and assistance, the effectiveness on these systems was confirmed throughout the inspections by foster carers. Foster carers are also supported through regular visits and quarterly formal supervision in which training needs were identified and any concerns discussed.

The agency provides respite care for the children in foster placements. There are a number of carers who are approved to provide respite care. Joint events such as support groups and family days out, ensure that children and foster carers develop supportive relationships and meet one another.

Communication between the fostering agency's social workers and the children's social workers is evident through joint attendance at planning and review meetings. Other communication occurs via telephone and email contact.

Carer's comments include:-

'The agency is brilliant very supportive of us as individuals.'

' I have heard from other agencies where foster parents are left waiting if they need help-I have never found this (with Catholic Caring)'

'very supported by phone and visits.'

'Catholic Caring provide a variety of events for the whole family. The social worker is good and her manager is good, and I receive support from them both.'

# 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>
<b>12</b>	4

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **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

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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