



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Dudley Local Authority Fostering Agency

**Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
7th Floor
Falcon House
The Minories
Dudley
DY2 8PG**

Lead Inspector
Christine Lancashire

Key Announced Inspection
16th October 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

| Reader Information | |
|---------------------------|---|
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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 | Dudley Local Authority Fostering Agency |
| Address | Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council 7th Floor Falcon House The Minories Dudley DY2 8PG |
| Telephone number | 01384 815858 |
| Fax number | |
| Email address | |
| Provider Web address | N/K |
| Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) | Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Name of registered manager (if applicable) | N/A |
| Type of registration | Local Auth Fostering Service |

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 23/01/06

Brief Description of the Service:

This is the fostering service of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. It is based in the centre of Dudley in a building shared by other Social Services workers. The aim of this service is 'to offer a family placement to all children looked after by Dudley Metropolitan Borough when this is the agreed option'. The underlying principle is 'to provide looked after children in foster care with an experience of family life which promotes their physical and emotional well being and happiness throughout their childhood'.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was undertaken at short notice by three inspectors over a period of a week, during which they examined records, spoke with staff, carers, young people and panel members. The manager provided information before the inspection and made copies of policies and procedures available. 14 carers, 2 social workers, 1 other professional and 12 young people provided comments about the service and some of these are included in the report.

What the service does well:

The service provides a good level of support to carers and young people. The workers value the carers and recognise the role which they play in meeting the needs of the young people. One carer wrote, 'I choose to foster for Dudley because I receive good support' and another wrote 'We feel Dudley fostering service does the very best they can to meet the needs of children and foster carers'. One informed the inspector 'Their help, support and commitment is really fantastic'.

Young people feel well supported by the service. One wrote, 'I feel so happy where I live now' and another wrote, 'I have support and I am well looked after and I eat healthily and I have information about how to live my life'.

The fostering panel is suitable composed and carries out its duties in a balanced and robust way.

Suitable checks are made on staff and carers to ensure that the safety and welfare of young people is safeguarded.

Staff and carers are supervised well and have good access to training courses. The service is innovative and seeks to improve its performance.

There are good arrangements for making complaints and for listening to the views of young people.

The service tries to be inclusive and to celebrate cultural diversity.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service has moved into more suitable premises.

There are improved foster placement agreements.

Payments to carers are now more direct.

There are improved arrangements for calling a fostering social worker out of hours.

There is now a Foster carer Centre which is available for all carers.

The service is developing closer links with the 'Flipside' project, which provides specialist placements.

What they could do better:

Solutions need to be explored with regard to the sound-proofing and heating in the offices.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that all information presented to panel is thoroughly completed and suitably detailed.

The service needs to ensure that there are foster placement agreements in respect of each placement.

The service needs to ensure that the role of the placing social worker is made clear and specified in the agreements so that young people receive the service from their social workers to which they are entitled.

The service needs to ensure that there are specific details in the placement agreements in relation to medical consent and consent for school trips and holidays.

The inspectors recommend that the service issues more clear guidance to carers in relation to the use of monitors and cameras.

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

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

This fostering service promotes the health and development of children.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

EVIDENCE:

The foster carers' handbook provides information for carers on managing the health needs of children in placement. Training is provided in first aid, HIV/Aids and child development. Each carer is expected to keep records of health needs, immunisations and interventions and social workers are expected to provide carers with full health details at the time of placement. This is not always possible, as social workers do not always have access to this information, especially where children are placed in an emergency. However, this information is provided as soon as possible. Carers commented at this inspection that they usually receive more information than in the past. Use is made of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service where appropriate. There is a Looked After Children's nurse, who sits on the fostering panel and also ensures that initial health assessments are undertaken and that any necessary follow up appointments are facilitated. There is also a designated doctor. Foster carers described a variety of specific medical needs in relation to the children in their care and raised no areas of concern in this respect. Young people wrote, 'I am encouraged to eat healthy food at home and at school' and 'I have healthy meals and I do a lot of walking and exercise'.

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

Staff carrying on, managing and working in the service are suitable to work with children and young people.

The service provides suitable carers and they are appropriately matched to children.

Children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect.

The fostering panel for this service is organised efficiently and effectively.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

EVIDENCE:

Standard recruitment processes are carried out in respect of all staff and records are maintained of references received. References are followed up by telephone calls. Criminal Records Bureau checks are obtained in relation to all newly employed staff at all levels. There is a system for ensuring that checks are renewed in relation to existing staff on a three-yearly basis. All staff are required to undergo training in fair and effective recruitment before they can participate in the selection process. The sampled staff files demonstrated that the departmental policy is followed and that only staff with appropriate qualifications are appointed.

The foster carers' handbook provides written guidance on Health and Safety issues. Foster carers receive training in this area. The policy and procedure

documents and the handbook specify the need to review each home annually and to inspect the premises against the Health and Safety standards. Health and Safety issues are discussed at the fostering panel at the time of approval and annual review. The inspectors visited four foster homes and these were found to be warm, homely and adequately furnished. They were decorated and maintained to good standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Those homes providing for younger children were equipped with suitable guards and other equipment. Preparation for foster carers covers Health and Safety issues and carers are made aware of their responsibilities in this respect. During the inspection, discussions were held in relation to the possible use of surveillance cameras and listening devices. There have been occasions when the use of such equipment has been appropriately authorised to ensure the safety of specific young people on a time-limited basis. However, there are no detailed guidelines about the use of equipment and the times when it may be permissible and it is recommended that the service produces guidance in this area.

Supervising social workers check that the transport used by carers is appropriate and suitable for the needs of the child. Dudley has a new taxi log sheet system. Carers are advised to check the driver and escort ID cards and sign a log sheet to ensure that the children are getting into a properly checked taxi, with suitable staff.

Foster carers are aware that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the inspection process. At previous inspections, the inspectors were concerned to hear of examples of young people being placed in emergencies over and above the approval level for the carers. There continue to be some examples of foster carers who have taken placements over their agreed numbers. The staff acknowledge that such placements are not best practice, but careful consideration is given when they are made and they are reported to panel for ratification.

The assessments of carers specify their strengths and weaknesses and outline the reasons for specific approvals. These elements are also discussed at the panel at the time of approval and review. Placement decisions consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs and these are matched as closely as possible with the characteristics of the foster family. Workers confirmed that attempts are made to match specific young people to appropriate placements at all times, but there are constraints on matching which arise from the number of placements available and the number of referrals at times. Generally, carers expressed the view that most placements were well matched to their circumstances and they understood that some young people may display behaviour in the foster home which had not been previously observed. Some expressed the suspicion that social workers may withhold some information about young people's past behaviour. One carer wrote, 'I have found some district social workers will withhold information to secure a placement'. This view was also put forward by other carers. However, all agreed that the fostering workers work hard to obtain relevant information. One wrote, 'My linkworker has always tried to get all the information from district.'

The foster carers' handbook identifies appropriate forms of control. It is clear that smacking, or any form of physical chastisement is not allowed. Carers are expected to sign to indicate that they will abide by these standards.

There is a joint protocol for children who go missing within the West Midlands Area. This has been approved by the Area Child Protection Committee. Carers have been advised of the appropriate action to take. There is a system for monitoring these incidents and a report is sent to the Departmental Management Team on a monthly basis. Meetings are held with the police to review practice in this area.

Each carer is expected to attend courses on Child protection, Self Care and Allegations, Caring for Children who have been Sexually Abused, and Sex and Sexuality. There are management systems to collate details of incidents of a Child Protection nature and these are reviewed annually.

There are internal procedures which result in significant concerns or complaints being taken to the Fostering Panel. Foster carers indicated awareness of the need to ensure that children in their care do not experience bullying. They are provided with an anti-bullying guide. This provides information about the signs and symptoms of bullying, together with information about the action to take and useful contacts. Brief details with regards to bullying are also included in the carers' handbook. Foster carers are aware of the arrangements within the education service to address bullying.

There are procedures which cover the composition and conduct of the fostering panel. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out on panel members.

The independent panel members include people with expertise in education and health. The panel has an independent chair. There are two foster carers from other Local Authority Fostering Services on the panel. The panel was observed to carry out its function appropriately and to be suitably composed.

The inspector was pleased to note that there is robust discussion of issues, during which various members represent the interests of the young people and the carers. There are procedures which cover decision making when not all of the panel members are in agreement. The panel also fulfils a quality assurance role and reports back to the fostering service and area offices on issues of procedure and practice. Statistics about the actions taken by panel over a six month period are provided to the panel for discussion. The inspector noted that some items presented to panel were not as detailed or complete as they should have been. Additional details were sought by the panel members. However, presenting workers must ensure that the material presented is fully completed, detailed and accurate.

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 fostering service values diversity and promotes educational achievement.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

EVIDENCE:

The handbook and the policies and procedures draw the attention of staff and carers to issues of equal opportunities. There is a short statement of guidance in assisting carers to care for a child placed from a different culture to their own. Carers are expected to attend a training course on caring for children with disabilities and one on understanding racism and heritage. In October 2005, Dudley hosted the annual Black Country Black Children's Celebration in which the surrounding authorities participated. This year carers, young people and workers attended the celebration which was held in Walsall. This event attracts considerable media coverage, raising the profile of black and minority ethnic carers and highlighting the work which they undertake. During the week of the inspection, inspectors were invited to attend an event held as part of black history month, during which two foster carers received awards for their service. This event celebrated cultural diversity and provided insights into the cultural needs of young people.

The fostering team is diverse in terms of ethnic background and staff confirmed that information and expertise is exchanged between members of the team. Although the service has some carers from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the manager and team have identified the need for further recruitment of Black and Asian carers to provide greater choice and diversity. When children have been placed with carers who were from a different culture, efforts had been made to meet the children's needs. Foster carers confirmed that this is the case. One wrote, 'I received lots of help and advice when I had placements of a different religion and culture to myself'. Another informed the inspectors, 'The issues of equality and diversity are addressed really well especially through training'. There have been initiatives to help foster carers from all backgrounds to develop skills in preparing food from a variety of cultures, such as the Caribbean cookery demonstration held as part of the support group sessions.

Visits to foster carers and conversations with children revealed examples of children being given encouragement to pursue talents, interests and hobbies. The department holds award ceremonies to celebrate and recognise the achievement of children in care in a wide range of fields. These are valued by the children and the carers, who spoke with enthusiasm about these events. The service places a very high priority on meeting the educational needs of children who are looked after. The carers' handbook, the policies and procedures and the Joint Education policy identify the role of carers in this area and support, guidance and information is available to encourage their role. The education support team drives this process. The manager of this team also participates in the fostering panel. The team is planning to make visits to all newly appointed carers shortly after approval. They are also involved in carer induction training. Young people have Personal Education Plans. Records of achievement and exclusion are maintained. The position of children without school placements is reviewed monthly at joint education and social services meetings. A range of resources such as worksheets and books is made available by the educational support team. Young people indicated that they valued the support in this respect; one wrote of his foster carers, 'My foster carers have been into school to see how I am doing and if I am successful and if I am not they help me to do better'. Another wrote, 'They make sure I do my homework.' Others mentioned foster carers providing computers to help with coursework.

Foster carers demonstrated a high level of commitment to enabling children in their care to achieve but reported varying levels of cooperation from schools and social workers in this respect.

The services of an independent agency are used to provide short breaks.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10,11

The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person.

The service promotes consultation.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

EVIDENCE:

The foster carers' handbook specifies the need to promote contact between children and families and to encourage carers to enable this contact within their own homes where appropriate. The Policies and Procedures manual details support and guidance in relation to this issue. The LAC procedures ensure that contact is addressed at each stage of the planning process. Foster carers provided examples of work which had been undertaken to ensure that children were enabled to maintain the agreed level of contact with significant people in their lives and they also demonstrated awareness of the need to provide additional support to the child prior to and after contact. They recognised the emotional effect on the child and, in some cases, described significant changes in behaviour. Carers demonstrated an impressive degree of sensitivity to the issues involved. Young people confirmed that they are consulted about access issues. One told the inspector, 'I say what days I can go on contact and where I won't go'.

The foster carers' handbook identifies the need for foster carers to listen to children. It provides information on advocacy, complaints and children's rights. The fostering service manager is a member of the Quality Improvement Group which contributed to the production of the Participation Improvement Plan. The children's advocacy service, run by the National Youth Advocacy Service, is now providing representation and opportunities for young people to express their views. Some young people attend a 'just say it' group where they are encouraged to share their views on being in care. Use is made of 'Viewpoint', the computer programme which aims to enable young people to contribute more effectively to their review process. Young people provided examples of times when their opinions have been sought and these included activities, meals, clothing, contact visits and at the time of review. The views of the children of foster carers are also sought in relation to placements and other issues. These young people also have the opportunity to attend the 'Children Who Foster' Support group. Young people confirmed that carers listen to their views. One wrote, 'They always listen and they help us. When we have problems they listen to us.'

There are many avenues for young people to use to make a complaint, including texting. Young people confirmed that they would know how to complain. Records of complaints made show that appropriate action has been taken and the inspectors were impressed with the quality of the responses which had been sent to the young people from the complaints service staff. The Children's Guide to the service provides space to record the telephone numbers of the relevant fostering worker and area social worker. Inspectors were concerned to learn that some young people continue to receive infrequent or very short visits and that many do not have an opportunity to see their social worker outside the foster home. One young person wrote, 'She's one of those social workers who's never around' and another wrote, 'He does not listen to me'. It is acknowledged that area teams are not under the management of the fostering manager and that workers are under great pressure. However, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, the responsibilities of the area workers should be recorded in the foster placement agreement. It is important that young people have access to a social worker in addition to the fostering worker. These issues were raised in previous reports.

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)

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

14,29

The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.
The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

EVIDENCE:

The foster carer handbook contains a section explaining the role of the 16+ team. Foster carers are provided with detailed information in relation to preparation for adulthood. It is clear from conversations with carers and young people that carers do enable young people to develop daily living skills within the family. Pathway plans were also made available to demonstrate that there is planning in this respect. All young people of a suitable age are referred to the 16+ team and are allocated a worker. They provide a link with resources for young people to move to further independence and their involvement is valued by carers with young people in this age group. Young people provided examples of carers who had enabled them to plan for the future. One wrote, 'They talk to me about what I will have to do to get the job I want and the things I will have to do'.

In 2004, Dudley introduced a more efficient and effective system for paying carers. This resulted in more timely payments and fewer under and over payments. However, carers have raised issues relating to the need for parity between the payments made by the service and other local authorities and independent agencies. The carers highlighted the increasingly professional and full time nature of their task. Managers of the service are aware of the concerns of carers in this respect and these issues are being considered, in the light of budgetary constraints. Carers reported improvements in the arrangements for and the speed of specific payments.

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, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

1,2,5,17,20,21,22,24,26,32

There is a clear Statement of Purpose for the service, including aims and objectives which the service works towards meeting.
The service is managed by people with appropriate skills and experience and is run in an efficient and effective manner.

The fostering service has an adequate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff, but they are clearly working under pressure and the service is recommended to review its staffing complement to enable all the functions to be undertaken within the service.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

Foster carers and workers are provided with a good level of supervision and support, but all placements should be subject to foster care agreements.

There are case records for children and systems are in place for these to be appropriately maintained and stored.

The service recognises the contribution made by family and friends carers.

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

EVIDENCE:

The Statement of Purpose for the service reflects the conditions and the aims and objectives towards which the staff work.

The Service Manager and Head of Service are qualified social workers with management qualifications. The managers have clear job descriptions and the levels of responsibility and lines of accountability are clearly defined within the service. Staff receive supervision from their managers. The manager has an 'open door' policy and is available for unplanned supervision of staff at all times. Staff reported a very good level of support. One reported, 'absolutely brilliant – the best manager I've ever had'. There are clear arrangements to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.

The fostering team consists of a service manager, an assistant service manager, a senior practitioner, 10 social workers, (five of whom work part-time), 1 support worker and 7 administrative staff, (three of whom work part-time). All staff have qualifications which are appropriate to their role.. The team includes a social worker with responsibility for caring relatives and friends and two with responsibilities for permanent fostering. The workers appear to be under pressure and the inspector recommends that the service reviews its staffing complement. The service has systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads and to assign tasks to appropriate members of staff. All workers have job descriptions and access to relevant policies and procedures. There are systems to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively, with some use being made of independent workers. Staff and carers undertake ongoing training and skills development. There is an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support and procedures for dealing with enquiries from prospective carers. The service has access to its own advisors in relation to childcare, medical and educational matters. Fostering social workers displayed a good understanding of their role.

The service has a well-organised, annual programme of recruitment of carers in addition to periodic enquiries. This includes a fostering 'fun day'.

Carers reported a good level of support, even though they were aware that the team is sometimes under pressure and most felt that the service would benefit from additional staff. The foster carers' handbook and the Statement of Purpose detail the processes and avenues of support available for foster carers. The role of the carer and that of the supervising social worker are clearly defined in the literature and this is understood. The manager oversees this process and issues which cannot be resolved through this process are raised at panel. Annual review reports are prepared and made available to the panel. Fostering staff attend meetings with carers in order to discuss issues and provide support. Carers report that they feel well supported by the managers and staff and that out of hours support is good. The arrangements for making contact with the service out of hours have been improved and carers can now page a fostering social worker directly. One carer informed the inspectors, 'I know there is someone at the end of the phone who will help me and advise me. If that person can't, they will find me someone who can'. Another wrote, 'I feel very lucky. I have an excellent link worker whose support is superb' and another wrote, 'We have very good support from our link worker who is there for us anytime we need support'. Dudley has opened a foster carer centre, which is financed by the service and run by Dudley Foster care Association for the benefit of all carers. There is also a monthly news letter which provides details of support meetings, social and fund raising events and general advice.

Carers felt well prepared for the task of fostering. One wrote, 'They are open with you and don't make you feel that it's a walk in the park. They tell you about the ups and downs of it, the good and the bad. They tell you the truth and then it's up to you if you want to carry on'.

The policies and procedures and the foster carer handbook detail the information which should be held on each child by the service. LAC forms should be completed appropriately, by placing social workers, and foster carers should be provided with sufficient information to be able to provide an appropriate service to each child. Improvement in this respect was noted since the last inspection, but there were still some shortfalls. Carers were found to maintain more detailed information once the child is in placement. There should be a foster placement agreement in respect of each child placed. This was discussed with the manager who informed the inspectors that a new form for this is still being developed and the agreements will be implemented in the near future. Carers again raised issues in relation to consent for school trips, holidays and medical treatment. Although these issues have been raised in newsletters and at reviews, there are still some examples of young people missing experiences because the consent could not be obtained. In the cases discussed this was due to delays and confusion on the part of the young people's social workers. However, the agreements should contain specific details about whose responsibility it is to provide consent and whether or not this is delegated to the carer. This should improve the situation for carers.

The Flipside project currently operates from the fostering office and offers specialist placements with a specific, structured approach to the behaviour of the young people. During the year, there has been increased cooperation between the traditional fostering service and this project and, despite the impending move of premises for the Flipside project, there are plans for closer cooperation in the future as bids for funding are being prepared.

Since the last inspection, the manager has sought further advice regarding the information which is maintained in respect of children placed by the service, with respect to Data Protection and access. The service is in the process of setting up separate files for each child and a cabinet has been obtained for secure storage of these.

There is now a worker who is dedicated to providing support, training, undertaking reviews and sharing information for family and friends carers. There is a newsletter in place and further training and support is planned. Efforts are made to ensure that these carers have access to support and that they are invited to events. Considerable progress has been made towards ensuring that reviews of all family and friends carers have been undertaken. The assessment of these carers is still undertaken within the area teams and additional staff would be required in order for the fostering team to take on this work.

Alternative premises are now being used by the service. Whilst these are an improvement on the previous premises, they are not ideal. Large, open plan spaces provide little privacy when making and receiving calls. Some areas have been partitioned. However, these areas are not sound-proofed and the inspectors could hear almost every word of meetings taking place in the adjoining rooms. The heating system is not designed to accommodate partitioning and these small areas are either very hot or very cold. The inspector recommends that the service explores solutions to these difficulties.

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 | 4 |

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

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

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

| ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| 14 | 4 |
| 29 | 3 |

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

yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

| No. | Standard | Regulation | Requirement | Timescale for action |
|-----|----------|------------|--|----------------------|
| 1. | FS17 | 19 | The manager must review the staffing levels in the light of the need to bring all fostering activity within the service. | 01/04/07 |
| 2. | FS22 | 34 | The manager must ensure that all placements are subject to a placement agreement, based on suitably completed LAC paperwork and that these contain details of <ul style="list-style-type: none">• details of the arrangements for visits by the placing social worker• specific details in relation to medical consent and consent for school trips and holidays. | 01/04/07 |
| 3. | FS24 | 22 | The manager must complete the process of setting up individual files for children. | 01/01/07 |

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. | FS26 | It is recommended that the manager explores solutions with regard to sound-proofing, privacy and heating in the offices. |
| 2. | FS9 | It is recommended that the manager issues more clear guidance to carers in relation to the use of monitors and cameras. |
| 3 | FS30 | It is recommended that more care is taken to ensure that all information presented to panel is thoroughly completed and suitably detailed. |

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