



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Kirklees MC Family Placement Services**

**Westfields  
Westfield Road  
Mirfield  
West Yorkshire  
WF14 9PW**

*Lead Inspector*  
Stella Henderson

*Announced Inspection*  
27th February 2006      9.00

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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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](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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Kirklees MC Family Placement Services
<b>Address</b>	Westfields Westfield Road Mirfield West Yorkshire WF14 9PW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 483707
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Kirklees MC Family Placement Services
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      14th February 2005

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

Kirklees Metropolitan Council fostering service provides a full range of fostering services including emergency, short term, long term, respite care, family link, friends and family and remand placements. The fostering service is part of the Family Placement Unit, which also provides the local authority's adoption services.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was carried out over approximately six days. Evidence was obtained from a variety of sources, such as case files, policies, records, and other documentation provided by the manager. Discussions were held with the manager and staff from the family placement team, and visits were made to children in placement. Their views, and those of their foster carers also made an important contribution to this inspection, as did the comments in questionnaires returned from children, foster carers and placing social workers. Information from the Education Support Team (EST) and Children and Adolescent Mental Health team (CAMHS), and the views of Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) also helped to inform this report.

## **What the service does well:**

Children and young people placed in foster care with Kirklees Family Placement service can be confident that they will be looked after by foster carers who will support them with their education, help them to stay healthy and make sure that they are kept safe.

The manager and her team make sure that people who want to become foster carers are properly and thoroughly assessed, and once they are allowed to become foster carers they are given a lot of training and support to help them in this important job.

Everyone who works with, or is connected to the Family Placement Team thinks that education is very important, and children who are fostered receive good support to help them do well at school. Foster carers said that the Education Support Team (EST) team is particularly good at supporting children with education.

The family placement team are all experienced workers, and they are supported in their work by a good management team.

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

All the things that the service should have done since the last inspection have been achieved. Fostering social workers have got better at placing children with the right kind of foster carers for them. More money is being invested in attracting new people to become foster carers. The new fostering manager has made a lot of progress in improving the service since the last inspection, in particular in demonstrating the good work that the foster placement team undertakes.

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

One of the good things about the Family Placement Team is that most of the time they recognise when things could be done better and the manager is always looking at how to improve things so that things will be better for children in foster care. The inspector found that some things could be improved, such as consulting with parents. The inspector is confident, however, that the few areas of improvement that have been highlighted will be quickly addressed and put right.

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 Outcomes

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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

A high priority is given to the health and well-being of children looked after by the fostering service. Foster carers are supported to ensure optimum health outcomes for children in their care.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Children and young people who returned their questionnaires indicated that they are given support and advice regarding healthy food and healthy lifestyles. Some young people noted on their questionnaires that they were encouraged to eat lots of fruit and vegetables, and were given the opportunities to become involved in exercise such as swimming, netball and rugby.

Foster carers who were visited by the inspector had a good understanding of the health needs of those they were caring for, and health assessments are carried out on an annual basis, or whenever deemed necessary. The local authority employs a nurse who has strategic responsibility for the health of looked after children, and two health advisors have been appointed to assist and advise carers and young people on health matters.

The carers' handbook contains comprehensive information about the health needs of children in the care system, and training on general health, first aid and hygiene is a core training requirement for carers. There is also specialist training for carers who may be caring for children with more complex health needs. All children and young people who are looked after by the fostering service are registered with general practitioners, dentists and opticians, and attend these appointments on a regular basis. Where children have had accidents or illnesses, these are recorded both individually and on a central file.

The fostering service has a close working relationship with CAMHS who can provide consultation and support for carers, as well as on-going intervention for young people. A useful leaflet – 'Information for carers attending consultation' has been produced to help carers understand their role where CAMHS intervention is necessary.

# 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):**

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

The safety and well being of children fostered is promoted by robust safeguarding policies and practices. The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide safe, healthy and nurturing environments.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The manager of the service is suitably experienced and qualified, and is supported by two experienced deputy team managers.

The files of prospective carers and previous panel minutes were inspected. The process of rigorous assessment of prospective carers and consideration and analysis of that information by fostering panel demonstrated that only those suitable for fostering are approved. The inspector noted a particularly high standard of recording on one assessment.

It was highlighted at last year's inspection the fostering panel did not always comprise the right amount of people to make decisions, sometimes because of a conflict of interest, or because of the absence of one key member. Panel minutes, and discussion with the manager, show that this has now been addressed and that panel is operating as required.

The fostering service, on the whole, achieves suitable matching, and was able to demonstrate this during inspection. The matching process identifies gaps in carers abilities and identifies additional support where required, and also

demonstrates 'valuing diversity' in other respects, such as raising children's self-esteem. Conversations with foster carers and evidence from questionnaires and files sampled, indicated, in the majority of cases, that children are placed with carers who have the skills and competences to match their assessed needs.

The majority of files have foster placement agreements, safe caring, health and safety inspections and evidence of unannounced visits. Where risk assessments are not taking place, it is advised that the reasons for this are recorded.

On case files inspected, there was evidence that carers were working within their terms of approval, and where necessary, exemptions had been sought and were being closely monitored by the manager. However, the pro-forma that is used for exemptions needs to demonstrate that consultation is taking place with children and their social worker before exemptions are agreed, and that these exemptions are taken to the next available panel, as recommended, rather than waiting for several to accumulate.

Safe caring guidance, and policies on bullying, absconding and behaviour management were seen by the inspector. The fostering service records incidents of bullying, and a record of any child protection inquiry is also kept. During the course of this inspection, policy was in the process of being updated regarding the referral of people to POCA where allegations are upheld.

Personnel records were checked and were found to be compliant against Schedule 1 of these regulations. Foster carers were aware that they might be interviewed as part of the inspection process.

# 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 and 31

The fostering service helps children and young people to develop and achieve, and education is actively promoted. The fostering service values and promotes diversity.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service demonstrates its commitment to valuing diversity at several levels. There is specific training for Asian carers, and cultural awareness events. There is also guidance for the carers of Muslim children, and the service makes additional monies available to meet the costs of particular religious and cultural requirements. There were several examples of foster carers working to enhance the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Education is high on the agenda of both foster carers and the fostering service. Extremely positive comments were received from foster carers about the support provided by the Education of Looked After Children team (EST). It was evident from minutes, statistics and evaluation papers that there is acute focus on the education of children in foster care. Attendance monitoring provides improved information on children fostered both within the service and those who may be placed in independent fostering agencies. The completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and who should have possession of them is still a sticking point, but the EST team is now taking the lead on developing PEPs for all new admissions.

An evaluation of the home tuition project, which provides up to 40 hours tuition for up to 20 young people drawn from years 6, 9, 10 and 11 in key subject areas of English, Maths and Science, was able to demonstrate that outcomes in terms of impact on results was positive and measurable in those cases where students sat tests or examinations. Young people are rewarded for participating in the scheme, with recognition for effort and participation, rather than just results. The data suggest that some students are helped to exceed the schools expectations quite substantially, and that all supported students have made successful transfers to next key stage.

The ELAC team have developed a 'prompt' for reviewing officers to illustrate the key points in a child's educational career. This should ensure that important stages are not overlooked. Carers appreciated the input received from the ELAC team at an individual level and for individual children, and joint training for staff from the service and carers was found to be useful. The service provides computers to help with education for children aged 8 years and above. Those children whose attendance or performance is causing concern are also identified and regularly discussed at meetings with the fostering service, and an attendance monitoring assistant is in post. The service has a system for recording the academic attainments and exclusions of fostered children.

Carers who provide short breaks for children are being integrated into systems in line with recommendations made at last inspection.

## **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 supported to maintain contact with families and friends, where this is assessed to be safe for the child. The fostering service promotes consultation with children and foster carers, but consultation with parents needs to be developed.

### **EVIDENCE:**

One young person, on their questionnaire, asked that 'contact to be made to work better', and some carers noted on their questionnaires and in conversation, that this is an area of their work that can be problematic. A contact officer team has been established to help facilitate contact, and it was clear from case files inspected that carers are given support in dealing with any difficult contact issues that may arise.

The inspector made contact with the Children's Rights Officer (CRO), and with Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN). Children in foster care are visited by the CRO, and foster children contributed to the local authority's 'Children's User Experience Survey' in 2004-05. Whilst this information is useful, the manager of the fostering service has identified other mechanisms (such as statutory reviews) that need to be employed to capture the views of both fostered children and their families, to give more specific and more regular feedback on how the service is operating. The fostering service was able to demonstrate how things have changed as a result of listening to children, both at an individual and corporate level. Children's questionnaires also demonstrated where things had changed as a result of being listened to.

Members representing KFN conveyed to the inspector that their working relationship with the fostering service is good, and that there are regular meetings with management. KFN has made some suggestions for improvements in practice – such as unannounced visits being undertaken by an independent fostering social worker – and this is under consideration by the fostering service.



# 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)

**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 the following standard(s):**

29

Clear information is provided by the fostering service in respect of allowances and expenses.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The transition to a new system of payment for carers, based on the achievement of certain skills and competences, is nearing completion. A letter to foster carers noted on a sample file clearly illustrated the allowances the carer would receive for the child and explained how the carer could qualify for a 'skills uplift' payment.

# 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, and 24 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, 4, 5, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 32

The fostering service is managed efficiently and delivers a good quality of service. Effective quality assurance and monitoring systems result in weaknesses or shortfalls being quickly identified and responded to. Foster carers, including those approved as 'friends and family' carers, can be confident that they will be well supported by fostering social workers. Electronic data bases, whilst efficient and for the most part accurate, must include the address to which young people are discharged to.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Statement of Purpose was reviewed December 2005. This information is available on the department's web site or on request. During the course of the inspection, work was in progress on a document containing 'Information for Parents', describing the work of the fostering agency and what parents may expect from the service.

Management of the fostering service is excellent. The procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service not only ensure the maintenance of quality performance but are also effective at highlighting weaknesses and shortfalls within the system. When these are identified, the management team respond within appropriate timescales. The manager's robust and pro-active approach ensures that the service operates efficiently and effectively, and she is supported by two team managers who make an important contribution to the management of the service.

There were several examples of this evidenced during inspection. Levels of management delegation and responsibility are clearly defined, and fostering social workers feel supported by their managers. There were many comments from foster carers and placing social workers who felt that the support given to carers was 'excellent' and 'superb'.

When children are placed with private fostering agencies, the fostering service has to ensure that any agreement spells out what those agencies will undertake on behalf of the local authority. Such agreements seen by the inspector were found to comply with this regulation, and the service also has a system to ensure that the quality of care provided by independent fostering agencies is monitored on a monthly basis, or more frequently if necessary. Where problems have been identified, these are addressed with those agencies and work is undertaken to develop strategies to remedy the problem.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers, and has a good working relationship with Kirklees Fostering Network. In terms of securing sufficient staff and carers with the right experience, increased funding for recruitment of foster carers has been agreed, and there are a number of initiatives and developments under way to promote and sustain recruitment and retention.

There is, for example, tight monitoring of the recruitment process, and an evaluation of this process indicates that all enquiries made to the service about fostering are dealt with on the same day as they are received. There was also positive evaluation of recruitment events, and one carer felt that the recent 'A space in your life' recruitment was 'excellent'. A second fostering panel is

being considered in order to more quickly facilitate the approval of prospective foster carers.

There is work in progress on joint commissioning with neighbouring local authorities to develop a coherent regional commissioning strategy for residential and foster care placement for next three years, and it is the manager's intention to use independent fostering agencies more strategically, rather than just to fill in gaps in the system.

When carers leave the service this is brought to panel with a note of explanation, and this process serves as a useful mechanism for identifying any patterns or trends that may emerge as reasons for the termination of foster carers' contracts. Disruption meetings are held in the case of placement breakdowns, however the inspector recommends that the minutes of these meetings record an analysis of the situation and outline what might be put in place to minimise disruption in future.

Children's and foster carers' case files were found to be in good order with recording at a high standard. There was a discrepancy on the electronic data base that is the Children's Register, with regard to the recording of where children are discharged to. This is an omission that can be easily remedied.

# 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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4

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

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

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

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

<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	3
<b>2</b>	X
<b>4</b>	4
<b>5</b>	4
<b>16</b>	3
<b>17</b>	3
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>20</b>	X
<b>21</b>	3
<b>22</b>	3
<b>23</b>	X
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	2
<b>26</b>	X
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X
<b>32</b>	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
1	FS25	22	The fostering service must record the address to which a child is discharged to on leaving placement.	31/03/06

### **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	FS30	Individual exemptions should be taken to the next available panel and monitored by panel.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Brighthouse Area Office

Park View House

Woodvale Office Park

Woodvale Road

Brighthouse

HD6 4AB

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)

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