



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service

**Jubilee House
Jubilee Street
Blackburn
BB1 1ET**

Lead Inspector
Mr Graham Robinson

Announced Inspection
11th October 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service
Address	Jubilee House Jubilee Street Blackburn BB1 1ET
Telephone number	
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Blackburn with Darwen Social Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 17th December 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Blackburn with Darwen Fostering Service forms part of the Boroughs services to children and families. A designated team of staff, the Family Placement Team (Fostering), work specifically to provide the service. Social workers from the team act as 'link workers' providing support, advice, direction and supervision to foster carers.

The Head of Service, Family Support & Permanence leads the team with everyday management the responsibility of the Team Manager(s). This post was designated as a job share post and was held by two people. Along with the managers, the team consisted of 1.5 principal social workers, 5 social workers, a foster care support co-ordinator, a foster care support officer and a recruitment officer.

The team were working with 122 foster families who between them were looking after 91 female and 72 male fostered children.

SUMMARY

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

To gather information the inspector sent questionnaires to each foster family and each fostered child. 25 foster carers and 16 young people returned completed questionnaires. 4 foster families were visited in their own homes and 5 foster carers and 8 young people attended separate meetings with the inspector at King Georges Hall, Blackburn. The inspector met and spoke directly with a total of 16 staff involved in some aspect of the fostering service. The inspection was conducted over a two-week period.

The comments received from young people were positive with a high proportion able to recognise what they considered to be the benefits of the placement. For example, one stated they had "*learnt to speak up for myself.*" Another felt they were "*looked after properly,*" and went on to describe how "*I was frightened on the first day, but things I was frightened of did not happen.*" They qualified those comments by saying, "*I thought I might not see my family but I do, so it is ok.*"

Young people were well informed about their rights and were confident that any worries or complaints would be dealt with appropriately. They indicated they had trust and confidence in the adults that were playing a pivotal role in their life. Six young people suggested they did not have copies of the children's guide and this was passed to the Head of Service during feedback.

A number of young people viewed their future positively, which included staying with their foster carers for the foreseeable future. Indeed, three specifically requested in questionnaires that they wished to remain where they were. One of them stated, "*I have asked to live in my foster home for ever and I can. Thank you for my home.*"

Some young people expressed concern about the way this year's Awards Night had been arranged compared to last years. The evening has turned into an annual event that recognises the achievements of 'Looked after Children'. Young people felt the general organisation and the venue used for the evening were not as good as last year. For example, very few social workers attended the event, which finished, in their view, too early (around 7pm as compared to 10.30). They also felt last years venue was better as it was more informal.

These comments were fed back to the Head of Service who was aware of some of the difficulties that affected this year's event. For example, many staff were unaware of the arrangements in place for this year's event. Young peoples comments will be noted and where possible, acted on.

Feedback received from foster carers was generally positive. They recognised some of the areas that had been developed to improve the levels of support and information given to them. For example, the creation of a duty system

adopted by the family placement team, 'out of hour's' support and the opportunities to both receive and assist with the delivery of training.

There general view about the levels of support received from their link worker was also positive. Some did speak about a particular situation where they felt that levels of support had dipped. They acknowledged that the situation had now been resolved.

Some concerns affecting individuals were made to the inspector. They were passed to the Head of Service during the feedback session in a way that was designed to maintain confidentiality. For example, concern regarding getting an appropriate response from a young persons social worker (balanced by positive comment from others), and a feeling that on occasions their views about young people they were caring for were not taken seriously by other professionals.

Feedback from staff associated with fostering was positive. They had moved into new office accommodation and each had access to their own I T equipment. Apart from some concerns around the arrangements for car parking, the move had been well received. They shared frustration with some foster carers about difficulties in accessing mental health (CAMHS) services for young people.

What the service does well:

The service was well managed by a team who demonstrated a clear sense of direction, purpose and a realistic ambition for further development.

Employed a staff team who demonstrated a commitment and general enthusiasm into providing a good service, with recognition of where improvements could be made.

Provided good levels of support and back up services to foster carers.

Evaluates the service it provides on a regular basis. Is creative in the way it consolidates current (good) practice whilst looking to develop its services further to meet demand within recognised budgetary constraints.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The Borough's recruitment of an Educational Psychologist and a Child Psychologist with a remit to support and assist with the service.

The team had moved into new offices and had been provided with their own modern I T equipment. This had been supplemented by the provision of 2.5 posts of dedicated administrative support.

An 'out of (office) hours' telephone helpline, operated jointly on a rota basis by staff from the family placement team and foster carers was operational. The printing and distribution of the A – Z Book containing a range of policies, procedures and guidance had been distributed to foster carers.

What they could do better:

Ensure the steps being considered (as described to the inspector) regarding the proposed membership of the fostering panel are implemented quickly, in an effort to avoid the situation experienced with September's (2005) panel being repeated. Panel non-quorate.

Steps should be taken to ensure that each foster carer has a record of the foster care agreement and annual review held on their file.

The current system in place to record incidents of physical intervention was identified as an area for development. The intended outcome would be to provide greater protection to all parties involved with more comprehensive records.

Develop a way of checking on a regular basis that young people have their own copy of the children's guide and associated information.

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 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The service was promoting the general health needs and development of fostered children in a pro-active and positive manner.

EVIDENCE:

Neither foster carers or young people reported any problems regarding issues around health or accessing medical services within the Borough. For example, a protocol had been agreed with the Primary Care Trust, which ensured access to dental services. The 'Looked after Nurse' continued to play a pivotal and supportive role in navigating foster carers through procedures and protocols that provide medical services for young people.

Some staff and foster carers reported difficulties in accessing mental health services (CAMHS) for young people. There appeared to be genuine confusion around the type of referral the service was prepared to receive. The recent recruitment of a Child Psychologist who will be able to offer advice and support was viewed as a positive move.

Foster carers confirmed they had received medical information and plans for the young people they were caring for. A review of files and other documentation had evidence of visits to doctors, dentists, opticians and other health professionals.

Some elements of the training programme in place for foster carers covered a variety of medical issues. For example, first aid, healthy living and sexual health.

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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Suitable systems were in place designed to offer protection to young people with a view to keeping them safe.

EVIDENCE:

The feedback received from young people about their current placement was, without exception, positive. Those spoken with directly stated they felt safe in their placement. Many wished to remain where they were and saw their immediate future as continuing to live there. They provided positive feedback about their current foster carers.

Recruitment was looked at in some detail at the previous inspection. This produced a recommendation about minor issues linked into evidencing recruitment practices. Written confirmation that the recommendation had been implemented was provided shortly after that inspection. Because of this recruitment was not re-visited in any detail.

All foster carers spoken with demonstrated practical knowledge of safety issues, which included child protection. They confirmed that child protection training was part of the core-training programme and courses were being provided and promoted by the Borough.

Each one had policies, procedures and guidance. This was contained in the 'A – Z of Fostering' that had been printed and distributed to foster carers since the previous inspection.

A number of foster carers had received recent training in physical intervention. They confirmed the view of the Head of Service that the training was necessary because some young people could be challenging and aggressive to both themselves and others. The training has been specifically designed for this service and avoidance techniques were heavily promoted. Foster carers were generally supportive of the training.

No young people reported that they felt worried or threatened. For example, six young people said they had experienced some form of physical intervention. All confirmed they had not been hurt. It was not an issue of concern to any young person the inspector had contact with.

The service was deemed to have met the standard around this issue. However, the inspector would like to suggest that a system of risk assessment for young people is introduced along with a more comprehensive and accountable system for recording all incidents of physical intervention. This should provide greater protection to all parties involved.

Observation of the Fostering Panel had taken place at previous inspections, the last being in December 2004. Observation of Octobers (2005) panel did not take place. The minutes of the last four panel meetings were supplied and issues about the panel were discussed with the Head of Service and Chair of the Panel. The inspector was made aware of a problem with Septembers (2005) panel where the panel was deemed non-quate. The arrangements taken with a few to avoiding further problems were described to the inspector.

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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The service was promoting education, general achievement and diversity in a positive manner.

EVIDENCE:

Valuing diversity was an area being promoted positively. It was underpinned by policies, procedures and guidance. Examples were available in the Fostering Procedures and A – Z of Fostering. The service recruits from the ethnic minority community and had developed good links with the Muslim Welfare Institute.

The Equal Chances Team promoted and supported education to foster carers and young people. Both parties viewed the team positively and examples of support they had received were described. Young people described their own arrangements they had to attend school and confirmed they received support from their foster carers. The (recent) recruitment of an Educational Psychologist was widely supported, particularly by agency staff and foster carers.

Other supports in place included 'the right to read scheme', the Drama Group that met at Blackburn Library and the annual Awards Night that celebrates young people's achievements. This was popular with young people, although some dissatisfaction with this years' ceremony was shared with the inspector.

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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Promoting and maintaining contact arrangements and the consultation processes in place to seek the views of young people, were viewed as good.

EVIDENCE:

Young people provided numerous examples of how they were encouraged to maintain appropriate contact with family and friends. Neither them or their foster carers raised any concerns. Evidence was viewed on the files of foster carers and young people that described the contact arrangements that were in place. Written policies, procedures and guidance on this subject were made available to the inspector.

Young people felt they were adequate opportunities for them to contribute towards planning their own lifestyle. They were satisfied with the levels of consultation that were taking place. Many demonstrated confidence in their foster carers along with other forums such as the In Care Group and the independent advocacy agency used by the Borough.

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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Young people were provided with appropriate support and guidance regarding their preparation into adulthood.

EVIDENCE:

Young people felt that foster carers, supported by their social workers from the Leaving Care Team were helping them to prepare for the time they would become independent. Two young people spoke about this forthcoming transition and were happy with the way it was being handled. They did not feel under any pressure or had any particular deadline looming in front of them.

None of the foster carers had any issues of concern regarding them receiving their agreed allowances and expenses. Problems were reported as being quickly rectified. They were confident that should an emergency arise they could purchase any appropriate article for a young person and be quickly reimbursed.

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 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The management of the service was good.

EVIDENCE:

The management team was the same as it was at the previous inspection with the addition of a new (permanent) Assistant Director who ratified all decisions regarding the operation of the agency. The management remained focussed

and committed to consolidating and moving the service forward. It provided consistency, a sense of purpose and direction.

Staff felt well supported and evidence was viewed to show that staff training, support, supervision and appraisal were taking place regularly.

Foster carers spoke well of management, recognising the progress made in recent years.

Only two areas of concern were identified. The first was with a foster carer file that had no record of the carers Foster Care Agreement or Annual Review.

The second was that six young people stated they did not have a copy of the Children's Guide.

These matters were passed to the Head of Service during the feedback.

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	2

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	3

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

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

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
1	FS1	It would be advisable to set up a system to check regularly that all fostered children have their own copy of the Children's Guide to the service.
2	FS16	It is recommended that steps are taken to ensure that each foster carer has a Foster Care Agreement and evidence of their Annual Review available on their file.
3	FS30	Practical steps should be taken to avoid the Foster Panel being put into the position of being non-quorate.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

East Lancashire Area Office

1st Floor, Unit 4

Petre Road

Clayton Business Park

Accrington

BB5 5JB

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI