



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**City of York Fostering Service**

**10/12 George Hudson Street  
York  
YO1 6JL**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Marcia Mackey**

*Announced Inspection*  
**30th January 2006      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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

*Every Child Matters*, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

**Name of service** City of York Fostering Service

**Address** 10/12 George Hudson Street  
York  
YO1 6JL

**Telephone number** 01904 613161

**Fax number**

**Email address**

**Provider Web address**

**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** City of York Council

**Name of registered manager (if applicable)** Mary McKelvey

**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**      31st January 2005

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

The City of York Council operates its fostering services through two teams that are part of the Community Services Department. The Family Placement Team recruits families to work with children who are looked after by the local authority and the Sharing Care Team recruits families who offer short term breaks for children with disabilities. All the carers who are recruited, approved and supported by these two teams are approved to act as foster carers.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over a period of two weeks and included interviews with both team managers, the Family Placement Team (FPT), the Sharing Care team (SCT), placing social workers and the Children's Rights Officer. In addition, inspectors were able to attend a fostering panel and to interview the Panel Chair. A number of visits were made to foster carers and to parents during the course of the inspection and inspectors attended training events, including CAMHS and child protection training, and were also able to attend a meeting of the York Area Foster Carers Association. Foster Carers attended an inspection meeting at which they were invited to give their views of the fostering service. Questionnaires were sent out to all placing officers, foster carers, parents and children / young people: the results of these have been incorporated into the inspection findings. Young people had been engaged in a number of meetings prior to the start of the inspection (unconnected with the inspection process) and chose not to meet with inspectors on this occasion. However, as well as questionnaire feedback, their views were obtained via minutes from recent meetings in which they were asked about being fostered in York. Feedback from children and young people who receive Sharing Care was via questionnaire and / or via parental feedback.

We would like to thank all those who took part in the inspection for their assistance throughout.

Marcia Mackey and Ian Milner  
Regulatory Inspectors

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

City of York Fostering / Sharing Care Service has a child centred approach which is informed by a good understanding of the needs of the children, young people and families it supports. The service collaborates well with other teams and disciplines, including health and education, and the steering group continues to develop and monitor a wide range of initiatives designed to support Looked After Children. The Sharing Care team is innovative in recruiting carers and offers very good pre and post approval support. Both teams undertake good quality assessments of potential foster / sharing carers and the Fostering Panel contributes effectively to decision-making.

City of York Foster / Sharing Carers offer a good quality of care and have a sound understanding of the needs of children and young people.

The service is effective at consulting with children and young people regarding their views.

Children and young people wished the following comments to be recorded about the service: 'My foster carers are wonderful to me in all aspects of my

life', ' My Sharing Carer is always using every opportunity to help me learn – I love it.' ' You know you are with someone safe who cares about your welfare'  
'My foster family is the Greatest',

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

Since the previous inspection, the FPT and SCT meet more regularly and, where possible, conduct joint reviews.

The Specialist Foster Scheme is now established and there are plans to develop this scheme by recruiting further specialist carers. Consequently, the number of children being placed in foster families outside of the York area has reduced since the previous inspection

Arrangements for out of hours support to carers has been reviewed and will be staffed by Children and Families social workers as part of a years pilot. This service will enable any issues to be addressed at a pre Emergency Duty Team level.

All employment references are now seen by the Manager of each service prior to staff's commencement in post.

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

- The fostering service is effective in consulting with children and young people and should now ensure that these ideas and views contribute to developments and improvements within the service.
- The FPT should ensure that carers understand how to safely store records about young people and the arrangements for giving records back at the end of a placement.
- Complaints made about the service should be recorded at each stage of the process.
- Placing social workers should be informed when additional children are placed in foster families with whom they have already made placements.
- The fostering service should offer an Induction programme to all foster carers.
- Foster carers reported feeling undervalued by the service at times, particularly regarding consultation and planning for children and young people in their care. Placing SW and FPT should therefore ensure that carers are consulted and that they have clear guidelines regarding any necessary limits to their involvement in decision-making.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

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

The fostering service effectively promotes the health and development of children and young people. However, foster carers do not always receive timely or adequate information regarding young people's health needs from placing social workers.

### EVIDENCE:

LAC documentation includes information regarding children's basic health needs and all children / young people are registered with a GP and Dentist and are required to have a full immunisation programme and regular dental checks. Children's files contain plans regarding their physical, emotional and social development and there was evidence of children accessing specialist services such as CAMHS. Foster carers receive training regarding the health needs of looked after children and those interviewed had a good knowledge and understanding of meeting these needs.

The Sharing Care Nurse coordinator produces individual health care plans for each child with additional health needs or life-limiting conditions and these plans are agreed and signed by parents, carers and the responsible paediatrician. Sharing Carers receive training via the team's Nurse Coordinator who is responsible for arranging training in specialist interventions such as gastrostomy feeding and the administration of rectal diazepam: no carer is required to carry out these interventions unless they feel comfortable doing so.

The sharing care newsletter 'spotlights' a different health condition in every issue in order to broaden carer's understanding and awareness of a range of disabilities.

The LAC steering group is actively engaged in improving health outcomes for all fostered children. Future plans include the initial health assessments of looked after children taking place in the home environment rather than in a

clinical setting. Children and young people will then be monitored on an ongoing basis by health visitors (for the under 5 age range) and school nurses (for over 5's) rather than via a 'one off' assessment.

Carers interviewed during the inspection felt that where they had been given sufficient information they were able to respond well to children and young people's health and developmental needs: however, some carers reported that these needs were often 'minimised' in pre-placement information. Social workers should ensure that health information accurately reflects the child's needs and that carers are informed of these in advance of the placement where possible.

## 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 and 30

The fostering service provides suitable foster carers and effectively safeguards children and young people from abuse and neglect. However, the matching process does not always include sufficient information sharing with relevant professionals.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers and sharing carers undergo the same assessment and approval process via the BAAF Form F assessment. This allows the teams to establish a thorough understanding of carers' background and experience. All carers are subject to checks via the Criminal Records Bureau and approvals take place via both the fostering panel and the Agency Decision Maker. The inspectors were able to attend one panel: assessments were of good quality and the panel's discussions showed evidence of a good understanding of diversity issues. The panel is quorate although the Chair is seeking to appoint a panel member who has personal experience of the looked after system. Prospective foster / sharing carers are able to attend the panel meeting at which their application is presented for approval and this is regarded as a positive development by staff and carers.

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

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

The service prioritises the matching of children and foster families as far as this is possible: this was evidenced via both written documentation and team meetings observed during the inspection. Discussions took into account the needs of the child / young person to be placed as well as the needs of other family members.

The Sharing Care team holds a 3 weekly matching and linking meeting during which the needs of the child, the skills of the carer, the child's interests and abilities and the needs of other children in the household are considered prior to making a placement. In addition, FPT and SCT liaise together where there are both fostered children and sharing care children in placement.

The inspector was able to obtain the views of the birth child of one foster family who felt that she had been consulted throughout the approval process as well as in preparation for each foster placement. Family placement workers assist birth children to complete a questionnaire which focuses on the positives and negatives of fostering and this was reported to be very helpful.

A number of placing social workers reported that they had not been informed by the service where additional children had been placed with a foster family. The service should ensure that placing social workers are involved in this process in order to ensure that the needs of all children in the home continue to be met by the placement.

All carers receive pre and post approval training in safeguarding children from abuse and the inspector was able to attend one child-protection training event, which was of a good standard. In addition, carers receive copies of the Fostering Network book 'Safe Caring' and are required to draw up a safe-caring policy for their home, which is reviewed as part of the annual review process. Where child-protection concerns have arisen, these have been managed appropriately. Children and young people have a variety of means via which to express any concerns; these include child-care reviews, contact with the Children's Rights Officer, access to 'Carezone' and the complaints helpline. Children also receive guidance via the quarterly 'Who Cares' magazine.

The fostering service / sharing care handbooks clearly state that use of physical punishment is prohibited and carers receive training in managing difficult behaviour. Inspectors were able to attend CAMHS training which focussed on some of the challenging behaviours that fostered children and young people may exhibit and the ways in which these can be managed by carers. This training was of a good standard and allowed carers to focus upon their own experience as well as professional guidance. Foster Carers and Sharing Carers receive guidance regarding what to do if a foster child is

missing from home and the local authority is currently developing new procedures for use by support / social workers who work with children in foster homes.

# 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 and 31

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

## **EVIDENCE:**

Carers have a good understanding of diversity and equality issues and children’s files contain evidence that gender, religion, culture and disability are taken into account when planning for care. Both teams receive training in diversity issues and the sharing care team specialises in the care of children with disabilities and their families. Training observed during the inspection included value based discussion regarding public awareness of and response to children with disabilities as well as carers’ own pre-conceptions of disabled people. This is good practice.

The fostering service is committed to Looked After Children’s educational attainment and the LAC steering group continues to develop a range of initiatives to support this attainment. The steering group includes members with education expertise, including an educational psychologist, a LAC teacher and a pedagogical support worker. The LAC teacher is able to work with fostered children either in school or, if they have been excluded, at the foster home. The fostering service has also developed an information pack for Designated Teachers in schools and Early Years Education (VIP) and Social Workers which outlines the importance of PEPs for Looked After Children and gives practical guidance on how professionals can contribute to the assessment process. The team is working towards the goal of 100% of looked after children having a Personal Education Plan (the current figure is approximately

85%) and all children's files examined during the inspection process contained PEPs.

In response to research regarding the negative impact of numerous placements on young people's social and educational development, the CAMH service provides support specifically to young people who have experienced a number of different placements.

# **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 and 11

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

### **EVIDENCE:**

Carers are provided with training regarding the importance of maintaining links with the child's birth family. Those children who returned questionnaires reported that carers help them to arrange suitable contact times and venues and that they are supported with, for example, transport to and from visits. However, carers reported numerous difficulties with taxis, which have resulted in children being late for visits or in their not being collected at all. This matter was discussed at the recent LAC steering group and is being addressed on an ongoing basis by the fostering service.

Social workers reported that a minority of carers have shown reluctance to facilitate contact and this was reflected in the inspector's group discussion with carers. However, carers had a good understanding of their role in ensuring that positive contact takes place, even where this is 'difficult', and no carer had prevented a child from contact with family.

Children and young people continue to report difficulties in maintaining contact with their peer group, particularly where they live with foster families away from their local area. The development of the Specialist Foster Scheme has done much to reduce the number of out of area placements and this has had a positive impact on children's ability to maintain these contacts.

The fostering service regularly consults with children and young people via the Children's Rights Service regarding their experiences of being fostered. Prior to

the inspection, children and young people had been able to meet with members of the City Council to discuss their experiences and to outline where they felt changes were needed. At the most recent Children's Rights event, children and young people had commented that the fostering service is good at obtaining children's views but that they would now like to see more action in relation to the points they raise.

The inspectors found a mixed picture with regard to children and young people being consulted by placing social workers about plans for their future: questionnaire responses were positive regarding relationships with social workers and the extent to which children felt involved and consulted by them. However, wider consultation by the fostering service / Children's Rights group has highlighted a need for greater involvement by children in decision - making.

# 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 and 29

Young people are assisted in preparing for adulthood. The service pays carers an allowance as specified; however, there is a degree of inconsistency regarding the payment of expenses.

### EVIDENCE:

Young people are referred to the Pathway Team at the review closest to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Following a referral, an Education Training Officer contacts the young person in order to assess their needs in relation to leaving care. Where appropriate, a designated worker assists young people to find employment but young people are encouraged and enabled to make arrangements for their own job interviews and other appointments with support both from their carers and the Pathway team. The Pathway Team has developed a 'Looking Ahead Group' in order to further support young people in foster care and there are also plans to deliver training to foster carers regarding the impact of a child permanently leaving the foster home. While the work of the Pathway team was regarded positively by foster carers, some reported feeling 'left out' of the preparation for young people's independence and would like the opportunity to be further involved in this process.

The fostering service pays allowances as specified in the Foster Carers' Handbook and carers reported receiving these on time. However, carers have made representations to the service regarding dissatisfaction with the level of payments and this matter is currently under consideration by the local authority.

Some carers also expressed dissatisfaction regarding the lack of consistency regarding expenses: issues raised included different levels of expenses being paid to different carers for the same items and / or expenses being delayed.



# 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**

2,3,17,21,22,23,24,25 and 32.

The fostering service is well-managed although the local authority should ensure that recent changes to the staffing of the sharing care team do not impact negatively on the team or its operation.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service manager has recently delegated some line management responsibilities to a Senior Practitioner in order to focus on developing and delivering staff training in the new Adoption and Fostering legislation. These arrangements are currently satisfactory but the service should ensure that workloads for both staff are not too onerous during this period. There are arrangements in place for the Group Manager to deputise in the manager's absence.

The current Sharing Care Team Leader is leaving the post at short notice and, at the time of the inspection, no formal arrangements had been made for her replacement. The local authority should ensure that the SCT is adequately managed and supported during this period and that a new Team Leader is identified as soon as possible in order for the service to continue operating effectively.

Foster carers are provided with a range of opportunities for training and development and the service has attempted to ensure that events are delivered at venues and times that are flexible for carers. Although the majority of carers commented positively about the training offered, the preparation course for fostering has received criticism from a minority who felt that one course did not focus on key issues in sufficient detail. The service manager is currently developing an Induction Programme for foster carers which will enable a more in depth approach to the topics covered.

The service is currently piloting the Integrated Children's System (ICS) for record keeping which will involve the majority of files being electronically held. The service manager should ensure that during this period, all files are monitored (both paper and electronic versions) and that remedial action is taken where necessary. Carers should also be clear regarding their responsibility for the safe storage and return of children's files / personal information during placement and following the end of placement.

# 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>	2
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	3
<b>30</b>	3

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	3
<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>	2

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

### **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	8.3	Matches should be achieved by means of consulting with all relevant professionals.
2	29.1	The service should ensure consistency regarding the payment of expenses and payments should be made promptly.
3	23.2	All new foster carers should receive induction training.
4	24.8	The fostering service should ensure that carers store information safely and that this information is passed back to the fostering service at the end of each placement.
5	25.3,25.13	Records should be monitored and remedial action taken where necessary. Records of complaints should be recorded on relevant files for staff, carers and children and should include details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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