



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Reach-Out Care Ltd

**Innovation House
Wear Valley Business Centre
26 Longfield Road
South Church, Bp Auckland
County Durham
DL14 6XB**

Lead Inspector
Darren Hobson

Announced Inspection
16th November 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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	Reach-Out Care Ltd
Address	Innovation House Wear Valley Business Centre 26 Longfield Road South Church, Bp Auckland County Durham DL14 6XB
Telephone number	01388 770850
Fax number	01388 770851
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Reach-Out Care Ltd
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 27th June 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Reach-Out Care independent fostering agency has been in operation since 1999. It is based in new office accommodation within a trading estate close to the centre of Bishop Auckland. The fostering team comprises a manager, social workers, support workers and administrative staff supporting around 15 carers. The agency has a sister company Inclusion and In School Support (ISIS) which provides support for children's education.

SUMMARY

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

The Inspectors would like to thank the children, carers and staff at Reach-Out Care Independent Fostering Agency for their warm welcome and the important part they played in the inspection.

This was an extra inspection carried out by two inspectors over two separate days in November 2005. Following the last inspection undertaken in June 2005 a number of serious concerns were found and it was decided that an extra inspection was needed to see if Reach-Out Care had improved. Whilst at the agency the inspectors;

- looked at children's and carers records
- looked at the agency's records
- talked with the manager and staff
- talked with foster carers
- talked with a child's placing officer
- talked with the chair of the fostering panel
- looked into two complaints received from ex-foster carers

The inspectors are pleased to report that Reach-Out Care has greatly improved the quality of its services and children placed by the agency with its carers have their welfare safeguarded.

What the service does well:

Reach-Out Care continues to train its foster carers well and we were told by carers to whom we spoke that, "training is very good, there is training all the time" and "we have done child protection training and safe care, it was excellent".

Foster carers support children to keep contact with their family and friends.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Reach-Out Care has improved greatly its service since the last inspection. The manager, staff and foster carers have worked hard to put right many of the concerns we identified at our last inspection in June 2005.

There are good improvements in the agency's management and support to carers that has meant that children's welfare is much better safeguarded. Staff and carers know about child protection procedures and what they must do if they feel a child is at risk of abuse. Comments made by foster carers included' "you can contact them anytime, they are there for you. I have no

complaints about my supervising social worker, she is excellent” and “things are much better, they keep me informed. If I have any concerns you only need to ring them. I now get monthly supervision, they look at your diary and let you know what training is available. I have just today done safe care training”.

The agency has greatly improved the quality and robustness of its foster carer assessments. Reach-Out Care now makes sure it carries out all of the important checks before it approves anyone to become a foster carer and look after children.

All of the information regarding foster carer assessments now goes to the fostering panel who make sure that only the right sort of people who will keep children safe become foster carers.

The agency has reviewed most foster carers Form F assessments to make sure that all foster carers appointed by the agency are safe to continue to look after children.

Foster carers are well supported by the agency’s social workers and staff and they now receive regular supervision.

Children are carefully matched with foster carers. When there is any placement breakdown, the agency looks at why this might of happened.

What they could do better:

Reach-Out Care has improved its complaints procedure, but it must look into the two complaints received by us from two ex-foster carers with the agency.

New foster placement agreements, which meet with the requirements of Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, should be introduced.

Children’s and foster carers files need to be sorted to that information can easily be found.

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

This standard was not inspected on this occasion.

EVIDENCE:

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

The agency robustly assesses prospective foster carers. Children are well matched to foster carer placements and their welfare is safeguarded by the agency.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has made significant improvements in the way it safeguards children's welfare. Since the last inspection most foster carers have undergone a review of their original carer assessment to ensure that they were appropriately and safely appointed through a robust assessment. Where necessary additional work/action has been undertaken to remedy any shortfalls identified.

An examination of training records and discussions with foster carers and staff confirmed that those involved with the agency have a sound understanding of child protection procedures. An example of a typical comment made by carers when asked what they would do if a child disclosed something they thought was a safeguarding issue was, "You listen to what the child is saying and reassure them. You don't ask questions, just record what the child has said. We don't promise to keep secrets either. You must tell the child that you will have to pass the information on".

The agency has introduced a new system for matching children with carers and to monitor placement disruption. All of the carers interviewed said that they considered the children placed with them had been appropriately matched to their placement by the agency.

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

These standards were not inspected on this occasion.

EVIDENCE:

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

The agency actively promotes contact between children and their family and friends.

EVIDENCE:

Contact arrangements for children are recorded within their files, although the agency does not maintain copies of placements plans in respect of all children. It was evidenced, however, that they had written to placing officers requesting this information. Carers during interviews confirmed that they are supported by the agency to promote contact between children and their family and friends.

An element of one of the complaints received alleged that Reach-Out Care had restricted contact for one child. Our investigations found that no restrictions had been put in place by the agency and indeed that the restrictions were due to the placing officer. This element of the complaint was therefore not upheld.

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

These standards were not inspected on this occasion. It was evidenced, however, that the agency is introducing training for carers in respect of preparing young people for adulthood.

EVIDENCE:

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

Management arrangements at Reach-Out Care have significantly improved. Foster carers are supervised and well supported. Training provided to foster carers is of good quality. There are robust procedures for the assessment and reviewing of foster carers. Further improvements to the complaints procedure are needed. Carers and children's files are not well structured.

EVIDENCE:

Management arrangements at Reach-Out Care have significantly improved since the last inspection. Staff said they are well supported by the agency's manager who is held in regard by staff and carers alike. An examination of staff files noted that recruitment procedures are robust and all staff receive regular monthly supervision, which is recorded.

Foster carers spoken to during the inspection said that support and supervision had greatly improved. It was confirmed by foster carers that they now receive monthly supervision with additional visits being made by agency staff. Comments from carers included 'you can contact them anytime, they are there for you. I have no complaints about my supervising social worker, she is excellent' and 'things are much better, they keep me informed. If I have any concerns you only need to ring them. I now get monthly supervision, they look at your diary and let you know what training is available. I have just today done safe care training'. The quality of training was further confirmed during an examination of training records and by talking to carers who said, 'training is very good, there is training all the time' and 'we have done child protection training and safe care, it was excellent'.

An examination of the most recent Form F assessments noted that these had greatly improved in quality and robustness. Full and accurate records of the foster panel meetings are maintained. As previously stated the agency has undertaken a review of all previous Form F assessments and remedied any shortfalls identified.

There has been some improvement in the way the agency manages complaints. A system to monitor complaints is now in place. However, two complaints were received from ex-foster carers of the agency and were looked into by the inspectors. It was found that the agency had not undertaken an investigation in respect of these complaints, therefore these elements of the complaints were upheld.

Information maintained on carers and children's files have improved, however, files are not sufficiently structured and information can be difficult to access due to the lack of a clear filing policy.

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	X

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	X
13	X
31	X

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

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

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

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	FS1	18	Reach Out Care must internally investigate the complaint received from the foster carer in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 18 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	31/12/05
2	FS24	22	The agency must maintain a copy of LAC documentation (Placement Plans Parts 1 & 2 and Essential Information Parts 1 & 2) in respect of all children placed and should ensure that carers have a copy of the aforementioned information And The agency must ensure that each carer is in receipt of a signed and dated Foster Placement Agreement which includes all of the matters listed in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	31/03/05

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	FS25	The agency should restructure carers and children's files to ensure that information is easily accessible.

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