



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Fostering Services**

**Social Services Department
4 Marlow Road
Maidenhead
SL6 7YR**

Lead Inspector
Lucy Martin

Announced Inspection
24th – 28th October 2005 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Fostering Services
Address	Social Services Department 4 Marlow Road Maidenhead SL6 7YR
Telephone number	01628 798888
Fax number	
Email address	sheilajones@rbwm.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 12th May 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead operates a family placement service in relation to Adoption, Fostering and Family-Based Respite Care for children with a disability. The team is known as 'FARS' (fostering, adoption and respite).

The team is located in central Maidenhead with other local authority children's services. A Team Manager, who is in turn, responsible to one of three service managers, heads the FARS team. The three service managers oversee all children's work and are responsible to the Head of Children's Services.

Although workers within the team may take a lead on, or have a special interest in, some aspects of the work, all engage in the variety of tasks associated with the work of the team. Fostering services provided by the team include: short term placements, long term placements, emergency placements and short breaks for children and young people with disabilities.

In September 2005 the number of foster children placed by the Service was 56 and there are approximately 30 foster carers.

SUMMARY

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

Before the inspection questionnaires were sent to all children over 7 years of age in foster care, to foster carers and the placing social workers. The Manager completed a pre-inspection questionnaire and a self-assessment form and sent the inspector key documentation.

The inspection took place over five days and the inspector met with:

- The Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager, Children's Service Manager and the Head of Children's and Families Services
- The whole FARS team and three workers individually
- Four foster families and the foster children in their homes
- A foster carer who has a role as a 'foster carer professional'
- A group of foster carers who were attending a training day

A sample of case records for the young people and the foster carers were looked at as well as some policies and procedures.

What the service does well:

The fostering service is well managed, proactive and has an experienced and competent staff team. Foster carers are well supported and a good number of new foster carers have been recruited over the past year. Foster carers have access to a wide range of training.

The health and education needs of the children and young people in foster placements are looked after well and there is good liaison with the other relevant authorities. 'Carezone' which is an interactive website for Looked After young people and the introduction of the free use of leisure centre facilities are good examples where these areas have been given high priority.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A strong feature of this service is its willingness to continue to develop and improve its knowledge and practice. There have been a number of improvements made since the last inspection which have included distributing the new Foster Carers handbook, recruiting, assessing and supporting a diverse range of new carers including Supported Lodgings carers for the first time. The Duty system has changed which allows better and quicker access to the FARS team.

There has been a stability within the senior management team which has facilitated the development of the service.

What they could do better:

There were no areas identified on this inspection where the fostering service were not meeting the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Some recommendations to improve practice were made regarding the use of risk assessments, reviewing the existing Foster Placement Agreement form and providing evidence that recommendations made at foster carers annual reviews are carried out. There should also be more details recorded when temporary exemptions to foster carers terms of approval are made.

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 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

The standard inspected was 12

The foster carers actively promote the health and development of children with good support from the fostering service.

EVIDENCE:

Both foster carers and foster children showed an excellent awareness of what was required to stay fit and healthy. The young people said that they were provided with fresh fruit and vegetables, they were encouraged to stay fit and active and one older young person said in the questionnaire that they got help with making appointments for doctors and dentists. Foster carers spoken with were clear about the health needs of the young people in placement and were involved in taking the children to routine medical appointments. Information regarding medical consent was routinely found in the foster carers files.

The fostering service has good mechanisms in place for monitoring visits to health care professionals and this information is recorded on the form completed when a supervising social worker makes a visit to a foster carer. There are also good links with health agencies and it is positive that all the annual medical checks for looked after young people are carried out by the same doctor and here is a specialist nurse for looked after children and young people. Medical issues are discussed and recorded at the time of placement and are always discussed at the statutory reviews for looked after children.

The inspector attended part of a training event for foster carers on 'healthy care'. A number of outside speakers were invited and topics included the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, smoking, teenagers and sexual health, the importance of a healthy diet and art therapy. This training was well thought out and presented, and other training for foster carers on health issues this year has included first aid and sexual health and relationships.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has recently introduced a scheme whereby foster carers and foster children get free entrance to the Borough's leisure centres. Both foster carers and foster children were positive about this development and were regularly using the facilities. This indicates a good commitment to the health needs of the young people.

Overall, there was much evidence to indicate good practice and that this standard is exceeded.

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 standards inspected were 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15

The fostering service has effective systems in place to ensure that children and young people placed are kept safe. A few recommendations to improve practice are made.

EVIDENCE:

Recruitment procedures were not looked at in detail on this inspection as these standards (3 and 15) were met at the last inspection. There has been no change of Manager in the past year and at the last inspection it was reported that the human resource section of the authority had set up a system to ensure that CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks are repeated on a three-yearly cycle. Information received on the pre-inspection questionnaire confirmed this and that the Manager's CRB had recently been repeated in August 2005 as had other team members. The Manager confirmed that all the adults working within the FARS team are suitably qualified and have had references taken up including telephone references. No new members of staff have joined the team since the last inspection.

The inspector visited the homes of four foster carers. All were seen to be warm, comfortable, well maintained and suitable for the children who were living there. A health and safety checklist is completed as part of the approval process and an annual inspection of the accommodation takes place. At the last inspection it was a recommendation that risk assessments are made

specific to the child, carer, and situation and regularly reviewed. On this inspection it was found that risk assessments are being completed but there was a large variation in the style and content of them. There was not always an indication that the risk assessments were completed jointly by the by both the FARS worker and the child's social worker or that they were regularly reviewed as part of the child's LAC review and the carer's annual review. It is recommended that further work is carried out in this area to develop good practice and to ensure better consistency.

The fostering service works hard to ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is matched with a carer capable of meeting their assessed needs. There is a comprehensive placement request form which informs and enables the matching process. Placement decisions cover all areas of need including race, culture, linguistic and health. Over the period April 2005 – March 2005, there has been an increase of over 24% in placement availability and therefore placement choice. A diversity of carers in terms of ethnic origin, religion and language has been recruited and the new supported lodgings scheme has added to the range of placement choice.

It was a requirement made at the last inspection that Foster Placement Agreements are to be introduced. This has been met in that a comprehensive document in addition to the Looked After Children paperwork has been introduced. However, the Foster Placement Agreements were not fully completed and a lot of the information was duplicated in the LAC paperwork. It was agreed that further work was needed to ensure that the Foster Placement Agreement worked well in conjunction with the other statutory documentation and that it contained specific reference to elements of matching which were taken into consideration agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match. It is a recommendation that this work is undertaken.

Awareness of issues around abuse are covered in the preparation training for new carers and foster carers can attend the multi-disciplinary training in child protection which is offered by the borough. Prospective carers are informed of the requirement to give an undertaking not to use corporal punishment and post approval, sign the foster care agreement. In addition, a child protection seminar with carers' issues as a focus has been arranged for March 2006. It is commendable that an implementation officer visited all foster carers in their own homes to advise on the safe use of the Internet and leaflets are also provided on aspects of Internet safety.

Safe caring guidelines are drawn up with each foster family and copies of the guidelines were seen in foster carers files. It was a recommendation made at the last inspection that the safe caring guidelines are reviewed and updated at the start of each placement, and cleared with the child's social worker. Following discussion with the Team Manager, it was agreed that the safe caring

guidelines would relate to the foster home and that any specific issues around safe caring for an individual child in placement would be recorded elsewhere.

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

The standards inspected were 7, 13, 31

The fostering service ensures that diversity is valued and that educational achievement is promoted.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has a diversity policy which covers matching, challenging discrimination, promoting equality, supporting carers and children and foster carer training. All staff have attended 'Equality and Diversity' training and Diversity Awareness training for carers is planned for December 2005.

Over the last year, a diverse range of carers in terms of ethnicity, religion and language have been recruited. This has ensured that placements can be better matched. There was good evidence that in placements where the foster carers were from a different racial and cultural background, work was undertaken to ensure that additional support was provided and this was recorded in the foster carers file.

There has been much work undertaken to ensure that the educational needs of the children and young people in foster care are promoted. An education conference 'High Hopes' took place in April 2005, which was attended by 70 representatives from a wider range of agencies and included input from a number of foster carer delegates. A further training event for carers on education is planned to take place in February 2006.

All the young people visited were in full time education and there was clear evidence that the young people receive support with homework and education in general.

A local public service agreement is in place to improved educational achievement and a worker is in post to deliver this target. They have done work consulting with Looked After young people on education and personal education planning. This work is commended as is the use of Carezone which is an interactive web site and can provide help and support with education and homework. Every child in foster care who can use a computer has access to one. This Standard is exceeded.

The fostering service provides two types of short- term breaks for children. Relief care is available to foster carers caring for children on a full-time basis and respite care provides care for children with disabilities, who usually live with their parents. In March 2005, the fostering service had 7 respite carers, 6 of whom provide respite care to a total of 8 children with special needs. In addition, there were 3 relief carers, proving short breaks to other foster carers. It has been identified that more carers need to be recruited who can provide respite care for children with disabilities and this is a targeted area. One new respite carer has been approved this year.

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 standards inspected were 10 and 11

Contact with family is encouraged whenever possible and arrangements work well. There was good evidence that consultation with the children and young people in foster care takes place and that changes are made as a result.

EVIDENCE:

The children and young people in foster placements are encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts. The foster carers spoken with understood the importance of maintaining these relationships and were generally very positive about the arrangements made for contact. Foster carers are often involved in the arranging and transporting of the children and young people to contacts. The authority has worked hard to ensure that the detailed arrangements for contact and any cancellations or alterations are communicated to foster carers and this appeared to be working well.

All the fostered children and young people who completed a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection said that they felt listened to by their carers and that they were aware of what to do if they had concerns. This was confirmed by the fostered young people spoken with during the inspection.

Looked After young people have access to an advocacy service and have been directly consulted on a range of developments. For example, Looked After young peoples view were sought about education and Personal Education Plans and the activities part of the Healthy Care Day was drawn up after consultation with all the children in foster placements. An Agreement not to use bin bags to move young peoples belongings was made after concerns were raised by young people and a young person in foster care was involved in drafting the

'Pocket Money' section of the Foster Carers Handbook after dissatisfaction with this area was identified.

The views of the young people in placement are not currently included in the Annual Review of each foster carer. The fostering Service have identified that this is an area for future development and are considering how best this might be achieved.

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

The standard inspected was 29

Foster carers receive clear information regarding the payment of expenses and allowances and it was reported that payments are made accurately and promptly.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carer allowances are set at a rate which is above average and 50% above the Fostering Network's recommended rate. All carers are paid the same rate whether they are relatives or not. The allowances are reviewed annually and a revised leaflet is sent to all foster carers. Carers are paid for attending training and receive a monthly remuneration for having achieved their NVQ.

Foster carers are given clear information about allowances and it was noted that this area is often discussed at the Foster Carers Annual Review. Those carers spoken with said that the payments are made promptly and are accurate.

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

The standards inspected were 2, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 32

There is an experienced and competent fostering team who are well managed. Foster carers are well supported and there are good training opportunities offered to them.

EVIDENCE:

There is a solid, stable and effective management structure in place. The Head of Children and Families Services is supported by three Children's Service Managers, one of whom is Line Manager to the FARS Team Manager. The FARS team itself, is very well managed by the Team Manager and Assistant Team Manager. Since the last inspection, the Manager has successfully obtained an NVQ Level 4 IN Management in September 2004 and is currently undertaking with the Assistant Team Manager, the SCIE Management Development Programme.

The FARS team is experienced, competent and stable. A new member of staff has just been appointed who is male and will provide some gender balance to the all female team. All the team are part-time, except for the Manager and Assistant Team Manager but duties are managed well and the change from a half-day Duty to a full-day on Duty ensures that prospective carers and existing ones get a prompt response.

The fostering service has a recruitment strategy which is working well and during April 2004 – March 2005 five new foster carers were approved, three kinship carers and one relief carer. This provided an additional 13 placements and a 24% increase in placement availability. It was evident that recruitment of new carers is considered a vital part of the teams work and much effort goes into following up new enquiries. All assessments are carried out using the new BAAF form F and those assessments seen on file were of good quality.

All the foster carers spoken with said that they felt well supported and were extremely complimentary about individual workers. The questionnaires completed by foster carers prior to the inspection contained a lot of positive comments such as 'I think the support is excellent. Because the authority is small everybody knows everybody', and 'I have regular contact with my social worker and I can ask her anything. She always gives me good advice and support in everything I do'. There is a foster carers support group which meets monthly and foster carers can get advice and support 24 hours a day from either the Emergency Duty Team or from a worker at Norfolk House (the Leaving Care Team). The team operating out of Norfolk House is the Contact Team which is a resource team for children, young people and their families.

The fostering service uses an experienced foster carer called a 'foster carer professional' for individual and group support to carers. In addition he is actively involved in recruitment processes including initial interviews and preparation groups. This arrangement works well.

The annual Reviews for foster carers were well documented and up to date. Since the last inspection an action plan form has been added which ensures that areas identified for action are followed up. It was noted in the files seen that the action plans were not always completed and so there was not evidence on file that the areas identified had received attention even though it was apparent from discussions with staff that action had been taken. It is a

recommendation that the forms are completed and kept on foster carers files. It was a requirement made at the last inspection that the Fostering Panel considers the first review for all foster carers undertaken since 1.04.02 and this has been met.

All foster carers have a named supervising social worker from within the FARS team who meets with them on a regular basis. Records detailing supervision meetings were good and carers found the meetings supportive. Since the last inspection, all foster carers have received a copy of the foster carers handbook which is of good quality and is comprehensive in content. Records regarding complaints and allegations are maintained and the outcomes are clearly recorded.

There has been much training offered to foster carers over the past year and further work is planned in this area. There is an annual training plan covering a wide range of subjects and strong emphasis is placed on the NVQ programme with approximately six foster carers already having completed the qualification and more planning to start in the near future. Training needs are identified at the foster carers annual review and training sessions attended are recorded on file. Further work planned in this area includes individual interviews to take place with carers to identify personal training needs so that a tailored programme can be identified and an induction programme for new carers is in the process of being set up. These are positive developments.

The case files relating to four fostered young people and to four foster carers were seen. All contained relevant paperwork and were of good quality. A new file structure was seen in place for foster carers files which included all the information about them on the left hand side of the file and a separate but attached file for the young people in placement on the right hand side of the file. This system works well and is designed to ensure that the next placement is provided with quality information about the needs of the young person. File audits take place and monitoring sheets were seen on foster carers files. Advice was given to always date and sign the monitoring sheet. Details of placements are recorded on file and advice was also given to record the date of birth of the young people placed.

There are occasions when the authority grants temporary exemptions from the terms of approval of foster carers. There was information seen on foster carers files relating to incidences where exemptions have been granted by a Senior Manager and it is recommended that there is more detail recorded regarding the circumstances surrounding the exemption.

Foster carers are provided with regular training on what to record and do so in a diary. One diary was seen which contained relevant information and there was evidence that the diary is seen by the supervising social worker.

One kinship carer was met with on this inspection and they were positive about the help and support they are receiving from the FARS team. There is recognition of the particular relationship of family and there is an equality of process and service provision. No distinction is made between stranger foster carers and family and friends carers. They are assessed in the same way, receive the same allowances, the same support and are offered the same training opportunities.

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	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	2
8	2
9	3
15	3
30	X

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	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	X
2	4
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	4
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	X
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
1	FS6	Further work is undertaken to develop the use of risk assessments to ensure higher levels of consistency and that there is evidence that they are reviewed on a regular basis.
2	FS8	The use of the existing format for Foster Placement Agreements is reviewed to ensure that any form used is fully completed and contains specific reference to elements of matching and identifies any gaps.
3	FS23	There is evidence on foster carers files that the recommendations made at the Annual Reviews are carried out.
4	FS24	There are more details recorded on file when temporary exemptions to foster carers' terms of approval are made.

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