



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Leicester City Council Fostering Service**

**Leicester City Council, Social Care and Health  
1 Grey Friars  
Leicester  
LE1 5PH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Trisha  
Gibbs

*Announced*  
06 June 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
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	<a href="http://www.csci.org.uk">www.csci.org.uk</a>

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Leicester City Council Fostering Service
<b>Address</b>	Leicester City Council Social Care and Health 1 Grey Friars Leicester LE1 5PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 299 5810
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 233 6053
<b>Email address</b>	tingm001@leicester.gov.uk
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Leicester City Council
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Mark Tingley
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Authority Fostering Service
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	Not applicable

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

NONE

**Date of last inspection**      04/05/05

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

Leicester City Council Fostering Service provides family placements for children and young people up to the age of eighteen years. The Service Manager, and three Team Managers have now been joined by four Senior Practitioners. (Three posts) The Team Managers are responsible for three Teams, Pre Panel, Post Panel, and Kinship Care, Family Link and Permanency. The Remand Scheme is managed through the Youth Offending Team, and an Accommodation Officer from this team links with the Fostering Service. Sixteen supervising social workers work within the three fostering teams in addition to the specialist posts i.e. Development Officer, Publicity Coordinator and Enquiry Officer. The administrative team comprises three full time and three part time staff.

A full range of placements is provided by the service, including emergency, short and long term, kinship/family care, respite contract and remand. The service operates from a central location in Leicester in a building with an attractive reception area, designed to receive members of the public, and to provide information about Fostering and Adoption.

All new carers commence as level one carers for the first year, progressing to level four as they receive training, supervision, and become experienced.

# SUMMARY

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

This Announced Inspection took two Inspectors 72 hours in total.

For the purpose of this Inspection four foster carers, and the children placed with them, plus four additional files, were tracked through the inspection of case files, home visits, and discussions with relevant staff, including Managers. Although the small sample of carers tracked, is not representative of the large carer group, (over 230 carers) however this did give a good 'snapshot' of the service being provided.

The above information provided the Inspection evidence for each Standard. Policies and Procedures, the Carer's Handbook, and other documents have been fully inspected over the last two Inspections and were consulted only for clarification purposes on this occasion.

In addition to the above, Inspectors attended a training session for carers and the Fostering Panel.

Questionnaires were sent out to carers, children and placing social workers. 40 questionnaires were returned from carers, 24 from placing social workers and 20 from children. These have been referred to within the report.

## What the service does well:

- Managers have a clear vision of where they want to be and are proactive in the continuous development of new initiatives to improve the service. The Fostering Service consistently refers in policies, procedures and documents, to the National Minimum Standards and Regulations, and to the five key outcomes under Every Child Matters.
- The Fostering Service provides very good information to carers through an excellent Carer's Handbook, and through a commendable, relevant, and varied training programme to carers.
- Files are organised and referenced well, and contain very good recording tools. There are mechanisms for supervising social workers to routinely audit their own work. Electronic records for carers are now being developed to match the information maintained on files.

- The Fostering Service Kinship Care team continue to respond creatively to the needs of a growing group of Kinship Carers (52 in May 2005), through written material specific to the task, and special Kinship Care days held four times a year, featuring guest speakers and specialist topics.

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

- The Fostering Panel Chair now meets with the Agency Decision Maker promptly after Panel Meetings to discuss recommendations of the Fostering Panel.
- There are new Senior Practitioner posts in place. These have enabled positive practice developments within the service.
- The fostering Service has implemented the use of a comprehensive risk assessment process for all bedroom sharing.
- New recording materials have been provided to carers, supported with training, and these include separate recording sheets for capturing Health and Education information.

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

- The Fostering Service should review how it links with the Youth Offending Remand Fostering Scheme, and more formally clarify mutual roles and responsibilities in relation to non-remand placements. There should be consistency in the supervision of young people who are placed within the Remand Scheme with remand carers, but who are not on remand, with those children placed in mainstream fostering placements.
- The Fostering Service should ensure that carer Approval Status matches the children placed with them at any one time, through normal supervision and review systems.

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 Standards

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12**

Children and young peoples' health needs are given very good attention.

### **EVIDENCE:**

- Although carers do not currently maintain a separate Health Record for children placed, the Fostering Service has introduced a commendable new recording pack for carers and this includes a separate sheet for recording health appointments, and administration of medication.
- Under the heading of 'Being Healthy' a comprehensive training programme is provided by the Fostering Service to carers on Health matters.
- Carers visited showed a good awareness of children's' health needs, and a commitment to accessing and supporting special health care programmes.
- Recent appointments have been made in conjunction with the Health Authority, including that of a Community Paediatrician, to improve the health care of Looked After Children.
- The 'Clayton File' (a separate Health Passport) is currently being piloted and will ultimately be launched and distributed to all Looked After Children through placing social workers.
- Carer reviews and supervision sessions gave good evidence to children's health and development being routinely discussed.
- Children's comments in questionnaires about staying healthy included; 'I eats lots of fruit and drink bottled water' 'My carer tells us how to look after ourselves and tells me if I've got too much makeup on' ' I eat good

food and clean my teeth' 'My carer reminds me to wash myself' 'I do lots of sport'

# 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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3,6,8,9,15,30**

The Fostering Service ensures that children and young people are provided with safe placements.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- Personnel records for staff employed over the last year evidenced that good systems have been implemented to ensure all required checks are being undertaken prior to their appointment.
- Strong systems are in place for staff induction and probation, and staff supervision and development. Staff interviewed during the Inspection were enthusiastic and committed to providing appropriate placements for children.
- An excellent new bedroom risk assessment is now in use, and consideration will need to be made as to how this is completed in respect of remand placements, given the emergency nature of some placements.
- There was a good standard of safe care in homes visited, and carers demonstrated and awareness of this. Safe Care Policies and Fire Plans were in place. Under the heading 'Staying Safe' the service provides a variety of ongoing training. One carer, whose long term placements are

now teenagers, said how she found the training on substance abuse extremely helpful.

- Referral forms for placements give detailed attention to risk assessment and matching of children to placement. In three of the placements tracked the children were very well matched with carers. Although the fourth carer was approved solely for remand placements, a young person was also placed in the home on a long-term, non-remand basis
- The Fostering Service monitors and maintains details on all allegations and complaints, and the file of these was looked at during the Inspection.
- Eight Independent Visitors have been fully assessed by the Fostering Service and are appropriately matched with the young people they visit.
- Managers confirmed that matching consideration has improved following a reduction in the Looked After Children population, attributed to the new Looked After Children procedures and Placement Panel, impacting on the demand for placements.
- The new very good recording material provided to carers, includes a simple mechanism for them to record at the time of new placements, the date they receive the Looked After Children essential information from placing social workers.
- The Fostering Panel attended was conducted in a professional and child centred manner. The Chair of The Fostering panel noted the increase in the approval of Kinship Care applications. The Chair now meets with the Agency Decision Maker promptly after the Panel meeting to discuss Panel business. There continues to be no City Councillor sitting on the Fostering Panel, however this will be addressed in the near future.
- All questionnaires received from placing social workers made positive comments about placements being provided.' Carers meet all his needs' 'She is warm, experienced and approachable' 'The child is displaying remarkable positive change with this carer' 'Carers show warmth to the children, sensitivity to their needs, time spent playing with and listening to them' 'The children feel part of the family' 'The young person tells me this is the best placement he's had' 'This is a positive culturally appropriate placement'

# 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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 7,13,31**

The Fostering Service provides a very good level of support to carers, to promote the educational achievement of children and young people.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- The Local Authority has in place a Black Looked After Children's Panel, to assist in the assessment planning and provision of services for Black children and young people, including those in foster placements.
- There has been an increase in the number of black carers, Asian and African Caribbean, recruited by the service, confirmed by recruitment figures seen by Inspectors.
- In one placement tracked a white carer had worked hard to positively promote the cultural heritage and religious needs of a black young person, utilising the resources in the community around her.
- Training is provided for carers in Developing Skills to Care for Mixed Heritage Children as well as Promoting Cultural Identity. Support and training was also provided for a carer visited who was looking after a child with ADHD
- All school aged children and young people tracked, were in school or at college, and were working to Personal Education Plans supported by their carers. In one case a carer actively secured a special school placement.

In another, the young people were undertaking GCSE's and pre University examinations, both having aspirations to their future careers, with the support and encouragement of their carers.

- The Fostering Service is involved in a range of impressive projects and initiatives, designed to promote educational achievement for Looked After young people and children. Workshops, events, training and road shows are provided to promote carers awareness and to equip them to support children placed.
- The Fostering Service works closely with the RALAC team. Some Looked After young people who would not attend mainstream school for a number of reasons, are referred to a local alternative educational facility coordinated and staffed by the team, where they can progress their education in a targeted way and achieve short course GCSE's.
- Young people and children enjoy a variety of sporting and leisure activities, e.g. martial arts, football, horse riding, dancing, and swimming. This was also evidenced within carer visits and questionnaires.
- The Fostering Service continues to provide a Family Link Scheme for children with a disability, and have supported through funding sources, adaptations of carers' homes. Training programmes have been designed for carers, to enable them to meet the health and communication needs of children placed.
- Children's' comments in questionnaires about school and college work included 'My carers help me with homework' 'They get me equipment' 'They tell me if I have made a mistake' 'They help me revise for exams and get me books' 'They give me verbal encouragement' One young person said 'I am very grateful for my lap top' (provided by the service)

# **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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 10,11**

Children and young people are well consulted through their carers and the Fostering Service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- Carers were aware of their responsibilities in relation to family contact. One carer visited showed a very good awareness of monitoring the impact of contact and positively representing child's needs.
- Contact arrangements were clearly detailed and recorded in files looked at. No carers tracked were supervising contact.
- Young people and children in fostering placements are provided with excellent, age appropriate, written information about the service, and this includes various contact details for help and advice, including Children's Rights Officer. Children receive Children's Rights' newsletters and 'Who Cares' magazines. One young person visited has made thoughtful and lively written contributions to these papers.
- The Children's Rights Officer post is currently vacant and discussion has been held, (including with Looked After Children), about whether to develop within this post, a more consultative role.
- Children and young people visited talked to Inspectors about being able to make choices in their foster home, and said that they were listened to. Children in questionnaires also confirmed this. They said that they were included in planning meetings. Carer files indicated that children, who were old enough, were consulted at time of carer's annual review. One



carer commented 'I see my role as an advocate for young people placed  
I am part of their support network'

-

# 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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 14,29**

The Fostering Service and carers give young people good support, in preparation for independent living. Additional payments, (not allowances) paid retrospectively can take an unacceptably long time.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- A new RALAC worker has been appointed to work with all Looked After young people age 16 plus.
- Social workers from the Leaving Care team were allocated to three young people tracked during the Inspection who were over fifteen years, and Pathway Plans were in place or being developed.
- Carer's receive good information within training (Living with Teenagers) and the Carer's Handbook, about young people growing up. One carer told the Inspector about different tasks she was encouraging and expecting the teenagers in placement to undertake, including cooking, washing their clothes and being responsible for cleaning their own rooms.
- Detailed information about fostering payments and finance is provided in the Carer's Handbook. Some concerns about financial reimbursement were raised by carers in questionnaires and by the Leicester City Foster Care Partnership. These are summarised as follows:

- Some carers said that they believed that the fostering allowances, paid fortnightly, were not enough to cover the true cost of caring for a child. The Leicester City Foster Care Partnership commented that other Local Authorities paid higher allowances than Leicester City. The Manager of the Fostering Service however noted that the Leicester City allowances compared well with neighbouring authorities, and that it had been possible to raise the fostering allowances paid by more than the increase recommended by Fostering Network in each of the last three years.
- With regard to additional payments, this was most likely to be an issue when an additional payment or expense was sourced from a budget not held by the Fostering Service, and usually from a Child Care Operations budget. Carers gave examples of having to wait for long periods to be reimbursed for expenses paid out by themselves. One example was given where carers were transporting children exceptionally long distances for Contact with their birth family, and this was incurring large sums of money that could take weeks to be reimbursed. The Managers of the service acknowledged that accessing different budget sources sometimes caused difficulty and that they continue to attempt, wherever possible, to limit inconvenience to carers. They stated a commitment to devising measures to prevent similar delays occurring in the future. Inspectors were concerned that carers should receive payment in retrospect, for facilitating Contact (as identified in care plans) between children and their families.

# 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 cares 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 standard(s) 17,21,24**

A strong and informed Management Team leads the Fostering Service and has developed good systems to monitor performance.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- Three Senior Practitioner posts have been created, to work within the specialist teams, i.e. Pre Panel, Post Panel and Kinship Care, to develop, monitor, and maintain standards, and to support the implementation of the Carer's handbook. The Senior Practitioners continue to also work closely with carers. A new permanency team is being created that will include the long term fostering resource and short breaks (family link) service. The Managers said that these changes are positive response to the growth in family and friends (kinship) care, and to prepare for the additional requirements contained within the Special Guardianship Regulations and Private Fostering Regulations and Every Child Matters.
- The Fostering Service continues to be pro active in the recruitment of new carers. Inspectors discussed the service Recruitment Strategy with Managers and looked at excellent publicity material and positive recruitment figures.
- The Management team are working to ensure that carer assessment is evidenced and competency based from the outset for all carers. Competency based evaluation forms have been developed for initial training days. Inspectors looked at the Form F assessments of four carers tracked, in addition to four others.
- The Fostering Service Senior Clerk is working closely with, and training the fostering teams to implement the transfer of all foster carer information over to electronic systems and to maintain and update these. There is now an electronic folder for each carer that mirrors information maintained in hard folders.
- Carer skills and experience are recognised through an accreditation scheme. Twelve carers have achieved NVQ level 3 to date and six are undertaking this.
- Feedback from the 40 questionnaires returned where almost all positive or very positive about the support received from the fostering Service Team, and included 'We have an excellent supervising social worker, training is very good...we go to every course available' 'My link worker is always at the end of the phone if I need her' 'They are a good team, there is a good flow of information'
- A new carer consultation form has been drawn up to assist the Fostering Service to obtain carer views and feedback.
- There was good evidence that the Fostering Service consults with the local Foster Care Partnership when changes and developments are proposed.

- A range of excellent proformas were seen in carer case files, designed to ensure reviews, supervision, unannounced visits and risk assessments fully captured essential information.
- Foster Carer Agreements contain all essential information and were noted to be appropriately signed on all files tracked. While Agreements do contain information about nature of carer Approval Status, they should also include numbers approved. The Fostering Service should also check during reviews that carers' Approval Status is appropriate in respect of the children placed with them. In two cases during file tracking, Inspectors noted that carer Approval Status did not reflect children placed with them.
- The Fostering Service has occasionally involved relatives of foster carers in the provision of respite, following full checks being undertaken. (Seen on file tracked) A written assessment should also be undertaken if children are staying overnight with these relatives.
- One positive Kinship Care arrangement was tracked during Inspection. The Kinship Care team continue to plan and develop initiatives to support and train Kinship carers, as applications and approvals increase significantly. The team are also working with a local University undertaking research in this area.

# 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>	3

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	4
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	4
<b>30</b>	3

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	4
<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>	3
<b>29</b>	3

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

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.	x	x	NONE	x

**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.	17	The Fostering Service should ensure that foster carers are appropriately approved for the children placed with them, and ensure that the Emergency Duty Team is aware of the Approval Status of Carers who take emergency and remand placements.
2.	21	The Fostering Service should formalise links with the Youth Offending Team, and clarify how non remand placements will be supervised.
3.	22	The Fostering Service should better clarify Approval Status on Foster Carer Agreements.
4.	6	The Fostering Service should undertake a written assessment, in addition to routine checks, when carers' relatives are providing respite for them.
5.		



## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

The Pavilions, 5 Smith Way

Grove Park, Enderby

Leicester

LE19 1SX

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)

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI