



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

North Yorkshire County Council Fostering Service

**County Hall
Racecourse Lane
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8DD**

Lead Inspector
David Martin

Key Announced Inspection
5th February 2007 09:30 am

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	North Yorkshire County Council Fostering Service
Address	County Hall Racecourse Lane Northallerton North Yorkshire DL7 8DD
Telephone number	01609 780780
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	North Yorkshire County Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs A Shaw
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 13th February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

North Yorkshire County Council provides fostering services through the Children and Families Business Unit of the Social Services Department. There are three teams that are responsible for the recruitment, approval, and support for and monitoring of foster carers. Each team is managed by a Service Manager who in turn is accountable to the Group Manager. The services provided include respite care, permanent foster care, family and friend foster care, specialist foster care and treatment fostering. There are three foster panels for the county that relate to the geographical areas of the three teams covering Scarborough/Ryedale, Hambleton/Richmond/Selby and Harrogate/Craven.

SUMMARY

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

The lead inspector telephoned the manager of the North Yorkshire Fostering Agency to agree the date for inspection. Further contact was made before the inspection to plan times for the inspectors to meet with young people and talk with carers, social workers and other staff. It was decided to look at the service in the Scarborough area rather than the whole of the county.

The inspectors went to the Family Placement Team office in Scarborough on the morning of 5th February 2007 and finished the inspection on the morning of 9th February 2007. During this time the inspectors:

- Met a small number of young people.
- Spoke to the manager of the Family Placement Team and the family placement workers
- Looked at some files and other records.
- Watched how young people and carers got on together.
- Talked to the person in charge of the foster panel and the Agency Decision Maker
- Talked to some carers.

As well as visiting carers' homes and talking to people, the inspectors sent out questionnaires to ask young people, social workers, carers and their views about the service.

The inspector would like to thank everyone who took part in this inspection.

What the service does well:

- North Yorkshire Fostering Service provides good care for children and young people.
- Carers and young people get on very well together.
- The service listens to young people and takes their opinions seriously.
- The carers are good at making sure that young people staying with them are safe.
- The Service makes sure its carers get all the help they need to look after young people well and make sure they are healthy.
- Carers work well with local schools to make sure that young people can continue their education.

What has improved since the last inspection?

North Yorkshire Fostering Service has made many improvements since the last inspection. This has included:

- The introduction of 'Treatment Fostering' for young people who are hard to place.
- The appointment of a children's rights officer.
- The introduction of the MAX card scheme giving free access to museums and other places of interest
- Better working arrangements with the Education of Looked After Children team.
- Appointing a worker to help care leavers find work.
- Created an 'out of hours' telephone contact to give support to carers.

What they could do better:

The Fostering Service is always looking for ways in which it can improve the service. Plans for the next 12 months include:

- Making sure that all young people in foster care have a plan to help them attend school.
- Providing carers with training about healthy lifestyles.
- Increasing the numbers of foster carers who can look after teenagers.
- Reviewing the allowances paid to foster carers.
- Improving the way the service gives and gets information to and from carers.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children's health needs are fully met.

EVIDENCE:

LAC documentation includes information regarding children's basic health needs and children and young people have individual health care plans in place. Health assessments are reviewed every 6 months. There is a designated Looked After Children's doctor who is also the medical advisor to the panel.

Children and young people are registered with a GP and dentist. Foster carers receive training regarding the health needs of looked after children and those interviewed had a good knowledge and understanding of meeting these needs, including drug and alcohol awareness and issues of sexual health. There is evidence on file that appointments are made and kept and that children with specific health needs are able to access appropriate medical treatment.

The service's links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are good. During the inspection CAMHS were guest speakers at the carers' forum.

The Authority has plans for improvement this year which include the publication of a revised smoking policy and the provision of additional training in relation to healthy lifestyles and sexual health

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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children are protected by the agency's safeguarding policies and procedures.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers undergo assessment and approval via the BAAF Form F assessment. All carers are subject to checks via the Criminal Records Bureau and approvals take place via both the fostering panel and the agency decision maker (ADM). Approval is subject to rigorous scrutiny.

The service prioritises the matching of children and foster families as far as this is possible: this was evidenced via both written documentation and team meetings observed during the inspection. The rate of placement breakdown is low.

All carers receive pre and post approval training in safeguarding children and demonstrated an awareness of their roles and responsibilities in child protection. Carers are aware of 'Safe Caring' and are required to draw up a safe-caring policy for their home, which is reviewed as part of the annual review process. The service takes appropriate action in the event of complaints, allegations and safeguarding referrals and maintains accurate and

up to date records including notifications to CSCI. Children and young people have a variety of means via which to express concerns.

All homes have been subject to an initial health and safety check by the fostering service, which is the ongoing responsibility of the carer and is monitored via checks of foster homes.

The 'treatment fostering' project is now well established and provides an excellent service for a small number of children who would be otherwise difficult to place. There are plans to expand the scheme in the coming year.

The panel is properly constituted and is quorate when it sits. Since June 2006 prospective carers attend panel and generally they have found this to be a positive experience. It has improved the quality of information available to panel and enhanced decision making.

In the next 12 months plans for improvement include: exploration of the possibilities of introducing independent chairs for foster carer reviews; establishing treatment fostering for 3-6 year olds; and completing a joint protocol with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to ensure young people receive a consistent response.

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.

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

7, 13 and 31.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The fostering service has a good awareness of children's individual needs and is effective in promoting their educational achievement.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is committed to Looked After Children's educational attainment and children's files examined during the inspection process contained PEPs. However, the Authority is not currently meeting targets in relation to PEPS but has plans to improve this. The ELAC team is working hard to reach children excluded from school and is aware of areas where it is not managing to do this so well. The relationship between the child placement team and the ELAC team continues to be strengthened.

Carers have done some excellent work in helping children and young people to continue with their education, even where this has been challenging. There is evidence of effective liaison between the service, its carers and schools.

Carers also encourage and enable children to take part in a range of enjoyable and rewarding activities and they are able to continue with hobbies and interests while in placement. The MAX card scheme has been introduced in the last 12 months enabling free access to a number of museums and other places of interest.

Carers have a good understanding of diversity and equality issues and children's files contain evidence that gender, religion, culture and disability are taken into account when planning for care.

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.

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

10 and 11.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The fostering service promotes contact arrangements and is effective in consulting with children on a range of issues.

EVIDENCE:

Carers are provided with training regarding the importance of maintaining links with children's and young people's birth family. Carers demonstrated a good understanding of their role in ensuring that positive contact takes place, even where this is difficult.

There are a variety of routes for young people to express their views. A young people's participation group was observed as part of the inspection and was considered to be run effectively.

Children and young people take part in the review process either in person or by submission of a questionnaire. Reviews can take place in children and young people's home environment if they wish and questionnaire feedback reflects that they involved in decisions affecting their future.

There is some evidence to indicate that young people's social workers do not visit at the required frequency. This Authority is aware of this issue and trying to resolve it.

There are plans to recruit local foster carers for teenagers and sibling groups.

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):

29.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

Young people are assisted in preparing for adulthood. The service pays carers an allowance as specified.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service pays allowances as specified in the Foster Carers' Handbook. There are plans to review the fostering allowances in consultation with the local Foster Carer Association

All those foster homes visited during the inspection offered welcoming, clean and comfortable environments for children and young people with adequate space for privacy and personal belongings.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The fostering service is well managed.

EVIDENCE:

There is a Statement of Purpose which is produced and reviewed by the Management team.

The general manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. She is currently off work but the temporary arrangements in place to cover her duties and responsibilities are working well.

Formal supervision of individual staff is carried out at the required intervals and team meetings are held regularly. Carers said that the child placement staff are very open and approachable. They are also suitably qualified and experienced and subject to strict vetting prior to being offered employment.

The manager has clearly been able to identify areas for improving the service and there is a clear commitment to the ongoing training of support of staff and carers. An out of hours service has been in place since April 2006.

The case files for children and young people and carers are well-maintained.

The panel is properly constituted and panel meetings are well-attended and quorate. This was evidenced through inspection of the panel minutes and interview with the panel chair.

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	3

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	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	3
22	X
23	X
24	3
25	3
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	3

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? NO

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

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