



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Solihull MBC Fostering Unit

**655 Auckland Drive
Smiths Wood
Solihull
West Midlands
B36 0SN**

Lead Inspector
Lynda Dale

Announced Inspection
5th –13th January & 13th February 09:30

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	www.csci.org.uk

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

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

Name of service	Solihull MBC Fostering Unit
Address	655 Auckland Drive Smiths Wood Solihull West Midlands B36 0SN
Telephone number	0121 749 8143
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Solihull MBC
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mike Gregory
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 2nd March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Solihull Fostering Service, is part of the range of childcare services within Solihull MBC and is the primary source of accommodation and care for children and young people looked after either temporarily or long-term by the Local Authority. The Fostering Service is part of the Education and Children's Services Directorate and the Local Authority has adopted a corporate approach to parenting. The Service recruits and assesses prospective foster carers and has 108 approved foster carers caring for children and young people aged 0-18 years. The Service strives to make available a range of foster carers whose households and skills match as closely as possible the needs and circumstances of the children and young people needing foster care. The care provided is broken down into 4 distinct areas of provision and these are mainstream carers, Friends and Family carers, Family Link for respite care and the CHES Multidimensional Treatment Fostering Scheme for children and young people with complex needs. The Service has a Fostering Panel to consider approvals, reviews and terminations. In context of the authority's corporate parenting approach, the Fostering Service works in partnership with each child's placing social worker, education professionals within the directorate and other organisations concerned with the health, education and wellbeing of children and young people.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection took place over 8 working days. There were two Regulation Inspectors who met with children, carers, staff and management from the Fostering Team. The Lead Inspector also met with staff and managers from the CHESSE Multidimensional Treatment Fostering Scheme and wider directorate and health. The Lead Inspector also had the opportunity to visit the Craig Croft Pupil Referral Unit. In addition, the Lead Inspector observed a fostering panel and interviewed the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor.

The Service provided registers of all children currently in foster care and approved carers. The Lead Inspector selected 6 carers from the register for welfare tracking. The Commission undertook a survey and sent out 483 questionnaires to children and young people, their foster carers and placing social workers. At the time of writing this report total of 109 had been returned with the majority of these being from placing social workers. Only 8 were received from children and 14 from carers. All statistical information used in the report was obtained from information provided by the Service (including registers) and analysis of the questionnaires returned.

What the service does well:

The Service responds well to inspection findings and is keen to implement measures to develop and improve the service. The Service has a strong culture of professionalism to which staff are committed. The Authority can demonstrate that it is able to meet its own targets for the health and education of all Looked After Children (LAC).

There is a well-resourced post-approval training programme in place for carers.

The CHESSE Multidimensional Treatment Fostering Scheme works well to serve children and young people with complex needs through the use of highly trained carers. This is a well-structured programme offering high levels of support to carers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The majority of statutory requirements from the previous inspection have been met. For those that have yet to be completed work is well underway to address these. For example, the previous statutory requirement to put in place a Joint Working Protocol to improve working arrangements with placing social workers and other colleagues was delivered within the agreed timescales. The Service has also developed a restraint action plan which includes new procedures already implemented, with training to be delivered in early 2006.

Some carers reported that they noticed encouraging improvements in the working relationships with the Aftercare Team since the previous inspection.

There has been an increase in foster carer's allowances since the last inspection and with additional enhancements linked to training. Written clarification on the breakdown of fees and allowances has also been provided to carers.

What they could do better:

Notwithstanding the above, further work is needed with colleagues within the wider directorate to ensure the lines of accountability translate into service delivery and support to the children placed and their carers. The Service is aware of this and has shown it is committed to ensuring it is delivered by drafting the working protocol mentioned above. The Manager is in the process of meeting with Child Care Teams to facilitate this process.

The service to Friends and Families has, until recently, been limited due to staffing shortages. Improvements are needed to the frequency of supervision and training, which the Service is aware of and has started to address.

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

CONTENTS

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 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

12

Children's health needs are being well met with only minor adjustments needed to ensure their routine safeguarding at all times.

EVIDENCE:

Children are registered with the carer's local GP where appropriate. Carers met were aware of their responsibility to promote the health of children placed and demonstrated a clear commitment to ensuring their needs were met. Children who responded to the survey and those met during the inspection indicated that their carers were helping them to follow healthy lifestyles by encouraging them to take regular exercise and maintain healthy diets.

There is a community paediatrician to undertake initial health assessments on Looked After Children. The directorate has a target that each child receives an initial assessment within 28 days of the placement commencing. There are two clinics in the north of the borough and 1 in the south where these medicals are undertaken and the Service was able to produce statistics to demonstrate that this target was met for all children placed in borough.

Carers met felt that this timescale was in some instances too long, when little or no information was available about the child's health on placement. In particular, information regarding children from asylum seeking backgrounds, when they may not have received routine childhood immunisations and accordingly represent a risk to other children in placement. Equally important, the child him/herself may have health needs requiring more urgent attention. The service should consider reviewing these timescales for children where there is little or no information regarding the health care history.

Children's health needs are assessed and reviewed during placement planning and statutory reviews. The HELAC Group is responsible for tracking the health

needs of Looked After Children (LAC) and helps to identify and access specialist health resources where needed for individual children. This area of the service is well resourced and with a good strategic oversight.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30

The arrangements for the protection of children are generally of a good standard with only minor improvements needed to ensure routine safeguarding from all potential risks.

EVIDENCE:

All personnel records seen were found to be in good order and contain all information detailed in Schedule 1. Written references received had been followed up with telephone enquiries. CRB checks are renewed every 3 years.

Homes visited offered warm, safe, nurturing environments for the children and young people placed. Health and safety assessments are undertaken of each carer's home at the assessment stage and are reviewed annually for the foster carer's annual review. All but one of these were found to have been reviewed within a 12-month period. Foster carer's pre-approval training includes health and safety components. Carers who drive are required to produce evidence of motor insurance, road tax and MOTs annually.

Carers met were aware of the need to co-operate with the inspection process and the Inspectors would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their warm welcome and kind assistance during the inspection. Although, the foster carer agreement does specify carers consent to visits from anyone 'authorised' by the Council, it does not clearly detail complying with visits from the

Commission at their homes at reasonable times. This would benefit from clarification.

The Service demonstrates a commitment to appropriate matching. Matching for mainstream placements is done via the duty worker with the fostering team who has access to all relevant matching information for carers. There is scope to place children out of borough if an appropriate cannot be found. As with the previous inspection, there was clear evidence of a high standard of planning for the CHESSE scheme, which is crucial given the nature of the work being undertaken.

Children are given the opportunity for introductions wherever possible, although this is understandably limited with emergency and EDT placements. Introductions are always undertaken with children and families using the Family Link Scheme for respite placements. There was also excellent introductions and matching in place for children using the CHESSE Scheme.

Some carers expressed concerns about the number and duration of placement vacancies. However, this would seem to directly correlate with the Service's commitment to making appropriately matched placements and a willingness to use external placements when an appropriate match cannot be found in borough.

Overall the authority has in place sound procedures for protecting children from abuse and neglect which include child protection, anti-bullying, whistle blowing and complaints. Staff and carers are aware of these and their role in protecting children. Since the previous inspection the Service has revised the procedure for children missing from care as it applies to foster carers and is in the process of reviewing the policy on the use of restraints and identifying training for carers. As this has yet to be delivered the statutory requirement from the previous inspection remains partially outstanding. Of the files sampled, all but one had written safe care guidelines for each foster home. One file was found to be without a specific risk-assessment for inappropriate behaviours that may present a risk to other children in placement, where this was necessary. Accordingly the requirement from the previous inspection is repeated.

The Service follows the Authority's recruitment and selection procedures for staff. Personnel files were found to be of a high standard and contained all information determined in the regulations. All fostering link workers and staff undertaking Form F assessments are social work qualified.

The Service has appointed a Panel Advisor since the previous inspection. The Lead Inspector met with the Panel Advisor and Panel Chair. The main responsibilities of the Panel Advisor include support to assessing social workers, co-ordinating the administration process of all fostering and adoption panels and advice to Panel members on matters of policy and practice. The

Panel Chair feels the introduction of this post has contributed to an improvement in the standard of assessments and Panels process.

The Lead Inspector had the opportunity to observe a Panel. Panel records provided revealed that overall these were of a good standard and contained evidence of security checks and satisfactory detail to enable the Panel to reach a firm recommendation. However, of the matters observed, one contained insufficient information regarding competing demands on the carer's time. None of the Panel members present requested this information and the Panel proceeded to recommend an increase in the terms of approval. The Chair acknowledged this oversight and agreed to ensure this matter would be reviewed at the next Panel.

Copy minutes provided were of a good standard.

The Panel are involved in the quality assurance of the Service and receive quarterly reports of the Manager's monitoring. There are plans to implement a system of feedback to assessing social workers and their line managers regarding the quality of assessment.

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

7, 13 & 31

Children and young people are provided with a good range of opportunities to enjoy and achieve.

EVIDENCE:

The Service works within the Authority's procedures for promoting diversity. The local population is predominantly White European and as such the Service has a limited number of carer applications from minority ethnic groups, although efforts are made to encourage applications from these groups. Same race placements are promoted, although in light of the above cannot always be achieved. Carers met who were caring for children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were clear on their role in promoting and safeguarding the child's cultural and religious identity and dietary needs.

The Service continues to work with unaccompanied asylum seeking minors. Policy has been strengthened in response to the recommendations from the previous inspection, with clear guidance for carers now included in the Foster Carer's Handbook. Training for carers working with these groups is due to be delivered in the Spring 2006.

The Service operates the Family Link Scheme for children with disabilities needing respite care. This was identified as a strong area of practice at the previous inspection and continues to provide an enriching experience for children, valuable support to parents and a rewarding challenge for carers.

The CHES Scheme is working with children with particularly challenging behaviour. Matching prioritises the carers' skills to address the behaviours above other aspects of matching. This results in some trans-racial placements being made and strategies for addressing any shortfalls are covered in the placement planning.

Staff interviewed felt the Service operates fairly in respect of issues of diversity.

The Authority has Craig Croft Pupil Referral Unit for children excluded or experiencing difficulties in mainstream education. Any looked after child excluded from school is offered a place at the unit the following day. Support is provided to some children still in mainstream education to prevent placement breakdown. The standard of service offered by the Unit was commended during a recent Ofsted inspection.

All but one of the files sampled contained Personal Education Plans, completed by the placing social worker. These vary in content and quality and not all had been regularly reviewed. The Service should review its role in ensuring the content of PEPs of a good standard and these are reviewed regularly following significant changes for children.

The Authority can demonstrate it meets its own targets with regard to timescales in finding alternative education for children excluded from mainstream education. However, Carers still expressed concerns regarding the amount of educational input these children receive. In addition, these timescales do not apply to none English-speaking asylum seeking children and placements for these children invariably take longer to arrange. The Service should consider reviewing the amount of education provided in specific cases. It was positive to note that training has been provided for carers working with education partners since the previous inspection.

Short-term breaks are provided through the Family Link Scheme. Previously this had been run on a voluntary basis but the Service has recently arranged to pay carer allowances on a pro-rata basis. This function of the Service continues to work well. Carers met reported that they find the role a very rewarding one. There were some issues regarding adequate information sharing highlighted through the survey but given the low numbers involved it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. Overall carers said they felt well supported by the Fostering 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10 & 11

Children and young people have a variety of opportunities to make a positive contribution.

EVIDENCE:

At the previous inspection there were a number of issues raised regarding contact which included a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities and unreasonable expectations being placed on carers by the Child Care teams. This was one of the key issues covered in the Joint Working Protocol referred to earlier, to provide clarity regarding roles and it is hoped this will address these problems. It is also positive to note that the Authority is in the process of setting up a Supervised Contact Team, which demonstrates a clear commitment to promoting contact.

Carers met at this inspection were aware of their role in promoting contact. Of the placing social workers who responded to the survey 100% were satisfied with the service's management of restrictions on contact, whilst 39% felt carers worked 'very well' and 48% felt carers worked 'quite well' with the child's birth family. From files seen and carers and children met there were no specific concerns raised regarding contact at this inspection and contact was being well promoted where appropriate. Copies of contact risk assessments were not found on any of the children's files seen, although contact arrangements were detailed in the placement plans. This is currently the responsibility of the placing social worker, which is confirmed within the Joint Working Protocol. Accordingly the Fostering Service does not have line management responsibility for this aspect of the service but can have a role in advocating for these to be completed.

The Lead Inspector met with the Development Officer for Children's Involvement for the Borough, who identified the ways fostered children are consulted. These included written consultations, surveys and group forums. The Authority plans to undertake a pilot scheme for children to be given the opportunity to have their own reviews from April 2006. If successful, this will be extended. There are also plans to involve children in the recruitment of staff for the Fostering Service in the future.

Of the children who responded to the CSCI survey, 83% of those in mainstream foster care said that their carers consulted them often and a further 17% said their carers consulted them sometimes. In addition, 33% of children said that their social workers visit them often and a 67% said their social workers visited them sometimes. Unfortunately, the numbers of children who responded were very low and therefore cannot be assumed to be representative.

All children met and of those who responded to the survey, 100% said they knew how to make a complaint. However, none of the children met during the course of the inspection and the majority of those responding to the survey, still do not know how to make a complaint to the Commission, despite this having been clarified through temporary amendments to the children's guide, in response to the requirement from the previous inspection. The Service may wish to include specific reference to the role of the Commission when the Children's Guide is fully revised.

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

14 & 29

Overall children and young people's economic wellbeing is well met and independence promoted.

EVIDENCE:

Carers met during the course of the inspection were actively encouraging young people to develop independence skills appropriate to their age. The Service has met the requirement from the previous inspection to include written guidance in the foster carer's handbook on preparing young people for independent living.

The Authority has a 16+ Team which works in partnership with the Fostering Service in preparing young people for independent living. Sampled files contained pathway plans where appropriate. Young people met were satisfied with the level of support being provided. Some carers met said they had observed improvements in the after care arrangements and working relationships with the 16+ Team.

The Authority has a training flat to help young people prepare for independent living. Young people spend a short period of time at the training flat whilst still in placement, with the support of the 16+ Team and their carers. They are given help with budgeting skills, shopping and other independence skills.

There has been an increase in foster carer's allowances since the last inspection, with additional enhancements linked to training. Clarification on the breakdown of fees and allowances has also been provided to carers.

Overall carers reported that payments were made on time. There are some isolated problems but this is understandable for an organisation of this size. Where problems occur, these are usually dealt with promptly.

There continues to be some problems with expenses and a lack of clarity and consistency of advice given to carers, particularly concerning holidays abroad, birthdays and Christmas. It is hoped that as the Joint Working Protocol with the Child Care teams takes effect, this will help to resolve these difficulties.

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

1, 2, 4, 5, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 32

The Service is well managed so as protect and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. A little further work is needed with colleagues in the wider directorate to ensure that carers receive the necessary resources to deliver good outcomes to children.

EVIDENCE:

The Service has revised the Statement of Purpose in response to previous inspection findings. This is now of an excellent standard and covers all areas outlined in the standards and regulations. There is an accompanying children's guide. Temporary amendments have been to include the issue raised at the previous inspection whilst avoiding the cost of a reprint. When this is permanently revised, the service may wish to consider clearer information about the role of the Commission, in light of the issues regarding complaints detailed above.

The Manager of the service has appropriate qualifications, skills and experience to deliver a fostering service. He is also in the process of completing the Post Graduate Diploma in Social Care Leadership and Management, equivalent to NVQ level 4. There are 3 separate deputy team managers, responsible for different specialisms within the team. The level of delegation and lines of accountability are clearly defined in this respect.

There are clear systems in place for monitoring and controlling the service to ensure quality performance. Of the carers who responded to the survey 60% indicated that they had not been asked for their opinions about how the fostering service runs. However, as with the children, the number of responses was low and therefore cannot be assumed to be representative. The Service has well established lines accountability between managers, staff and carers and appropriate financial procedures. Staff, carers, management, and panel members are aware of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.

More than 60% of the carers who responded to the survey felt that the service did not have enough staff. However, accompanying comments seemed to indicate that these observations related more to the Child Care Teams, than the Fostering Service directly. The Inspectors formed the view that there is currently an adequate number of staff, with the right skills and experience to deliver the fostering service.

The Service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Files sampled revealed that on the whole carers receive supervision on a monthly basis. This was less frequent for Friends and Family Carers supervision due to staffing shortages, as detailed below. Placing social workers visits to children are not always carried out within the timescales determined by the regulations. However, the Fostering Service has no line management responsibility for staff from the Child Care teams so is accordingly unable to control this directly. There is an out-of-hours telephone line for carers and the service arranges insurance cover and Fostering Network membership for all carers. There is also a good system for carers' annual reviews, which are all reviewed at Panel.

At the previous inspection communication between the Fostering Service and their colleagues in the wider Authority had been identified as in need of improvement, to ensure adequate support was delivered to children and carers. In response to the previous inspection, the Manager introduced a joint working protocol between the Fostering Service and all Childcare Teams (which includes the Duty Assessment and Referral Team (DART), the Community Child and Family Teams, 16+, the Children's Disability Team (CDT), the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's Team and where relevant Family Focus, the Family Support Services and the Emergency Duty Team). The Service had until the 1st November 2005 to implement the statutory requirement and this timescale was met. Given that, at the time of this inspection, the protocol had been only been in place for 2 months, it was difficult to determine if this had been successful. Clearly this will need more time to take effect but the early signs were promising. Carers advised the Inspectors that they had noted improved communication with the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's and 16+ Teams. The Manager told the Inspectors that further meetings were planned with the Child Care Teams to help them understand their role in supporting carers.

The Service has a comprehensive pre-approval training programme for new carers. There is also a well-developed ongoing training programme for approved carers, with the opportunity to complete NVQs. The Service offers enhanced carer allowances linked to training attendance, which serves as a useful incentive to attend training and accordingly raise standards across the service.

Children's case files are maintained and stored by the placing social worker with the Child Care Teams. Fostering Link workers have access to the Carefirst database (used for electronic records) to make any necessary entries in children's records. Carers met suggested there is some variance regarding the amount and type of information Carers record by about children in their daily logs. Of those files sampled, carers' daily logs were not stored along with the child's file so it was not possible to fully assess the standard of these records at this inspection. The Service should ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained in respect of the child, which includes the recordings completed by carers, on behalf of the child.

The Foster Service premises are appropriate for the purpose. The building is shared with the adoption service and of a good design with access for wheelchair users. There is a large meeting room for training. Social workers and administrative staff have sufficient workspace and there are robust administrative systems with up-to-date IT and an appropriate security system.

It was especially positive note that Carers have a dedicated office to use as a base and for meetings. However, the carer's committee room has been moved to a smaller room in order to accommodate additional staffing for the service.

Inspectors were not able to see the public liability insurance certification as the Local Authority holds this centrally.

With regard to Friends and Family placements, the Service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships during the assessment process. Sampled records revealed some shortfalls in the frequency of supervision for Friends and Family carers. This arose from staffing vacancies for which recruitment has now taken place. Training opportunities for friends and family carers has been limited and there has been no pre-approval training offered to date.

Carers interviewed felt supported by the Fostering Service and those who responded to the survey expressed similar views. Contact arrangements were identified as an area of concern by some carers in the survey, although these usually related to an overriding court order.

Solihull Foster Care Association offers support to Friends and Family carers.

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	2
15	4
30	2

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	4
11	3

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	4
2	3
4	4
5	3
16	X
17	3
18	3
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	3
23	3
24	2
25	X
26	3
27	X
28	X
32	2

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? Yes

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	FS9	13(1)	The Service must ensure that all carers are provided with policy and training regarding restraints. This requirement remains partially outstanding since 2nd March 2005	30/06/06
2	FS9	S22 (3a) CS 1989	The Service must ensure that compatibility risk assessments are undertaken for children with a history of inappropriate behaviour that poses a significant risk to others, prior to placement and behaviour management strategies are addressed in the child's plan. This requirement remains outstanding since 2nd March 2005	30/04/06
3	FS30	26(1)(c) & 27(d)	The Panel Chair must ensure there is sufficient information available before making a recommendation. (The case specified at the inspection must be scheduled for early review.)	30/04/06

4	FS24	CA 1989 SI 1991/890	The Service should ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained in respect of the child, which includes the recordings completed by carers on behalf of the child, to comply with Arrangements for the Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1998.	30/06/06
5	FS32	17(1)	The Service must ensure that supervision and training for friends and family carers is comparable to mainstream carers.	30/06/06

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	FS12	The Service should consider to reviewing the timescales for initial medical assessments for those children where there is little or no information available regarding their health care history.
2	FS6	Foster carer agreements would be improved by including specific reference to complying with visits from the Commission in accordance with Regulation 28(5)(b) Schedule 5 (13).
3	FS13	The Service should review its role in ensuring the content of PEPs of a good standard and these are reviewed regularly following significant changes for children.
4	FS13	The Service should consider reviewing the amount of education provided to excluded children in specific cases.
5	FS10	The Service should request contact risk assessments from placing social workers for all children.
6	FS11	The Service should consider including specific reference to the role of the Commission when the Children's Guide is fully revised

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Birmingham Office

1st Floor

Ladywood House

45-46 Stephenson Street

Birmingham

B2 4UZ

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: 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