



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Trafford Fostering Services

**4th Floor
Waterside House
Sale
Manchester
M33 7ZF**

Lead Inspector
Lolly Warren, Ruth Loughridge

Announced Inspection
6th March 2006 10:00

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Trafford Fostering Services
Address	4th Floor Waterside House Sale Manchester M33 7ZF
Telephone number	0161 912 5050
Fax number	0161 912 2144
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 25th October 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Trafford Family Placement Team provides fostering service for the authority. It provides short-term, long-term and permanent placements for children "looked after". It also provides short-term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being "looked after".

The Service was responsible for recruiting, assessing and approving foster carers as well as supporting them. Since the last inspection, the responsibility for assessing and supporting friend and family (kinship carers) has transferred from the social workers in the area teams, to the family placement team.

The Family Placement Team is based in Sale, in a new local authority building which houses a number of other council services. However, some of the administrative support to the Service was still based at other sites.

The Family Placement Team is made up of the Family Placement Team Manager, 1 Senior Practitioner and 4 Family Placement Officers, one of whom has their role divided between Family Placement work and the recruitment of foster carers. At the time of the inspection, an agency worker was filling one vacant post. Two Support Workers have been recruited whose role is to provide additional support to carers and the children fostered by them. A Team Clerk and 3 Administration Officers provide administrative support to the team. The Children with Disabilities Team Manager has one full time member of staff who recruits and supports carers for the 'Home from Home' scheme.

There is no requirement under the Care Standards Act 2000, to register a local authority Fostering Service.

SUMMARY

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

The annual announced inspection of Trafford Fostering Services began on Monday 6th March and lasted for three days. Two inspectors undertook the inspection. During this time the inspectors met with:

- The manager of the Family Placement Team
- The Head of Services for Looked After Children
- The Placements Manager
- The Social Worker who is responsible for the Home from Home service and their manager
- The Family Placement Team
- The Support Workers
- The Social Workers who place children and young people
- The Children's Rights officer

The inspectors also:

- Attended a Panel meeting
- Met with some carers and the children/young people they looked after
- Went to the foster carers support group
- Sent out questionnaires to carers and young people
- Looked at files and records kept by the service

This part of the report is written especially for the children and young people who are fostered by Trafford Fostering Services so that they can read about what the service does well, the things that have improved since the last inspection and what the service needs to do better.

What the service does well:

The fostering service is good at making sure that children and young people have the health care they need. The carers are given training and information about keeping healthy and there is a special nurse called a 'Community Nurse for Looked After Children', who can help the carers when they are not sure about something to do with health. The service also has someone who can give advice about how to help the children and young people take care of their feelings and emotional health.

The service is good at making sure that the people who they have as foster carers are the right people for the job that they do. Most of the time the carers had the right information, training and support they needed to look after the children and young people properly. It was also good to see that the people who work for the service have got the right experience and qualifications to support the children, young people and the carers. It was clear by talking to them that they know how to do their jobs and that they think about important things when placing a child or young person with a foster carer. These are the

most important things that the service needs to do to help keep children and young people safe.

The service has someone whose job it is to look at ways the children and young people can get extra support if they are having difficulties at school. The National Teaching Advisory Service help with education and provide support for children and young people, especially when they are doing their course work and exams for GCSE's.

Trafford Fostering Services works hard at trying to make sure that there are a range of carers who are able to meet the needs of all their children and young people. This is important because the children and young people who are fostered are from a variety of backgrounds and so the service needs foster carers who are also from a range of backgrounds.

Because the service understands that children and young people who are Black or from other backgrounds are sometimes treated differently, and their needs are not always fully understood, they have set up a 'Black Case Panel'. The people who sit on the panel help the workers look at the best ways of meeting the needs of these children and young people.

The Children's Rights Officer helps to find out the views of the children young people who are fostered by Trafford. He has met with groups of children young people to talk about how they feel about school and education. He also meets with children and young people separately to discuss any complaints or concerns that they might have and helps them to sort these out.

The 'Home from Home' scheme provides short breaks for children and young people with disabilities. The carers will look after the children for a day or maybe an overnight or weekend. This part of the service is growing and they are now going to have another worker to help with arranging this support to children and young people with disabilities and their families.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The Trafford Fostering Service is steadily getting better. After the last inspection the service was asked to do some things to make some improvements and they have done the things they were asked to do. For example, it is important when a carer is looking after a child or young person that they have the information they need to look after them properly. The carers said that they now have "...more of the paperwork coming though" that has information about the children and young people.

Trafford asked for, and has been given money from the government, so that they can provide more children and young people, who live away from their families, with the option of being fostered. The money will help with finding more carers from a range of different backgrounds and give them the training they need to meet the needs of the children and young people.

At the foster carers support group the carers said that lots of things had improved over the last 18 months.

They said that there was a new manager and there were more Family Placement Officers and this meant that there was nearly always someone available to speak to if they needed to.

The carers said that all of the things they had asked for had been done. This included an increase in the payments they receive and information about the different kinds of help that they are entitled to. They also said that the new Support Workers provide valuable help to the families that need it.

What they could do better:

The carers sometimes need help and information about how to meet the needs of children from different backgrounds from their own. Although the workers have this information they need to make sure that carers also have it so that they can understand the needs of the child or young person.

The workers often think about the things that might place the children and young people at risk and the things that they do to keep them safe. This is not always written down in the files that they keep. It would be helpful if these things were written down so that if there were a new worker for the carer or the child/young person, they would know important information about helping to keep them safe.

The 'Panel' helps to make decisions about the people who become carers and the age and number of children they should care for. There were some occasions when carers were asked to take more children or older young people than was originally thought to be best for that carer. Sometimes these placements did not last very long. The service needs to think very carefully when it asks carers to take an extra child or an older young person than they thought they could look after so that children and young people have the placement that is right for them.

It would be good if someone on the panel had experienced what it is like to either be fostered or have your own children fostered so they could help the panel understand fostering from this point of view.

Sometimes it was not made clear for carers who paid for things like glasses when young people were 16 and 17 years old because they had a number of different workers involved in their care. The young people and the carers need to know this information so that young people received the things they need when they need them. One young person talked about their move to independent living and knew what their plans were. The Pathway Plans for carer leavers did not always have enough information written down about how the young person's goals were going to be achieved. This would be helpful in

making sure everyone is clear about how young people wish to be supported in their move to independence.

The carers said that sometimes communication about changes to meetings, or plans for a new child or young person coming to live with them need to be better. We have asked the service to think about the way important information is passed on.

It is important that workers keep a good records about the children and young people in foster care; the places the have lived, the people who have looked after them and the reasons they were looked after. Some of the records looked at did not give a clear understanding of these things. The report asks that the records give a clear understanding of a child or young person's life in foster care.

Although the social workers said that they ask children and young people their views, the individual files did not show how or when they have done this. It would be good if the files had more information about how children and young people are consulted with. Some of the carers did not feel that the views of their own children were thought about. It would also be good if the workers asked the birth children of the carers what their views and feelings were about what it is like to be part of a foster family.

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.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Trafford Fostering Service provides carers with support and information that assists in meeting the young peoples' health needs.

EVIDENCE:

The Looked After Children (LAC) documentation contained information relating to the young peoples' health. One of the carers explained that when a young person is placed with them that they always have the necessary LAC papers. However, it was noted on young peoples' individual files, that the consent to medical treatment was not always signed.

Training was available for carers on health related matters and covered: First Aid, Health Issues and Substance Misuse. The proposed training for carers for 2006-2007 has been expanded and includes a broader range of health related topics.

In discussion with the Family Placement Officers they reported that young people have an initial health assessment when they are placed and registration with General Practitioners and dentists are checked. Recently, a 'Health Information Pack' that holds a range of literature, has been made available to carers to assist, promote, and raise awareness in meeting children and young peoples' health needs.

The Community Nurse for Looked After Children provides support and advice to children, young people and their carers and has an overview of all of the young people's 'Health Action Plans'. In addition a Child Psychologist, who is managed through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, works with children and young people looked after within Trafford Children and Young People's Service (CYPS). The Head of Services for Looked After Children said that there are strong working arrangements across health and social services staff and he believes that people are committed to meeting the health needs of the children and young people who use the service.

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

The young people who are placed in the service are generally safe.

EVIDENCE:

The manager has relevant qualifications and experience of family placement. The manager is currently undertaking the National Vocational Qualification, Level 4 in Management to ensure they have the necessary skills for managing the fostering service. At a meeting with carers they cited the appointment of the manager as one of the improvements of the last 18 months.

Carers visited were aware of health and safety issues and they were provided with any necessary safety equipment. The service provides Family Placement Officers with clear guidelines to complete the Health and Safety assessment of carers' homes.

The Family Placement Officers (FPOs) said that as part of the matching process they consider the foster home's accommodation and whether the space available can meet the needs of the child or young person to be placed and any birth children within the family.

Close liaison with and the sharing of information between the placing social workers and the Family Placement Officers assists in the matching process and

both placing social workers and FPOs said that when matching a child or young person they consider any apparent training needs of potential carers.

Placing social workers and FPOs seek to match children and young people with carers from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They explained how they seek to support and meet the needs of children and young people where such a match has not been possible. Both teams identified the child's birth parents as a source of support and advice and the Family Placement team said that a member of their administrative team gathers information relating to caring for children from diverse backgrounds. However, one respite carer said that they were not provided with any information about how to care for a child from a different background from their own and they had to research this information themselves. The fostering service should therefore consider ways in which this information is passed on to carers; this would assist the good practice identified.

The service is developing its strategy to provide children and young people with carers of a similar ethnic and cultural background. Recently the service has recruited their first Asian carers who wish to act as a resource to the team in developing services and support to children and young people of similar backgrounds to their own.

The fostering service provides a range of training for carers aimed at keeping children and young people safe. This includes: 'Safer Caring', 'Working With Chronic Neglect' and various Child Protection courses, at different levels, including specific training on 'Disabled Children and Child Protection'.

A record of in which there had been apparent child protection concerns was provided by the service. A number of incidents were appropriately followed up through Trafford's Child Protection procedures.

Safe Caring Policies were on the carers' files. Although the policies were individualised, some of the elements were not always linked to appropriate risk assessments. Where risks are identified, these should be assessed, written up and placed on the carers and/or young person's file as appropriate.

Policies relating to bullying, missing from home and managing behaviour are provided for carers in their 'Information Pack'. Trafford MBC and the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have a joint protocol entitled 'For Children Missing From Care in Greater Manchester'. One carer described positively, the support she received from the police during a period when a child placed in their care was missing from home. However, they experienced this as an unexpected source of support and did not appear to be fully aware of the role of the police within the protocol. The fostering service should ensure that carers are fully appraised of the role of GMP, where children and young people are missing from home. The policy of the service is to notify the Commission for Social

Care Inspection if a child has been missing for 21 days. Although not a requirement, the agency does this as a matter of good practice.

Recruitment of staff follows established HR procedures. Social work staff are suitably experienced and qualified. Successful applicants are required to provide satisfactory references (including enhanced CRB disclosures, renewed every three years), which are checked before an appointment is made. New members of the team are given an induction pack that explains the procedures and policies that they are expected to follow.

The make up of the fostering panel meets the required mix of suitably skilled and experienced members. It was noted however, that the panel does not have a person who at any time had been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with foster carers. It is recommended that the panel consider recruiting someone who can provide their view and input from this perspective.

The panel has a clear role to provide quality assurance in relation to the assessment process. Another of their functions is to consider changes to the approval range of carers and any exemptions to their approval. Decisions about the approval range of carers are arrived at following a thorough assessment of the carers suitability and capacity to care; therefore, it was concerning to note, within the sample of cases looked at, the relatively high number of children who are placed outside the terms of the carers approval, and, the number of exemptions that were brought to the panel. In some cases several exemptions were applied for within the carers first year of being registered. A number of these placements resulted in an eventual breakdown. The service should therefore:

- Monitor the number of children and young people placed outside the carers' terms of approval.
- Consider whether it is necessary to review the approach to defining the carers' terms of approval (It might be the case that initially these are defined too narrowly).
- Consider the experience and capacity of carers, before seeking exemptions on their terms of approval.

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

The service has systems in place to support and address issues of diversity and the educational needs of children and young people. Respite, and 'Home from Home' carers provide appropriate short-term breaks for children and young people.

EVIDENCE:

Through discussions with staff, the training available and efforts to recruit carers from a range of backgrounds it was clear that the fostering service recognises and values diversity. At the time of the inspection a student social worker, on placement with the Family Placement Team, was carrying out research into how the service can attract carers from a range of backgrounds. Staff made reference to the recruiting of same sex couples and single people as carers as well as emphasising the need for carers from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The staff acknowledged that in an emergency situation it could be difficult where a child's parents object to a cross culture match and they said that, dependant upon their age and understanding, the views of the child or young person would be considered.

In acknowledgement of the prejudice and discrimination faced by Black children and young people, the Children and Young People's Service have set up a 'Black Case Panel'. The panel aims to provide more culturally appropriate services to Black and Minority Ethnic children and young people by discussing individual cases and exploring with the social worker whether needs are being met. There is a Trafford Foster Carer representative on the Black Case Panel.

The FPOs said that the increased partnership working with schools has benefited children and young people. Trafford CYPS operates a multi agency LAC panel that meets fortnightly to discuss cases of complexity. The Chief Advisor, School Improvement, provides input regarding educational issues on the panel, and, resources to support children with education are identified. One young person said that the input they received from the National Teaching Advisory Service (NTAS) has been helpful in preparation for their GCSEs. The services of NTAS (an independent agency) are employed to support Looked After Children at Key Stage 4.

Copies of Personal Education Plans were kept on the children and young peoples' individual files.

The service provides short term breaks for children and young people. One of the respite carers spoken with was clear about their role in the life of the child they support. In addition the Home from Home (HfH) scheme, which is managed by the Children with Disabilities Team Manager, provides respite and short breaks for children with disabilities. In addition to the volunteers who provide respite care, the service has recently employed a number of 'multi-link carers' who support a number of disabled children and their families with respite care. As the scheme has expanded and developed, the department is in the process of recruiting an additional worker for the scheme. Home from Home carers and respite carers have access to the same training as foster carers.

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 receive the support they need to remain in contact with their families. Whilst there was evidence that young people were consulted with this was not always well demonstrated in the individual files.

EVIDENCE:

Both the placing social workers and the Family Placement Officers acknowledged the importance of contact for children and young people. They were clear about the need to balance the needs and wishes of the child with the views and commitments of carers. Carers received initial training about the importance of contact and had access to post-approval training on supervising and assessing contact. Where it is not felt to be appropriate for carers to facilitate contact the Support Workers and placing social workers would do so. Contact arrangements are discussed at the point of placement and are reassessed at the Looked After Children review.

Young people said they were consulted with about the way they were looked after and given choices on a range of matters such as what they would eat and where they go to where they will live when they move on from their foster placement. Placing social workers and FPOs reflected that they consult with children, their carers, and where appropriate, their parents in preparing for statutory reviews and also as part of carers reviews. Children and young people complete consultation forms prior to reviews and pictorial consultation form is available for children with communication difficulties.

The Children's Rights Officer (CRO) plays an important role in consulting with, and representing the interests of children and young people who are looked

after by the service. The CRO works with individual children and young people where they have concerns and complaints and a clear structure is in place through which these are addressed. The results of consultation with children and young people carried out by the CRO formed part of the service's 'education strategy'. The Children's Rights Officer acknowledged the potential for a conflict of interests when advocating on behalf of a child against his employer and stated that where this might arise an external advocate would be introduced.

Although there are systems in place to consult with children and young people, consultation was not clearly evidenced on their individual files.

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

Young people are supported in preparing for adulthood. Whilst generally carers are satisfied with the arrangements for payments they require further clarity about the financial assistance to which they are entitled.

EVIDENCE:

The 'Aftercare Team' forms part of the Children and Young People's Service. Young people aged 16 and over have a Pathway Plan in which they are consulted and their carers' views are sought. Whilst the plans set out the goals for the young person they did not always provide sufficient detail about how the goals were to be achieved. One of the young people explained that they have regular contact with their aftercare worker. They have also met with the member of the team dedicated to co-ordinating Supported Lodgings as they are considering this as an option for moving on from their foster placement. This young person has found the various workers helpful and supportive.

The foster carers group highlighted a number of issues relating to the arrangements for payments:

- There was some confusion around whose responsibility it is to finance aspects the care and needs of 16 & 17 year old young people. It was described as, "...a very grey area." The service should provide clear information to carers defining whose responsibility it is to pay for items such as glasses when a young person receives a service from both the placing social worker and an aftercare worker.
- There was a lack of clarity about payment for items that are broken or damaged by foster children in the carers homes. Where some carers understood that they must claim on their house insurance, others

claimed the cost of damages directly from the service. Carers therefore should be provided with clear guidance on this matter.

- Not all carers were aware of the financial assistance that they are entitled to, for example, laundry payments. Carers should therefore be provided with clarity on the financial assistance that is available to them.

The group were however, generally satisfied with the arrangements for payments and they spoke positively about the increased financial support they now receive.

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

17, 19, 21, 23, 24 & 32

The service is staffed with well-motivated staff who are keen to deliver a good service to carers and children and young people. Some improvements in communication and recording would be of benefit in supporting carers and providing a clear understanding for children and young people about their time in foster care.

EVIDENCE:

The foster carers group were very positive about the progress within the family placement service over the last 18 months and emphasised that the expansion of the team, and the new manager, has played a large part in the improvements that have been made. Four FPOs were employed by the service at the time of the inspection and one post was vacant.

The Family Placement Workers are qualified social workers. They felt that the range of professional and personal experience (one of the staff had previously been a foster carer) within the team, equipped them well to meet the needs of the families and young people who used the service. One of the team has the responsibilities within their role split between family placement work and the recruitment of foster carers. The Family Placement Team talked about the strategy aimed at recruiting a range of carers and the ways in which they are planning to promote the service to potential carers.

During the inspection process it was identified by a number of staff that the service requires more carers who have the skills and experience to meet the needs of teenagers who require foster care. One carer said that the training they received prior to fostering did not prepare them for what it would be like to care for a teenager and the training on behaviour management did not provide sufficient skills to address the challenges that caring for teenagers presents. The service should therefore address the provision of foster care to adolescents through their training and recruitment strategies.

Feedback from carers, through questionnaires, meeting with individuals and with the support group, about the level of support they received, was mixed. One carer described how they were supported through a particularly difficult time with one of the young children they cared for. They said the FPO and the 'family aid' visited and rang regularly, and provided advice and practical help. This was contrasted with how they felt supported in caring for a teenage young person, which they described as "varied". They identified that support for the young person, although offered, was not timely and that earlier intervention, addressing emerging issues, may have protected the placement from the subsequent breakdown. When the placement did eventually breakdown, the carer felt they did not receive the support they needed.

Poor communication was highlighted as a concern for carers; they expressed that:

- There have been occasions when carers have not been kept up to date and informed about changes of plans when they were expecting a new child or young person to be placed in an emergency. Carers said this could cause them significant disruption.
- At times, not enough notice is given about meetings or change of time or venue of meetings.
- There is no systematic distribution of the minutes of meetings.

- There was a general feeling that clearer communication between placing social workers, FPOs, children and young people in placement and carers would be of benefit.

The service must therefore review and develop the strategy for working with and supporting carers by ensuring clear systems of communication and timely responses to the support needs of the children and young people and their carers.

Manchester Foster Care Association (MFCA) provides independent support to carers and receives financial assistance from the Children and Young People's Service. The carers found this particularly helpful in terms of 'peer support'; they identified that they now realise they are "not carers in isolation." Carers said they now have access to a complaints procedure and have a right to have representation through the MFCA where there might be an allegation made against them.

The training available to carers has been commented upon throughout the report. At the panel it was noted that in the review of a carer who had not attended training in the last year, the social worker asserted that a carer did not require training due to their professional background. Whilst it was acknowledged that the carer would have found it difficult to meet the commitments of training, caring and their work, the importance of attending key areas covered in training, was not. The service should ensure that carers training needs are thoroughly appraised and promoted through the Annual Review process.

Support for the birth children of carers was recognised by the teams and the carers, as an area that requires further development. Whilst it was acknowledged by carers that their children are considered during the assessment process they felt that little further consideration was given to their needs and views. It was noted that with one of the cases brought to the panel for review, the needs and views of the birth child were considered. There was a sense however amongst carers that at times they were expected to consider the needs of the children and young people to be placed, above those of their own children. A suggestion was made that more discussion between the social worker and birth children about a child or young person to be placed, or a questionnaire for birth children might be helpful in making and sustaining placements. One carer commented, "It's the whole family that foster not just the carer." The service should consider ways in which they can demonstrate that the views and needs of birth children are considered.

Young people's files were not well ordered. From some of the files it was difficult to establish basic information such as the child or young person's current legal status or why they were placed. One file had information relating to 3 other young people and documents were frequently not signed or dated. Some files lacked demonstration of written risk assessments and the consultation that takes place with children and young people. The service

should ensure that children and young peoples' files provide an accessible and comprehensive record of the nature and quality of care provided.

The carers are provided with lockable boxes in which to keep records relating to children and young people. One carer visited did not keep the young person's information, in their own home. This raised concerns about confidentiality and safety. The service must ensure that all carers understand the importance of storing information about children and young people in the appropriate way.

Since the last inspection, the responsibility for supporting Family and Friends as carers has passed from placing social workers to the Family Placement Team. Discussion with a 'family and friends' carer showed that whilst they felt they were well supported, they were not aware of the role of the Family Placement Officer in supporting their care of the young person in placement. It subsequently became clear that this aspect of the Family Placement Service is still at a transitional stage and there are plans to further develop the role of the FPT in supporting Family and Friends as Carers. The service should continue to develop the role of the Family Placement Team in supporting Family and Friends as carers.

Keeping in line with the Every Child Matters agenda, the overall strategy for the authority, is to reduce and keep young people out of Residential Care by improving and developing the fostering service. With this in mind the authority has successfully secured government funding to develop a Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to provide a range of foster carers from different backgrounds and to recruit and train those who are able to provide intensive, focused support to children and young people whose needs are such that they require a high level of support.

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	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	2
15	3
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	3
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	X
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	3
20	X
21	2
22	X
23	3
24	2
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	3

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? No

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS12	15	The service must ensure that the 'consent to medical treatment' on the LAC documentation is always signed.	25/05/06
2.	FS9	11	The service must ensure that where risks are identified, these are assessed, written up and placed on the carers and/or young person's file as appropriate.	25/05/06
3.	FS30	26	The service must consider: a) Monitoring the number of children and young people placed outside the carers' terms of approval. b) Whether it is necessary to review the approach to defining the carers' terms of approval. c) The experience of carers before seeking exemptions on their terms of approval.	25/05/06
4.	FS24	11	The service must ensure that all carers understand the importance of storing information about children and young people in safely and securely.	25/05/06
5.	FS21	17	The service must review and develop the strategy for working	26/06/06

			with and supporting carers by ensuring clear systems of communication and timely responses to the support needs of the children and young people and their carers.	
6.	FS14	16	The service should ensure that young peoples' Pathway Plans set out clearly how their future goals are to be achieved.	26/06/06

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.	FS8	The service should consider ways in which the information gathered about caring for children from different backgrounds, is effectively passed on to carers.
2.	FS9	The service should ensure that carers are fully appraised of the role of GMP, where children and young people are missing from home.
3.	FS30	The service should consider recruiting a panel member who has been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with foster carers.
4.	FS11	The service should consider ways in which it can be demonstrated that children and young people are consulted with, on their individual files.
5.	FS14	When a young person receives a service from both the placing social worker and an aftercare worker, the service should provide clear information to carers, defining whose responsibility it is to pay for particular items and activities.
6.	FS17	The service should address the provision of foster care to adolescents through their training and recruitment strategies.
7.	FS24	The service should ensure that where discussions take place in meeting about the process of independence/Aftercare for each young person, the information is separately recorded and placed on the individual young person's file.
8.	FS29	The service should provide carers with clear information regarding: a) The reparation of any damage or loss of items

		caused by the children or young people placed by the service. b) The financial assistance to which they are entitled.
9.	FS23	The service should consider ways in which they can demonstrate that the views and needs of birth children are considered.
10.	FS23	The service should ensure that carers training needs are thoroughly appraised and promoted through the Annual Review process.
11.	FS24	The service should ensure that children and young peoples' files provide an accessible and comprehensive record of the nature and quality of care provided.
12.	FS32	The service should continue to develop the role of the Family Placement Team in supporting Family and Friends as carers.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

CSCI, Local office

9th Floor

Oakland House

Talbot Road

Manchester

M16 0PQ

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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