



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency

**Parkfield House
38 Esplanade Road
Paignton
Devon
TQ3 2NH**

Lead Inspector
Christine Freestone

Second Inspector- Jennifer Reed.

1st February 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 Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency

Address Parkfield House
38 Esplanade Road
Paignton
Devon
TQ3 2NH

Telephone number 01803 201201

Fax number

Email address

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Torbay Local Authority Fostering Agency

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Mrs Rosie Rayner

Type of registration Local Auth Fostering Service

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 8th February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Torbay Council is a small unitary authority in South Devon. The foster care service is a constituent part of the accommodation services provision for the authority and is currently based at Parkfield House , Paignton.

The service provides a range of placements and has recently been divided into two sections , each led by a service manager. Mainstream fostering and the family & friends scheme form one part of the service; adolescent placements, contract care and the adolescent support work team form the service which deals with children looked after who require more complex care.

The service is also developing provision related to private fostering. At the time of the inspection the service held 64 carers on the register with whom 101 children looked after are placed.

The structure of the service is as follows: an operations manager has oversight of all accommodation services (i.e. foster care, adoption service, one children's home and a specialist assessment and therapy service – SATS.) Two service managers between them have oversight of 8 fostering social workers and 5 adolescent support workers. The team is supported in terms of clerical and financial support by 6 part and full time staff.

Recruitment to the fostering service is managed by a central human resources team and the management teams of the service area concerned. Foster carers are recruited to the service utilising various methods , most recruitment being by "word of mouth." Foster carers currently approved generally enable the service to provide a variety of placements in terms of gender , age and type.

A broad range of policies and procedures are established within the authority in relation to the service provision. Service specific policy and procedural guidance is also in place.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection carried out by two inspectors between February 1st 2006 and March 13th 2006 totalling 75 hours of inspection. Evidence was gathered from the sources listed below:

- *A comprehensive file / records audit.
- *Interviews and meetings with: Operations manager, registered/ service manager; service manager; 7 of the 8 fostering social workers; 3 of the 5 adolescent support workers; the administrative/ finance team.
- * Informal discussion with the : operations manager and service manager (permanency planning)
- *Interviews and / or meetings with: 8 foster carers and 1 young person.
- *Interviews with staff from the human resources department and the education department.
- *Observation of the panel and its' process .
- *Survey returns from 36 placing social workers; 19 foster carers.
- *Survey returns from 27 children looked after.

Three parents of children looked after were also invited to meet with the inspectors , 2 did not reply , 1 declined the invitation.

The report is written in such a way as to reflect what the Authority must / should do and what the Service must / should do. It is written in this way in order to highlight issues which impact upon the Service provision, but which cannot be wholly controlled or implemented by the Service.

What the service does well:

The inspectors wish to commend the team for their evident enthusiasm for the development of the service and support for foster carers. The service has very good placement stability. The adolescent support team demonstrate commitment to the young people they support. The recordings made by the adolescent support team are very good. The role of an educational adolescent support worker in providing pastoral support for a period of education transition (from primary to secondary school) is a good practice model. The family and friends model of practice developed over the last two years has been rolled out with very good results. The Foster Force group for the support of foster carers own children is a model of good practice. The restructured Skills to Foster programme provides a clear indicator of the potential of applicants to progress to full assessment as foster carers. Support groups are well established and well regarded by foster carers. A newly developed Sexual Health (Practice Guidance) and information pack is a good practice model. Foster carers feel well supported with regard to education and their involvement in personal education plan (PEP) meetings. Foster carers report that support in transporting to school and liaison with local schools is good. Foster carers feel that the independent reviewing process supports and enables

them in their role. The Contract Care model has been used more flexibly to accommodate young people.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A monitoring system of the quality of provision has been initiated. Panel has undertaken a very focussed training day and defined its' role further. The service has moved to develop a clearer matching process. Issues around the financial return for fostering are clearly explored at the assessment stage. Updating of the training programme is in progress. The budget for the adolescent support workers has been clarified. Record keeping is improved. The service has recognised a need to restructure and manage /deliver a more focussed service around complex care needs for young people. The service has initiated a project which will develop a model for private fostering. A review of training for foster carers is underway.

What they could do better:

The Authority must ensure that they see and record all General Social Care Council (GSCC) certificates of all practising social workers. The Authority / Service must ensure that no new member of staff who has direct contact with children looked after, should start work for the service until an enhanced CRB has been seen. The Service must ensure that records of telephone reference follow up calls are held in the personnel files. The Authority should make sure that the processes related to Human Resources are clearly defined in terms of local responsibility as the current system appears unclear and is not well monitored. The Service must ensure that Safe Care assessments are in place for all carers. The Authority must ensure that all carers receive initial and updated Child Protection training. The Authority should make sure that a written, transferable health record is in place for each child looked after. The Authority should make sure that routine dental care is available to all children looked after (not just emergency care). The Service should make sure that all foster carers hold a full training portfolio. The Service should make sure that where carers are jointly approved they both complete all the required training. The Authority should make sure that carers are paid the appropriate payment and not over / underpayments which can cause financial problems for some .The Service must make sure that all staff receive an annual appraisal. The

Service should make sure that foster carers sign all their records. The Authority should make sure records are appropriately filed in the correct child's file. The Authority should make sure that all details held within a child's file are correct .e.g dates. The Service should make sure that all foster carers receive adequate supervision and training, including those geographically distant.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12. The day to day health needs of young people are generally well met.

EVIDENCE:

Examination of children's files , foster carer records, interviews with managers, staff and foster carers demonstrates that the health of young people is taken seriously. The Authority has adopted and is working towards the "Healthy Care Standards." Children and young people are registered with a GP and have access to appropriate optical care. There are major problems in the Torbay area with regard to access to an NHS dentist. The Authority has made a designated dentist available for emergency care. The Authority should make sure that routine dental care is available to children looked after, not just emergency care.

Foster carers knowledge of the general and special health needs of the children and young people is good. All commented positively on the independent reviewing process which ensured that tracking of the annual medical check enabled it to be effectively carried out.

As a model of good practice the Service has developed a new Sexual Health Guidance Pack for carers and staff with an informative information pack for young people. This was very well received by foster carers.

Examination of file evidence shows that a transferable health record is not in place. The Operations Manager for Permanency Planning stated that this is to be developed by the Authority in conjunction with the designated nurse. The Authority should make sure that a written , transferable health record is in place for each child looked after.

Young people frequently comment in the returned surveys that they are consulted about their health, diet and personal hygiene.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for 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, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3,6,8,9,15 and 30. Young people are generally kept safe and secure by foster carers in the Service. Shortfalls in the application of human resource recording/recruitment processes could potentially place young people at risk.

EVIDENCE:

Sampling of human resource files , interviews with staff, interviews with service staff and tracking of the human resource processes shows that policies and procedures are in place . However, there was a lack of clarity in relation to the processes to be followed by the central human resources team and those to be followed locally. This was evident in the shortfalls with regard to the recording of the registration of practising social workers with the General Social care Council(GSCC). The central records held of individual registrations demonstrated clear gaps. The Authority must ensure that they see and record all of the General Social Care Council certificates as held by all practising social workers.

Examination of records held by the fostering service show that a member of staff commenced work with the team before an updated, enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check was seen. The Service/ Authority must ensure that no new member of staff who has direct contact with children looked after , should start work for the service until a new enhanced CRB check has been seen.

Records also show that whilst most written references have been followed by evidenced follow up telephone calls , this has not been consistently carried out. The Service must ensure that records of telephone reference follow up calls are held in staff personnel files.

Recruitment of foster carers is largely by word of mouth , though other forms of advertising (e.g newspapers) are also used. The assessment process for foster carers was reflected upon by all carers visited as being thorough. Assessment Form F is used as the baseline assessment model and the standard is good; the Form F seen at Panel during the inspection was of an exemplary standard.

The Panel observed was presented with three annual reviews of registration and one full assessment. The Panel deliberated in a considered manner over all the presentations and asked relevant questions of the carers. Debate was well informed . A Panel training day has taken place and a review of the working of Panel and its' functions has been carried out.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7 and 13. The fostering, children's and education services have created an environment in which young people generally see education and learning as important and having value.

EVIDENCE:

A wide range of evidence was sampled including: policies and procedures, staff interviews, interview with the dedicated teacher for children looked after, interviews with foster carers, survey results from young people, an interview with one young person, records and relevant case files.

Tracking of the Skills to Foster training and subsequent training programmes demonstrates that issues related to aspects of diversity and equal opportunities is embedded in the sessions. Foster carers reflected this stance at interview and in survey responses.

Young people are encouraged to pursue hobbies and pursuits such as pool, swimming, snooker, football, guitar, Guides/ Brownies, dance. This was confirmed by young people and foster carers. Carers recognised the importance of such sessions and actively supported them taking place. Foster carers are supported by the service in the provision of a range of reduced price entrance offers to local attractions. This was positively commented upon as being of "great value", particularly in the school holidays.

Education support was particularly commented upon by foster carers who expressed a clear understanding of personal education plans, homework issues and the provision of IT equipment and software for children looked after.

The Children Looked After teacher who was interviewed was clear , positive and showed a detailed understanding of the issues related to education and working flexibly with foster families and young people. Tracking of file evidence showed that a clear personal education plan structure is in place (the paperwork is currently subject to review) with explicit links made by the Children Looked After teacher to a range of primary and secondary schools.

Data shows that at the time of the inspection numbers of children / young people looked after (from the unitary authority area) who are within the education system are as follows:

- *14 pre-school.
- *5 Key Stage 1.
- *21 Key Stage 2.
- *20 Key Stage 3.
- *19 Key Stage 4.
- *Post 16-3.

The Children Looked After teacher is also to sit on the fostering panel and has clear links with the adolescent support worker who offers pastoral support at the transition period in year 6.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10 and 11. Foster carers actively support contact and recognise it's importance to young people. The system for consultation with young people is good , their views being sought and acted upon.

EVIDENCE:

Evidence from case files, foster carers, young people, placing social workers and staff interviews shows that foster carers for the service are clear in their understanding of contact and the issues which may arise. They are proactive in supporting contact.

Fostering social workers support carers well in relation to contact and where contact has a subsequent impact on the placement.

100% of placing social workers feel that contact is managed satisfactorily (some 58.3% of children looked after have restricted contact in place.)
72.7% of placing social workers consider that foster carers work very well with the child's family; 21.2% fairly well.

Consultation with young people is clear via a series of processes including: the independent reviewing system; the young person attending their own reviews; access to the Children's Rights Advocacy Service; foster home review process; co – facilitation of Total Respect training by care leavers; informal feedback and information to social workers at visits; informal feedback to adolescent support workers by young people.

Young people reflect positively on being included within survey responses to the Commission. 21 of the 27 young people who replied state that they are clearly consulted about their care.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14 and 29. Young people are supported in their preparation for independent living and adulthood. Foster carers are generally paid the correct amount; some financial difficulties have arisen as a result of under/ over payment.

EVIDENCE:

A review of policies and procedures, case files , information from foster carers and young people demonstrates that the Service works in conjunction with the Care to the Community Team , foster carers, placing social workers ,Independent Reviewing Officer and other parties in order to formulate a Pathway Plan and the development of independent living skills for young people leaving care.

Accuracy of payment to foster carers has improved . For a minority of carers some payments were found to be not accurate, with under/ over payments having been made which has led to some cases of financial difficulty for carers. The Authority should ensure that payments to foster carers are accurate.

Management

The intended outcomes for 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 – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1,2,4,5,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26 and 32. The management of the service is satisfactory overall. The management team have a clear understanding of the areas in which the service needs to improve.

EVIDENCE:

Examination of case files , training records , staff files , policies and procedures, interviews with a range of staff and foster carers demonstrates that overall management of the Service is satisfactory , Discussions with the Operations Manager and Service Managers shows that the management team have a clear understanding of the areas which require improvement.

Foster carers and staff are clear in their understanding of the recent restructuring of the service into two distinct teams. Both Service Managers are working towards an improvement in areas related to staff and foster carer management, foster carer training ,a consistent approach to record keeping.

Feedback from foster carers and examination of training records shows that delivery of appropriate training has improved since the last inspection including training related to : Attachment; Healthy Care; Sexual Health; First Aid. However the Service should make sure that all carers hold a full training portfolio. The Service/ Authority should make sure that all carers receive initial and updated Child Protection training. The Service should make sure that where carers are jointly approved they both complete all the required training. The Service should make sure that all carers receive adequate supervision and training, including those geographically distant.

Staff speak very positively of the supervision offered by the Service Managers and the systems and structures in place for their support. The Service should make sure that all staff receive an annual appraisal.

Foster carers maintain records in relation to the children and young people in their care. These are reviewed by the fostering social worker. The Service should make sure that all foster carers sign / date all their records related to Children Looked After.

Examination of children's case files held by the Authority Permanency Planning team showed well structured and detailed evidence. Most young people who are looked after, now have an allocated social worker – children commented on this greater stability in their survey responses. The Authority should make sure that records are appropriately filed in the correct child's file and that all details held on each child are correct. e.g. date of birth.

The Service is to be commended on their implementation (after some two years in development) of a scheme to assess carers who take responsibility as "kinship" or friends and family carers. This scheme is now in place with the service Manager as the "gatekeeper" for all requests. The social worker and manager responsible have developed a well researched model which is clear in the processes to be followed. The fostering social worker responsible for this

area of work was very clear in the need for a basis of trust and insight in working with carers who may feel very threatened by this process.

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	1
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	N/A

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	2

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

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS15	20	The Authority must ensure that they see and record all of the General Social Care Council certificates as held by all practising social workers.	31/03/06
2	FS15	20	The Authority / Service must ensure that no new member of staff who has direct contact with children looked after, should start work for the service until a new enhanced CRB has been seen.	30/04/06
3	FS15	20	The Service must ensure that records of telephone reference follow up calls are held in staff personnel files.	30/04/06

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	FS15	The Authority should ensure that the processes and procedures related to Human Resources are clearly defined

		ion terms of local responsibility , as the current system appears unclear.
2	FS9	The Service should ensure that up to date safe care assessments are in place for all carers.
3	FS12	The Authority should ensure that a written , transferable health record is in place for each child looked after.
4	FS12	The Authority should ensure that routine dental care is available to all children looked after (not just emergency care.)
5	FS16	The Service should ensure that all carers hold a full training portfolio.
6	FS23	The Service should ensure that where carers are jointly approved they both complete all the required training.
7	FS29	The Authority should ensure that carers are paid the appropriate payment and not under / over payments.
8	FS20	The Service should ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal.
9	FS22	The Service should ensure that foster carers sign all their records related to children looked after.
10	FS24	The Authority should make sure that records are appropriately filed in the correct child's file.
11	FS24	The Authority should ensure that all details held in the child's files are correct .
12	FS23	The Authority / Service must ensure that all carers receive initial and updated Child protection training..
13	FS22	The Service should ensure that all foster carers receive adequate supervision and training, including those geographically distant.

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