



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Rutland County Council Fostering Service

**Catmose House
Catmose Street
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6HP**

Lead Inspector
Trisha Gibbs

Announced Inspection
14th August 2006 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

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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	Rutland County Council Fostering Service
Address	Catmose House Catmose Street Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP
Telephone number	01572 722577
Fax number	01572 758398
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.rutland.gov.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Rutland County Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Catherine (Katie) Linda Arnold Ms Kate Greaves
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 1st December 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Rutland County Council Fostering Service is based in Oakham.

The Head of Inclusion, Children's Services has overall responsibility for the Fostering Service and is responsible to and supervised by the Director of Children's Services.

Two part-time Senior Supervising Social Workers are responsible for the management and development of the fostering service, and also for the recruitment, training, approval and support of carers. They are responsible to and supported by the Family Support Team Leader.

There is also a full time Social Worker Family Support Services, appointed to develop family support services, working with the private fostering legislation and kinship care. A permanent part time fostering clerk supports the Fostering Team. A sessional social worker provides a quick response service to expressions of interest in fostering and some training and assessment work.

Some functions of the service, including the management of the Fostering Panel are provided by Compass, an independent Children's Service Agency,

At the time of the Inspection, the service supported 14 carers and 9 children in placement. The small group of carers provide a very good range of placements.

SUMMARY

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

This announced Inspection took two Inspectors 30 hours in total and included Inspection of Rutland County Council's Private Fostering arrangements, the outcomes of which are detailed in a separate report.

Since this is the second Inspection of this Fostering Service within eight months, some of the evidence for Key Standards has been drawn from the last Inspection. For the purpose of this Inspection questionnaires were sent out to carers, children and social workers and comments incorporated into the report. Inspectors consulted with no children on this occasion since the small group of fostered children were either too young, or had previously been spoken to, or it was deemed not appropriate. Inspectors were satisfied that children in placement were well consulted by the service. One child and one carer's file were selected for tracking, and key members of staff interviewed from both the Fostering and the Child Care Operations Teams. The Fostering Panel was observed, and a number of key documents and reports on the activity of the service were also consulted.

What the service does well:

Works positively and closely with placing social workers and carers, to provide very good outcomes for children in placement. Shared working accommodation enables an excellent level of communication and prompt responses to children and carer needs.

Gives careful consideration to matching children and young people to placement, and where appropriate and possible involves children in this process.

Gives very good attention to the provision of safe placements and promotes carer awareness and understanding about Child Protection matters.

Works well with placing social workers and carers to promote children's education, and to positively support family contact arrangements. The appointment of the Family Support Social Worker has impacted positively on children's contact with their families.

Provides individualised support and training to a growing group of carers who between them have significant strengths and skills and work well together. Carers have a good awareness of the placement needs of all fostered children and support each other.

Maintains very good carer and children case records.

Provides a strong and experienced Fostering Panel to consider Applications undertake reviews and scrutinise the work of the service.

What has improved since the last inspection?

All carers have been provided with a copy of the Clayton File (Health Passport) and received training with regard to the completion of this.

The Family Support Social Worker has already undertaken significant work in the promotion of family and friends care, and the support of positive contact arrangements.

Fire Plans are now routinely completed in respect of all fostering households.

There is now an integration of Rutland's Children and Young People's Services, and close working relationships are positively promoted and were noted during the Inspection.

What they could do better:

The Fostering Service Managers (senior supervising social workers) have identified a difficulty in providing short break placements for children with disabilities, and continue to endeavour to recruit appropriate carers. However respite care breaks are being creatively managed through joint working with the specialist childminding scheme.

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

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The Health and Development needs of children and young people in placement are given very good attention. Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

All carers have now been provided with a Health Passport (the Clayton File) for each child in placement and have received training at a Foster Carer Support Group Meeting on the use of this from the County Council specialist nurse for Looked After Children and Child Protection. The nurse also talked to carers about the new Health Assessments procedure. This is commendable. Fostering Managers reported that 100% of children and young people placed with the Fostering Service have annual Health Assessments and full routine health checks.

An information pack regarding Health issues is provided to carers, and a range of health related training is routinely made available, some of this joint training with social workers, including First Aid, Mental Health Awareness, Sexual Health, Diet, and Drugs Awareness.

There was an excellent example on file of carers being offered individual consultation sessions with the CAMHS team with regard to the management of a young persons behaviour, and of carers positively using advice given with good outcomes.

Carers indicated in questionnaires and support meetings that they were well supported by the service in the promotion good healthy lifestyles for the children placed with them.

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):

6, 8, 9, 30

The Fostering Service works closely with placing social workers and carers to ensure that children and young people are well matched to safe placements. Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Personnel files were not looked at on this occasion, since no new staff members have been appointed to the Fostering Team since the last Inspection, when Standard 3 and 15 were met. The Fostering Managers, (senior supervising social workers) have now successfully completed the NVQ level 4 Managers Award.

Detailed Risk Assessments and very thorough Safe Care policies were seen on the young person's and the carer's files. Safe Care policies are compiled at time of carer Approval and senior supervising social workers confirmed that these would routinely be reviewed with placing social workers and if appropriate the child, at time of each new placement. There was good evidence of this happening. The child specific placement Risk Assessment goes hand in hand with the Safe Care Policy and the service has been advised to file

these together. Comprehensive Health and Safety checks, annually reviewed, were noted on carer files, and carers have now produced individual Fire Escape Plans.

The Foster Carer Training Programme indicates that very good training opportunities are provided by the service, to raise carer awareness about Safety, Child Protection, and the Impact of abuse. A carer tracked had recently attended a 6-session course on The Impact of Trauma and Abuse on the Developing Child. Other courses include The Impact of Domestic Abuse. A new multi agency protocol for Young People Missing from Care has recently been launched (shared with two neighbouring Local Authorities) and representatives from the Fostering Service, including a carer attended for this. Training is also provided on Managing Difficult Behaviours (concentrating on a 'de escalation' approach) Parenting Assessments and Preventing Accidents in the Home. It was evident from supervision records that supervising social workers and carers used supervision sessions as an opportunity to relate training to the fostering task and to identify future training needs.

Although the Fostering Service does not utilise a Matching pro forma as such, Inspectors were impressed with the very thorough matching processes evidenced on files looked at. With regard to one young person needing a new placement early this year, three potential placements had been identified, including Independent Agency provision. Placing social worker and supervising social workers visited all three placements and following this drew up a list detailing the positive and negative aspects for each placement, including that of educational implications. The young person was fully consulted and their views taken into account, prior to the decision being made about which would most suit their needs. This was an excellent example of collaborative working. In addition, Inspectors noted that key family members were also fully informed and included in the process. This young person had already experienced a number of failed placements over four years of being looked after, however because of the work and approach that has been carefully undertaken by both placing social worker and supervising social worker the young person has taken positive elements from each placement and has since maintained close relationships with previous carers. This is commendable.

The Inspector observed the Fostering Panel undertake two carer reviews and was impressed with the thorough approach given to these. All aspects of carer performance, needs and support were considered, and discussion between Panel members when considering the comprehensive review reports was appropriately searching and critical. Carers attended and fully contributed. Their views on the overall support they received from the Children's and Young People's Services were sought. Individual skills and placement achievements were recognised and training needs identified. Good attention was given to carer competencies, diversity and safe care. Since the last Inspection a young person who has experience of being in foster care has become a Fostering Panel member.

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, 31

Children and young people receive a very good level of support from carers and the Fostering Service to achieve educationally and enjoy leisure activities. Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Although the Fostering Managers have identified a shortfall in respite placements for children who have disabilities good examples were seen of the fostering and childminding service working creatively together to offer a flexible response to address this. Examples included the offer of respite day care, if necessary in the child's own home, or the agreement to occasional planned overnight stays. Recruitment initiatives to attract short stay carers for respite continues.

Although there are no black children currently in fostering placements, senior supervising social workers recognised the need to ensure that carers must still be aware of their responsibility to positively influence the developing attitudes and assumptions of children in placement in an all white rural community. Diversity training is routinely provided to carers and would be implicit in all training offered. Diversity was recorded as being discussed and represented in Form F Applications, carer supervision records and during the Fostering Panel observed during this Inspection. The service recently placed two Asylum

Seeking young people with an Independent Fostering Agency to ensure a more appropriate cultural and religious match.

Children's and young persons leisure activities and interests are well supported financially by the Fostering service. Evidence of this was seen on file, and confirmed by carers at a Support Group Meeting attended by Inspectors at the last Inspection.

With regard to the young person tracked, in addition to the commendable input from placing and supervising social worker, there was very appropriate involvement of external services including the Connexions service. The young person was pursuing athletics and cookery courses at school, receiving home tuition, and was allocated a learning assistant at school. All related paperwork, copies of Statement of Educational Needs, Personal Education Plans, reviews of this etc were on file in addition to evidence that the young person had attended for some meetings. Carers were providing a structured timetable and were clearly committed to encouraging not only the young person's educational achievements, but also their personal achievements.

A questionnaire was received from a local school noting the 'outstanding care' being provided by carers in the placement of another young person, and the very good support offered by supervising social workers. The overall improvements in the young person's education, relationships and general wellbeing were also recognised.

All young people and carers of Looked After Children have access to computers and software.

There is now a plan to introduce an Award Scheme in recognition of Looked After Children's achievements at all levels, and carers will be providing a six monthly report on these, and will include any gaps in the provision that could impact on such achievements. A system to monitor Looked After Children's educational attainment and school attendance is also being developed.

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

Children are very well supported to have contact with their family and friends where appropriate.

The fostering service and carers work very well with children and young people to ensure that they are consulted and to ensure that their views and wishes are taken into account.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

There was excellent evidence within the case looked at for Inspection purposes, of the young person being involved and consulted in respect of all aspects of child care planning, placement and contact arrangements. A very detailed Family Contact plan was in place on carer and child files, including transport responsibility for each contact visit. The plan was regularly reviewed and updated. The Family Support Social Worker had played an active role in gathering family members together for a meeting to discuss the support and care that could be offered to the young person in placement. There was evidence of carers working intensively and sympathetically with family members. This is commendable. There have been very positive outcomes for the young person as a result of the family meetings, including one set of family members being assessed and approved to provide respite care.

All carers have been provided with a very good, colourful booklet called 'My Turn to Talk'. Booklets are available for over and under eleven year olds. These are 'guides to help children in care have a say about how they are

looked after' and include useful contact numbers and websites of organisations that can support and help children in care. With respect to the young person tracked, there was good evidence that the supervising social worker and placing social worker had consulted with them consistently. There were examples on file of child friendly review consultation forms being completed and hand written notes and letters from the young person, expressing views and thoughts, and of these being acted upon. The young person also signed Care Plans.

There was a commendable example where the carers, along with social workers, planned for an important anticipated carer family event. The young person was fully consulted about this and impressive efforts were made to enable the young person to understand the occasion, to feel included and to be prepared, since there was risk that the event could have a detrimental impact on the placement. The careful planning resulted a positive outcome for everyone.

Currently there is a temporary arrangement for Children's Rights service, and both children and carers have received information about this, however the County Council are now recruiting a Participation Officer whose role will include that of providing an independent Children's Rights Service for children and young people who are Looked After by or who have left the care of Rutland Children and Young People's Services.

All Rutland's Looked After Children and young people, receive an annual visit by a Corporate Parent. The identified Corporate Parent also sits on the Fostering Panel, and was observed to provide good feedback to the Panel about a recent visit she had undertaken to a young person in placement. The Inspector acknowledged this as very good practice.

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

Carer allowances are paid promptly, and some additional allowances are made available on occasions. Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

There is one young person in placement currently at the point of leaving care but this person was not tracked during the Inspection. However there was good evidence on file of the young person tracked that they were encouraged to undertake small tasks for both themselves and for the benefit of the family e.g. cooking, caring for family pets and making the bed. There is a Leaving Care Worker who is available to formulate a Pathway Plan prior to a young persons sixteenth birthday. Fostering Managers confirmed that an individual Leaving Care package would be provided to carers in this situation.

Two new levels of foster carer payment, enhanced and contract care, have recently been introduced, and a clear procedure has been drawn up to clarify application and eligibility criteria for this. Carers reported no concerns in questionnaires about payments or allowances.

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, 16, 17, 24, 25, 32

Carers are provided with very good levels of support and training to respond to the needs of children in placement. The care provided to children is very well accounted for in case records, which are maintained to a high standard. Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Service provides a good clear Statement of Purpose and this is updated on a monthly basis. Two age appropriate leaflets are available for children in placement. The new booklets issued to carers, referred to earlier in the report, can now support the leaflets.

The management structure of Rutland County Council Children's Services has been reviewed and all Children's Services incorporated within an Inclusion Section. A Family Support Team Leader now manages the Fostering team and is also responsible for Leaving Care Support, Children's Behaviour Intervention initiative, Childminding and Children's Fund initiatives. The Fostering Team works closely with the Child Care Operations Team on a day-to-day basis and this was seen to have positive outcomes for carers and children.

Three new carers have been recruited in last year, making fourteen fostering households in total. There is now the capacity to provide placements for young people with higher levels of needs, since some carers have gained in experience having been with the service for four years, and some newly recruited carers already have professional experience and knowledge of children and young people. Although there is a shortage of placements for children with disability, the Rutland foster carers as a group work in a creative way to meet the needs of children in placement. Each has a good knowledge of all children being looked after and supports each other to provide respite.

The staff team has been significantly enhanced and boosted by the temporary appointment of the Social Worker Family Support and it is hoped that this post will be confirmed as permanent. This worker is currently providing cover for the senior supervising social worker who returns from maternity leave in November. Inspectors recognise that there will always be a need to review the capacity of the Fostering Team to meet the management and support needs of a potentially expanding service. The positive impact and potential of the integration of children's service however has been noted.

The carer group are very well supported and supervised by the senior supervising social workers. Carers have made extremely positive comments about the workers and their support and training. They routinely attend joint training with social workers. Carers appear to have a uniquely supportive relationship with each other. They meet on a monthly basis in each other's houses, and supervising social workers attend for part of this. One carer is considering being a representative on the local Foster Care Association. Carers have confirmed very good accessibility to the fostering and social work team. 'The supervising social workers are very supportive, I can contact them whenever I like and if I have a problem there is always someone who can help'

'they give moral support' 'they give me full support with my kinship duties and help financially'.

File records were comprehensive, clear, well organised and up to date. LAC paperwork was very well detailed, and appropriately signed. Supervision and contact records reflected that essential issues were being discussed, risks assessed, and children's needs considered. There was evidence that the service is appropriately monitored. The Team Manager (Children and Young People's Services) visits all fostering households to provide a report for annual reviews.

The Fostering Service supports three kinship/family care placements. These have been observed during past Inspections to be consistently supported in line with mainstream placements. It is envisaged that should the Social Worker Family Support post be made permanent, that the post would include responsibility for fully supporting these placements, alongside promoting family group meetings and other family support mechanisms.

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	4
9	4
15	3
30	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	3

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

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

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Leicester Office

The Pavilions, 5 Smith Way

Grove Park

Enderby

Leicester

LE19 1SX

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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