

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Foster Care Associates - East Midlands**

**160 Upper New Walk  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
LE1 7QA**

*Lead Inspector*  
Trisha  
Gibbs

*Announced*  
Week of Monday, 11 April 2005

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	<a href="http://www.csci.org.uk">www.csci.org.uk</a>

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

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

<b>Name of service</b>	Foster Care Associates - East Midlands
<b>Address</b>	160 Upper New Walk Leicester Leicestershire LE1 7QA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2854833
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2854834
<b>Email address</b>	Steve.Blackbwood@thefca.co.uk
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Foster Care Associates Ltd
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Steven Blackwood
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agency
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	Not applicable

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

NONE

**Date of last inspection** 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Foster Care Associates is a nationwide fostering agency. Foster Care Associates East Midlands consists of a regional office in Leicester and two other offices in Peterborough and Nottingham. Within each of the three offices there is a Team Manager, plus a team of social workers, resource workers and administrative staff. The Director/Manager of the service is based at the head office in Leicester. The Agency is currently looking for accommodation in the Derby locality, for the staff team working with carers in this area.

Foster Care East Midlands offers a range of family placements including emergency, short term, assessment, long term and parent and child. At the time of the Inspection the Agency was supporting 78 carers.

The Agency provides recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers and all related training and support. Supervising social workers and resource workers support placements, and work closely with both foster children and carers own children. Referrals are coordinated at the Leicester office. The East Midlands staff team also includes an Educational Liaison Officer and dedicated Therapists.

# SUMMARY

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

Trisha Gibbs and Sharon Treadwell undertook this Announced Inspection taking 72 hours in total.

For the purpose of this Inspection four foster carers, and the children placed with them were systematically tracked through the inspection of case files, home visits, and discussions with relevant staff, including Managers.

This methodology subsequently informed the Inspection evidence for each Standard. Policies and Procedures, the Carers Handbook, and other documents have been fully inspected over the last two Inspections and were consulted only for clarification purposes on this occasion.

In addition to the above, Inspectors attended a carers' support meeting and the Leicester Fostering Panel.

Questionnaires were sent out to all carers, children and placing social workers.

Letters for comment were sent to the Directors of the three local Social Services Departments and local Area Child Protection Committees. No observations have been received about this Agency.

## What the service does well:

- ❑ Foster Care Associates East Midlands provides a child centred service, and prioritises consultation and communication with children. The agency promotes an inclusive team approach when working with children, carers and staff. Newsletters and information materials are age appropriate and colourful and children contribute to these. Activities and events are made available throughout the year and especially through holiday periods, for the whole family.
- ❑ Foster Care Associates East Midlands provides an excellent level of supervision and support to carers and to staff, in addition to regular professional training opportunities for everyone.
- ❑ Foster Care Associates East Midlands has in place very good, comprehensive systems and processes to promote consistent and effective practices, and to monitor and control the work of the Agency. Foster Care Associates documentation is regularly reviewed, revised and

updated by the Agency's Quality Assurance section and directly references the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations.

- ❑ Foster Care Associates East Midlands is proactive in ensuring that all children placed receive education, through the intensive work of the Education Liaison Officer.

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

Foster Care Associates East Midlands provides a very good fostering service for Looked After Children. The last Inspection report identified only one recommendation, which has now been implemented.

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

No requirements have been identified within this report. The Agency should now continue the work already commenced in ensuring consistency across the three offices, following the boundary changes.

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**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Standards

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection



# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12

The Health and development of children and young people is positively promoted and given very good attention by the Agency and carers.

## EVIDENCE:

- ❑ The Agency has provided for each child placed, the new Health Passport booklet that carers are expected to maintain and that will be transferred with the children when they move. Guidance notes were provided with the Passports at time of issue. Inspectors saw use of the Passports during carer visits, but noted that some carers were more confident than others about completion, and will need ongoing encouragement with this. The Health Passports move with children when they are provided with respite care by the Agency, and are included in the newly introduced Respite Folder. This is commendable.
- ❑ Health and Medical matters are summarised under a special heading within monthly progress reports for each child placed, for the attention of placing social workers. Inspectors saw these.
- ❑ A comprehensive Child and Young Person Profile is completed for each child at time of placement. This details as far as possible their entire medical and health needs.
- ❑ Within two of the placements tracked and visited, the children had special health and education needs. The carers' recording of medication given and consultation with health professionals was excellent.
- ❑ Carers facilitate statutory Looked After Children medical appointments but do not receive copies of the outcomes of these from placing social workers. The Agency has been recommended to formally request these as standard procedure.

- ❑ Carers are provided with full information in the Carer's Handbook about their responsibility to actively promote the good health care of children placed with them. Nearly all children in their questionnaires talked about carers giving them 'good and healthy food' One said their carer 'watches what I eat and makes me eat lots of fruit' another said 'I drink lots of water'
- ❑ A Therapy Service Manager and part time Therapist provide individual support to some children placed, in addition to training and group work for carers. Carers commented on the value of this input.

# Staying Safe

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

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

The Agency provides very good support, training, and guidance to carers, to assist them to provide children with safe placements, and work is being undertaken to ensure consistency in carer practice across all East Midlands offices. A range of excellent formats, guidelines, checklists are in place to assist supervising social workers to assess risk and protect children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- ❑ A new Team Manager has been appointed for the Nottingham office and Agency personnel files for both her and for other newly recruited staff were exemplary in evidencing comprehensive and vigilant recruitment checks.
- ❑ All carers visited had Safe Care policies in place, however some were not up to date and did not relate to the particular child currently in placement. Others contained full details specific to the children and young people in placement. The Agency has been recommended to ensure that Safe Care policies are reviewed signed and dated at the time of each new placement.
- ❑ All carer homes visited provided a pleasant, safe environment and carers were aware of safe care principles.

- ❑ The Agency's Placement Agreements are comprehensive and include a robust risk assessment format to cover all potential areas of risk that might be presented during placement. The Agency is commended for ensuring these Agreements are also utilised for internal respite provision.
- ❑ The Inspectors saw the recently launched risk assessment format, designed for use on the rare occasion of children (siblings) sharing bedrooms. Managers were reminded to now ensure the completion of this in respect of a placement tracked.
- ❑ A format, with guidelines, has been designed for use on the occasion of unannounced visits.
- ❑ All carers visited confirmed recent training in Child Protection and Safe Care. They noted the expectation of attendance on these courses (including refresher training) by the Agency.
- ❑ In all placements visited there was evidence of very good 'matching'. Children had been appropriately placed taking into account their racial cultural and emotional needs. Inspectors have tracked one stable placement of a sibling group over three years and recognise this as testimony to good initial matching processes. The Agency is now launching a Parent and Child initiative and looking to develop a pool of appropriately skilled and trained carers for parent and child placements.
- ❑ On one child's file (placed 10 months ago) there was a lack of any essential Looked After Children paperwork including records of reviews. These have been pursued by the Agency. The Looked After Children forms arrived just in time for the Inspection.
- ❑ The Agency has created a new post of Recruitment and Panel Manager who oversees and advises all Panel processes across the three offices for the two Fostering Panels, held in Leicester and Peterborough, from point of initial enquiry to approval. Inspectors interviewed this Manager who confirmed the agency's commitment to vigorous Form F Assessment quality checks, pre approval training and rigorous Panel systems.
- ❑ The Inspector observed the Agency's Fostering Panel. The Panel members, facilitated by a suitably experienced and qualified Panel Chair, processed a large number of carer reviews. Panel members will now attend for Panel training and information days at least twice a year, and are routinely provided with updates about the performance of the Agency at Panel meetings.
- ❑ A new illustrated 'Guide to Maintaining a Safe Environment' booklet has been produced by the Agency for carers to use as an aid memoir, to assist them in ensuring they are providing a safe and healthy environment for children.

# Enjoying and Achieving

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

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 7, 13,**

The Agency provides an excellent level of support and delegated resources to promote the educational achievement of children and young people. Young people in questionnaires and during visits said they were proud of their achievements.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- ❑ All placements tracked evidenced consideration of consideration of children's individual needs within the matching process. In two of the four placements, children and young people were positively matched with carers to reflect their ethnic and cultural needs and to promote their black identity. Work was being undertaken by carers, and the Agency to support these placements.
- ❑ A number of groups are organised and supported by the Agency at a local level, to enhance children's feelings of confidence and self worth. Sometimes these feed into national groups. They include a Black Children's Forum and separate groups for Girls and Boys. Some of the children and young people tracked attended these.
- ❑ Children in questionnaires confirmed that they are supported to pursue a variety of leisure and sporting activities. These included drama, singing, horse riding, violin, Brownies and football. One young person visited is supported to play basketball for a local County Team. There is a commendable level of commitment from her carer.

- The Agency's Education Liaison Officer continues to provide intensive support to children and young people in Education. (Approximately 80 children since the last Inspection) Inspectors saw the Foster Care Associates East Midlands's 2004/2005 Development Plan for Education. This included ten clear targets, one being to achieve 95% of placed children attending an appropriate educational provision.
- An individual comprehensive Education file is maintained for all children and was seen for each child in placements tracked for Inspection purposes. Carers receive training, and recently a special detailed Education Handbook, to assist them to carry out their responsibilities. Inspectors were impressed with the personal and educational achievements of all children placed with carers who were visited. All of the eight children attended school. Two carers tracked had supported children to integrate into mainstream school from Learning Support Units. Most children in questionnaires said that their carers encouraged and helped them with homework 'I get lots of help with my homework, but they don't tell me the answer.'

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 10, 11**

Young people and children positively benefit from the Agency being proactive and working creatively with them to ensure that they are consistently consulted in a meaningful manner, and to ensure that their views and wishes are listened to and acted upon.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- ❑ Contact, where appropriate, can be facilitated by the Agency. Agency supervision of contact is available through arrangements with placing social worker, and if utilised a record of the contact retained. Agency files of some children and young people tracked contained minimal information about contact, and the Agency has been recommended to include a Contact Detail sheet in each child's file to clarify basic contact arrangements, and if a carer is involved, a risk assessment.
- ❑ The Agency consistently communicates and consults with children and young people, through activities, groups and clubs, using colourful written material and also involving carers and an experienced staff team while doing this. There is a special Silent Voices Group that meets four times a year where children over nine can talk about what it is like being fostered. Younger children are written to and offered alternative ways of expressing their views. There was again consistent evidence from a variety of sources that children are individually consulted about their placements, their interests, and their views. The Agency is highly commended on their very evident commitment to consult with all children and young people, and for initiatives and mechanisms implemented for doing this.

- ❑ Children in questionnaires said that, among other things, carers consulted with them about hobbies, pocket money, school, careers, clothes, food, holidays and clothes.
- ❑ The Agency promotes an inclusive approach towards all children within the family, actively communicating and consulting with carer's own birth children, and providing a dedicated Sons and Daughters group.
- ❑ Managers confirmed that the Agency had recently appointed a person nationally to oversee Children's Rights.



# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

**The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 29

Carers are aware of their financial obligations to children and young people in placement, and are given good information about meeting their material and developmental needs. Children's responses in questionnaires confirmed that they enjoy a good standard of care.

## EVIDENCE:

- ❑ Carers receive a weekly basic allowance to cover the full daily living costs of caring for a child, such as food, clothing, pocket money, travel and some household bills. Enhanced payments are made in some circumstances and Managers confirmed that additional expenses could be claimed for e.g. travel and additional activities. The Carer's Handbook gives details about what is included in the foster carer allowances and what is not included.
- ❑ One carer visited was concerned that a young person placed with them might not be able to attend a major event for a sporting activity in which they excelled. It was their understanding that the Agency would not fund this. Managers spoken to however confirmed that they were fully aware of this situation and were in discussion with the young person's Local Authority about this.
- ❑ Young people and children placed were seen to enjoy a good standard of care in well-maintained homes. They participated in activities and were offered opportunities to attend outings and holidays.
- ❑ Young people and children receive pocket money and they referred to this in their questionnaires.

- ❑ Although Standard 14 was not inspected on this occasion, Inspectors noted the excellent work undertaken by one carer visited in his preparation of a young person for Independent living. The young person continues to visit the carer regularly.
- ❑ Each carer has an entitlement to two weeks respite per year.

# Management

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

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster cares are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 17, 21,.24**

The fostering service provided by Foster Care Associates East Midlands is efficiently and professionally managed. The current Manager is committed to ensuring consistency across the three offices and leads a competent and suitably qualified staff team.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- ❑ Some issues were identified at the Nottingham office around recording, (carer and staff), file organisation, and carer expectation and support, however there was good evidence throughout the Inspection that the Managers were aware of the shortfalls and were actively addressing these. There has been a complete change of the staff team at this office following boundary changes and Managers confirmed that the new team is now systematically working to ensure consistency of practice across all three offices. All staff interviewed spoke positively about Foster Care Associates as an employer.
- ❑ Inspectors confirmed robust carer support systems in place, and firm and consistent management of carers. All carers have a written Individual Support Plan and this is commended.
- ❑ Some variation in content was noted in children's files inspected. Although information about children was provided within Agency documents, there were some omissions in relation to Looked After Children paperwork. It was evident that the new Team Manager is pursuing this and a recommendation has been made that the Agency more proactively pursues the Local Authority for essential paperwork. Files were very well organised and information easily accessed.
- ❑ Some staff expressed concerns about the availability of computers inadequacy of the I.T. system, however the Manager confirmed that the Agency is about to provide additional and replacement computers, fitted with new systems.
- ❑ The Fostering Agency is staffed with a suitably qualified and experienced staff team. Foster Care Associates East Midland was recently successful in achieving Investors In People status, and Inspectors read the assessment report for this, which included very positive comments throughout, about the quality of training and support offered to the whole staff team.

# 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>	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	4
<b>6</b>	4
<b>8</b>	4
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	4
<b>30</b>	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	4
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	N/A

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	N/A
<b>2</b>	N/A
<b>4</b>	N/A
<b>5</b>	N/A
<b>16</b>	N/A
<b>17</b>	4
<b>18</b>	N/A
<b>19</b>	N/A
<b>20</b>	N/A
<b>21</b>	4
<b>22</b>	N/A
<b>23</b>	N/A
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	N/A
<b>26</b>	3
<b>27</b>	N/A
<b>28</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
1.			NONE	

## 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.	12	The Agency is recommended to formally request from Local Authorities, the outcomes of Statutory Medical and Health checks.
2.	9	Supervising social workers are recommended to ensure that all Safe Caring policies be reviewed, signed and dated at the time of each new placement.
3.	10	The Agency is recommended to include in children's files, a contact sheet that provides details of family contact arrangements and where carers are involved, include risk assessment.
4.		

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

The Pavilions, 5 Smith Way  
Grove Park, Enderby  
Leicester  
LE19 1SX

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

Web: [www.csci.org.uk](http://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