



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Redcar & Cleveland Fostering

**Grosmont Resource Centre
20 Grosmont Close
Redcar
TS10 4PJ**

Lead Inspector
Stephen Smith

Key Announced Inspection
13th November 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Redcar & Cleveland Fostering
Address	Grosmont Resource Centre 20 Grosmont Close Redcar TS10 4PJ
Telephone number	01642 495910
Fax number	01642 491630
Email address	judith_allan@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Judith Allan
Type of registration	Local Authority Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 31st October 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Fostering Service is based at Grosmont Resource Centre in Redcar. The service currently provides support to approximately 100 children in foster placements with around 70 foster carers. The service provides and supports long and short term placements as well as placements with foster carers under shared care, family support, teenage and specialist fostering schemes. The service also assesses and supports kinship foster carers, where children are fostered by family or friends. The fostering service staff team comprises the manager, seven supervising social workers and a team clerk. In addition three foster carer support workers are employed to provide extra support to foster carers.

SUMMARY

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

The inspectors would like to thank the children, carers and staff for the way they helped the inspectors do their job and find out what the fostering service is like. The inspectors also want to thank children's social workers who filled in forms or who told inspectors what they think of the fostering service. Staff in the fostering team, carers and children spoken to were very helpful and people spent time filling in surveys and sending them to the inspectors before the inspection. Information and facts in this report come from surveys sent to foster carers, fostered children and placing social workers and from written information the manager gave inspectors, as well as from the things seen and the people spoken to when they visited. Inspectors visited three foster carers with children living with them and surveys were returned from 9 fostered children, 13 foster carers and from 23 social workers in relation to 29 of the children fostered through the service. All together, five inspector days were spent with the fostering team and a further two days were spent reading questionnaires and sorting out the information in them.

A team of two inspectors carried out the inspection, which was done alongside an inspection of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's adoption service and an inspection of its arrangements for private fostering. Readers may wish to refer to the reports from these inspections, which are available from the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Information was gathered by:

- Talking individually with children and foster carers;
- Individual and group discussions with fostering staff;
- Individual discussions with children social workers;
- Visiting foster carers' homes;
- Group discussion with foster carers and with fostered children;
- Group discussion with independent reviewing officers;
- Reading children's, carers' and staff files;
- Reading records;
- Interviewing the Looked After Children Development Manager;
- Interviewing the Business Manager responsible for the fostering service;
- Interviewing the fostering manager;
- Studying the surveys and other information sent back to us;
- Reading records of the meetings of the fostering panel.

People who told inspectors what they think about Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Fostering Service generally said very good things. The great majority of people said that the service gives excellent support to foster carers and provides very good outcomes for fostered children. All foster carers and social workers said the fostering service has either not changed or got better in the last twelve months.

People consulted did say that the fostering service could do some things better. A quarter of social workers consulted said the service needs to recruit more foster carers especially those able to care for teenagers. Social workers who said this recognised this problem affects most local authority fostering services, "I am aware that there is a national shortage of foster carers and this is a problem in Redcar and Cleveland." A small minority said that communication between the fostering team and children's social workers should be improved. Foster carers' views about where improvements could be made were more individual. One carer cited levels of foster carers' allowances, one reported that the service treats foster carers' own children less well than fostered children and another asked for more advance notice of training events. These were isolated views, however, and not supported by the views of other foster carers consulted.

It is good that so many people think the service works well works well and though there are some areas for improvement written in this report, most people are very pleased with how things are going for them. Most importantly, children said very good things about being fostered and said that they are well looked after and happy in their foster homes. They said things like, "I am happy and well looked after." One young person said, "I love my foster family, I don't know what would have happened to me without them but they do everything they can for me every day" and another said, "(Foster carers' names) love me, I'm safe here and they sort out all my problems."

What the service does well:

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Fostering Service is very good at a lot of the things it does.

- The fostering service is good at finding people who want to be foster carers and working with them to make sure that they are the right sort of people to look after children. It checks new foster carers out very carefully and they get good training before they can foster.
- The fostering service is good at 'matching' children with foster carers; that is making sure that children get to live in the place and with the carers that are right for them. This is hard for a local authority because it always needs more foster carers and sometimes has to put children with carers in an emergency but it works hard to make sure children live with carers who are right for them. A social worker said, "Where possible, placements are planned and children visit placements before moving."

- The service is also good at making sure that foster homes and foster carers get checked regularly to make sure they are safe places for children to live and that children are well cared for. Children told inspectors things like: "I have lots of toys to play with and go to Beavers, see my friends and they come and play here," "I can have friends here to play with and nice things to eat and a big garden to play in," "I'm going on holiday for the first time ever" and "I am happy and well looked after." A social worker said, "There is a consistent focus on the needs of children and young people" and another said, "The fostering service is very good. Children's needs are met and they are provided with safe caring environments."
- The service is good at helping children stay healthy and well. Children get good health advice and foster carers make sure they have doctors and dentists. It also makes sure that children get their health checked often.
- The fostering service is good at helping children get a good education. It is good at helping children stay in school and helping plan the support they need at school. The service is doing a lot of work to help children who are looked after to do well and get good grades at school.
- The fostering service is excellent at finding out what children think about things and using this to make their care better or to help the service do things better. The local authority is doing a lot of work to make this even better. Children said they are listened to by their foster carers and by their social worker.
- Once children are in placements, social workers, foster carers and fostering staff are good at working together and talking to each other to make sure that children keep being well cared for. Although some social workers said this could be better the inspectors think the fostering service works hard to do this well. Two social workers said. "On my experience they provide a thorough service which enables good communications between the foster carer and social worker" and "They work closely with the foster carers and get to know the children in the placement."

- The service is excellent at supporting foster carers to look after children. Foster carers get visited regularly and get good advice about how to help the children they are caring for. Foster carers get excellent training and this helps them to look after children well. Foster carers said very good things about the support and training they get, like “We feel that the support we have received from our support (link) worker has been exceptional. Without her hard work our first placement may have broken down,” “Although I have not fostered for a while with going through an adoption I have always had the highest support in all areas. Nothing was too much trouble at any time. I can’t praise them enough” and “The service provides a good level of training, provides good telephone support and practical support.” A social worker said, “Overall foster carers are brilliant at supporting young children in their care with their various needs.”

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the service has:

- Made sure that it gets proof from new staff members that they are who they say they are and have got the right qualifications to do the job.
- Sorted out how it does Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks on people every three years to make sure staff are the right sort of people to work with children. It writes the checks it has done down better.
- Given foster carers training about bullying so they know how to help children who are being bullied and stop children bullying others.
- Helped carers write down a ‘policy’ about how they are going to look after children in a way that keeps them and the child safe.
- Worked to make sure children know how to make a complaint about any problems they have with their care. In this inspection all children said they know how to make a complaint.

What they could do better:

Although the fostering service does a lot of things well there are some things it needs to do better.

- The main thing it still needs to do better is to make sure that, when it gets new staff, it finds out about every job they have done before and knows the dates they started and left these jobs as well as the reasons they left them. It also should ring up the people who have written references for new staff members to check the references out more. It needs to do these things so it can be sure that new staff are the right sort of people to work with children.
- The service should make sure that foster carers' supervision happens more often, especially where foster carers are working with children who have a lot of problems or where things change a lot. It also should make sure it writes down when fostering social workers visit foster carers without telling them they are going to visit. The rules say that these 'unannounced' visits should happen at least once a year and if they are written down it would be easier for the manager to make sure they happen.
- The rules say that every so often the manager has to find out about and check out any important things that have happened to children so that she can make sure that the service did the right things. The manager knows what goes on in the fostering service but does not write this down well enough, so it would not be easy for her to look back over the records she keeps to see if some things were happening too often or were not being put right.
- The authority still needs to do some work to make sure children's records have all the information about children that they should have and make sure that one child's records do not get put into another child's file. It needs to do this to help people look after children and plan for their future properly and also, if children want to look at their records, to help them learn about their past and the things that have happened to them.
- The authority also needs to make sure that children who are fostered get visited regularly by their social worker while they are in their foster placement and get chance to see their social worker alone often. This is important because the authority has to make sure that children feel safe in their placements and can tell their social worker about any worries they have.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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 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.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children's physical and emotional health needs are well met by the fostering service.

EVIDENCE:

All people spoken to or consulted during the inspection said there are good links between children's services and health services working with children in the area. The authority has placed great emphasis on promoting the health of looked after children and has done a great deal of work in the last twelve months to ensure that 80% of children are now receiving annual Looked After Children (LAC) medicals. People spoke highly of the effective work being carried out by the LAC Nurse who is based within TARGET (the authority's leaving care team. Health promotion work has been carried out by the LAC nurse and foster carers and staff have access to services provided by a substance misuse worker. A Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) clinician is available to work with foster carers who need support and access to CAMHS for children is well supported. A variety of sporting and leisure activities are provided for children.

Case tracking during the inspection provided good examples of how children's health needs are met and provided for, including children's dietary, medical and emotional needs. Children visited and spoken to were all registered with doctors and dentists and foster carers said that the local authority will make sure children have access to dental services if they are unable to be registered with an NHS dentist. Young people case tracked had up-to-date LAC medical reports in place in their files and health plans where appropriate.

In the case of one young person case tracked during the inspection, the Essential Information Record (EIR) Parts 1 and 2 were not in place. These documents record information about children’s health, medical history and immunisations so this information was not available within the child’s file.

The fostering service has a very effective programme in place to ensure that foster carers have up-to-date first aid training. Foster carers visited had undertaken this training and courses are run regularly to ensure that training for carers is kept up-to-date.

Foster carers and social workers views about how well the service supports foster carers to meet children’s health needs were as follows:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	15%	48%
Good	62%	43%
Adequate	23%	9%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

Foster carers’ comments included:

- “A football club and other activities are regularly arranged for looked after children.”
- “Health and healthy lifestyle values are promoted in my view. I have only been with the programme for a short while but signs to the positive are encouraging.”
- “Plenty of ongoing information for the child (as well as the normal good support for the foster carer.)”
- “We have lots of training on healthy living.”

Social workers’ comments included:

- “This is an area that is now heavily promoted by the LAC nurse.”
- “Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted.”
- “All children are offered a healthy diet and encouraged to be active and get/stay fit.”
- “They encourage healthy eating and physical activity.”
- “Carers ensure that all health needs are being met.”

75% children consulted said they ‘always’ get the right help and advice with their health and 25% said they usually get this help. Children’s said things like:

- “Healthy eating at school, no tuck shop now.”
- “Because people want me to stay healthy.”
- “I get healthy food and exercise.”
- “(Foster carer) gives me healthy food and gives me at least one piece of fruit a day.”
- “I go to the doctors for check ups often.”

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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children's safety is promoted by effective matching arrangements and the provision of safe homes with foster carers who get good training in keeping children safe. The arrangements for checking the employment histories of staff need to be improved and some children need to be visited in placement and seen alone more frequently to ensure that fostered children are kept safe. The fostering panel provides a rigorous consideration of foster carers' assessments and reviews presented to it.

EVIDENCE:

All foster carers visited as part of the inspection process made the inspectors welcome and cooperated fully with the inspection process. The homes visited were comfortable and suitable environments in which to bring up children. Children consulted were very pleased with their home. Good health and safety checklists were in place in all the files examined; these contained thorough checks of home safety and include checks on car MOT and registration documents as well as driving licence and insurance details. These checklists were all up-to-date as were pet safety questionnaires where appropriate. Travel safety training is provided to foster carers.

The authority's arrangements to match children with foster carers taking into account their specific needs are generally good. Some social workers were very positive about matching arrangements and placement choice though around a quarter said that there is a shortage of carers, particularly for older children with more complex needs. Social workers' views about the council's ability to offer a choice of placements were as follows:

Excellent	5%
Good	23%
Adequate	32%
Inadequate	40%

Social workers' comments included:

- "Children are offered choices and are given opportunities to visit placements and meet carers."
- "I believe that they do consider the children's views considerably."
- "Appear to take information given about children to inform the choice of foster carer."
- "Due to the lack of foster placements in this authority there is little to no opportunity for this to happen."
- "There are not enough foster carers for some young people to be placed locally."
- "The shortage of available foster carers prevents a choice of placement being offered at times. Planned moves to long-term is much better and the child's wishes are the main focus."

The fostering service is being successful in its recruitment of new foster carers to deal with this. Social workers said that members of the fostering team know the carers' strengths well and the service is as careful in matching placements as it can be. Supervising social workers and the fostering manager acknowledged that sometimes there is little choice of placement but the service draws up placement stability plans to identify any areas where additional help will be needed to support the placement. The authority's low level of unplanned endings of placements of over 3 months provides confirmation of this. Independent review officers said that placement stability, from their experience, is very good and improving. Case tracking during the inspection demonstrated a situation where the service was 'protecting' a placement by restricting access to a vacant placement with a foster carer in order to support the placements of the children already in placement.

The local authority has around a fifth of fostered children placed with independent agencies. A rigorous policy and procedure is in place to manage access to independent placements including procedures to follow in respect of planned and emergency situations. Placements are made and monitored through a multi-agency children's panel and 'LAC Stat' meetings which identify any issues or placement drift. These groups monitor placement effectiveness and also consider the distance of the placement and value for money.

Supervising social workers and independent reviewing officers interviewed said that outcomes for children have priority in this process of reviewing placements. The agency is involved with the regional commissioning group. The authority has recently developed, with help from an 'Invest to Save' grant, a 'teenage' foster care scheme to provide placements for those children who might otherwise, because of a lack of capacity, have had to have been placed in expensive placements with independent agencies.

Figures provided by the fostering service showed that overall 22% of placements are made in an emergency with the figure rising to 24% for children aged 10 and over. These figures demonstrate that good work is being done in this area and people consulted said that the use of children's panel to authorise placements is helping this. The fostering service manages the use of exemptions well; at the time of the inspection there were no situations in which an exemption was required for more than three children being placed with a foster carer.

Case tracking showed that the fostering service keeps good levels of information about young people on the file of their foster carers and foster carers spoken to had received good information about the children they care for. People spoken to said that children's social workers have difficulty in finding the time to do good life story work with children. Foster carers and supervising social workers said they work to support this and that foster carers often do a lot of the work. A number of people expressed view that the authority should employ a person specifically to carry out and support life story work. Training in life story work is provided to foster carers. Independent review officers said that life story work with children who are fostered in long-term placements has been 'overlooked' a bit and that more work needs to be done in this area.

Foster carers' views about the quality of information they receive before placements are made were positive:

Excellent	25%
Good	67%
Adequate	8%
Poor	0%

Social workers were also generally positive about the quality of information they receive back from the fostering service and foster carers:

Excellent	23%
Good	51%
Adequate	15%
Inadequate	11%

Views of foster carers and social workers about how good the fostering service is at promoting placement stability were also generally positive:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	50%	25%
Good	50%	55%
Adequate	0%	12%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	8%

Social workers and foster carers were also positive about the support given to foster carers to make sure children are well cared for:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	38%	48%
Good	54%	43%
Adequate	8%	9%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

Comments from foster carers about matching included:

- "Considering the young person we care for was initially placed with us as an emergency the information provided was good."
- "I have always had full information about the children placed with me."
- "I usually get information the next day, if I don't get it when the child is placed."
- "The service seems somewhat slow at giving background information about placements. I think this should be improved."
- "It depends on the situation. If it is pre-planned I have access to plenty of information and can speak to their current carer. If its an emergency then I get as much as is available."
- "Use tea visits and overnight stays so moving on is less upsetting for the child, and for you too if you have had the child for a long period of time."
- "If it is possible to be moved in a planned way then every support is made to do this."
- "Will help or guide you to get the right information to help look after that child whatever needs they may have. I.e. disabled children, special diets, medical advice."
- "We would like more visits from the young person's social worker and our link worker but overall support is good. The social worker is always helpful when we phone and can be relied on to return telephone calls if she is not available at the time."

Comments from social workers included:

- "Liaison with fostering staff is very positive."
- "They phone if there are any significant matters (positive or negative.) It would be beneficial to have this in writing also (especially contact records.)"

- "Foster carer is very good at keeping myself informed. Fostering link worker will contact with any issues."
- "All the children I am currently working with are provided with a stable background."
- "Staff work consistently to ensure stability."
- "(Young person's) placement is very stable and working well for the family."
- "The service makes every effort to maintain placements. However, there are too few specialist foster carers for teenagers but the service has now employed a social worker to assess and recruit new foster carers."
- "(Young person) is cared for very well."
- "Standards of care are consistently monitored and sustained."
- "The review process ensures the children are well cared for and rightly placed. Also foster carers receive training in order to deal with the special needs of children."

Information about how to keep children safe, including child protection, unauthorised absence and behaviour management arrangements, is provided for carers in the foster carer handbook and foster carers receive child protection training during their initial assessment training. Ongoing training in child protection, updated annually, is provided by the fostering service, as is bullying training, safe care training and training in managing children's behaviour. One foster carer said that she had requested training in internet and telephone abuse and the fostering service had arranged for this to be provided within 5 weeks of her request. Child protection training is provided with a specific focus on the age of the children that carers are looking after.

Children consulted reported only appropriate sanctions taking place. Examples included grounding, loss of treats or loss of use of the television or games machine. One child said, "I don't like to tidy up toys and to sit on naughty step when I hit my brother." Records showed that no restraint takes place and all parties spoken to said that physical intervention would only be used in situations of immediate physical danger. The fostering service manager monitors complaints and allegations effectively and has a system in place to record this monitoring though this record was not completed with sufficient detail. The borough has appointed an anti-bullying co-ordinator and the authority's head of service and an elected member visit a foster home every month.

All of the foster carers' files examined contained safe caring policies. One of these policies related specifically to the young person fostered, the others were more generalised but were relevant for the needs of the young person placed. Safe caring policies are reviewed at the placement agreement meeting at the beginning of each placement. All foster carers whose files were examined contained up-to date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosures and a clear system is in place to ensure that they are updated every three years.

The Business Manager responsible for the fostering service said the service is planning to develop an emergency service to ensure that children have a safe placement provided overnight in situations that might have lead to the use of police protection orders.

In one short break foster placement examined during the inspection the child had not been visited in the placement by his own social worker with sufficient frequency. Although the child had been seen away from the placement and the foster carer's social worker had seen the child in the placement on a number of occasions his social worker had only visited home in the placement once since August 2005. In another situation a foster carer described a situation in which a young person had not been seen alone by the social worker between January and November 2006. People consulted during the inspection cited the restructuring of the children's social work teams and sickness and vacancy problems as possible reasons for a lack of visiting. The service needs to make sure that children are seen alone and in placement by their own social workers at appropriate intervals.

All children spoken to said they are happy and well cared for in their placement and older children knew who to speak to if they had a problem. Young people consulted had received a children's guide telling them who they can speak to and how to complain. This was confirmed by children who returned questionnaires, all of whom said they are 'always' well cared for where they are living. Children all said they know who to speak to if they have a personal problem or they are worried about anything and all said they know how to make a complaint. Only one child said that he was having a problem with bullying. The foster carer and service were aware of this and work had been carried out to deal with the situation

Children's comments about being safe included:

- "I have lots of toys to play with and go to Beavers, see my friends and they come and play here."
- "I can have friends here to play with and nice things to eat and a big garden to play in."
- "I'm well looked after."
- "I always feel well cared for because I can ask for some food and most of the time, about 89% of the time, I'm allowed food when I ask. I get new clothes when I need so I do feel well cared for."
- "Can talk to (foster carer) when I'm sad or happy, my school classroom assistant."
- "Talk to (foster carer) or my teacher if I'm sad."
- "I speak to (foster carer.)"
- "Because I can trust (foster carer) and I know she would sit down and listen to me then try and sort it out if she could."

Since the last inspection the authority has done a great deal of work to the recruitment files of its staff to deal with issues identified at the last inspection.

Files examined contained proof of the applicant's identity and qualifications and recent photographs or arrangements were in place to get these for the file. Files did not, however, contain the reasons that applicants had left previous positions working with children as is required by regulations. Similarly not all files contained clear full employment histories as most applicants only stated the years of previous posts rather than the months they started and left positions so gaps could not be identified. The application forms used by the authority do not request applicants to supply the above information. The authority must ensure that this information is sought and all gaps in employment explained for all staff employed by the fostering service. Recruitment files examined, also, did not contain evidence that written employment references for staff members are followed up by a telephone call made to verify the reference.

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Fostering service operates an effective panel that employs structured processes and keeps good records of its decisions and how it reaches them. Decisions and recommendations made are clear and the agency decision maker makes a decision promptly bearing in mind the panel recommendation; good records of these decisions and panel minutes are maintained on foster carers' files. Panel is correctly constituted in line with the regulations and national minimum standards. Long-term fostering arrangements, where a match is agreed between the young person and foster carer, are considered by the authority's permanency panel. This panel also complies with the regulations and standards pertaining to fostering services and attendance at this panel by an adoption inspector while it was considering a long-term fostering situation confirmed that its operation is effective.

Some foster carers said that panel is intimidating and cited some problems with waiting arrangements in which carers all wait together and can hear voices from panel in the next room as making them particularly anxious. It is recommended that the fostering service consult with carers further to see how this matter can be addressed.

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.

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

7, 13 and 31

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children are well supported educationally. Foster carers get good support to help them care for children with different needs and from different ethnic backgrounds and the service is working to improve its provision in this area. The short-break fostering scheme has improved greatly in the last twelve months and provides good outcomes for children.

EVIDENCE:

The service provides foster carers with good information about promoting equality and diversity within the foster carer handbook and issues surrounding this are covered in foster carers' approval training. Good arrangements are in place to provide ongoing training for foster carers. The population served by the local authority is predominantly white British and the make up of foster carers and children that the service works with reflects this composition. The service is involved with the Sahara project, which provides support for the recruitment and support of carers from different backgrounds. People spoken to said that, although this involvement has not led directly to the recruitment of a foster carer from a black or other ethnic minority background, the service has benefited from its involvement in terms of advice, information and awareness raising.

The service uses specialist carers to work with children with disabilities and operates a short break foster care scheme to support children with disabilities to remain with their families. This scheme has developed greatly over the last twelve months. Foster carers and social workers said that carers have access to a budget for any aids and adaptations necessary.

Social workers and foster carers consulted spoke very positively about how well the service supports foster carers to address diversity issues in relation to the children they care for.

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	54%	27%
Good	38%	50%
Adequate	8%	23%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

Comments made by foster carers included:

- "(Diversity) is, in my opinion, strongly promoted and stressed throughout our training and since."
- "We had a child from a different culture. There was a lot of support from link worker and another carer."
- We are always having courses on this.
- We are always told how important it all is for the children and everyone.

Social workers said things like:

- The fostering service addresses all issues of ethnicity and diversity.
- Staff are appropriately aware of the above issues and focus on the best interests of children and young people.
- The foster carer is excellent and the service is good in this area.
- All (young person's) needs are being met in all these areas.

The foster carers' handbook provides carers with good information about promoting education for fostered children and working with the different services involved. The service is working hard to raise the proportion of looked after children who have up to date Personal Education Plans (PEPs) with a quoted figure of around 70%. Children of school age spoken to during the inspection had PEPs and SENs were in place where appropriate.

The authority is working hard to monitor and promote school attendance and has monitoring group for this purpose and a worker specifically to promote and support the education of looked after children. A pupil inclusion team works to provide a quick response to support children at school where they at risk of exclusion. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that fostered children are generally getting good support at school. A worker has been appointed to support children with homework, home studies and academic achievement as well as helping develop the use of computers among fostered children. All children consulted said they have access to computers in their foster placement.

70% of care leavers whose last placement was a foster placement achieved at least 1 GCSE at A* - G or a GNVQ. All young people over fifteen years of age have a Pathway Plan in place and all parties spoken to during the inspection spoke highly of TARGET, the authority's leaving care service. The authority has a bursary fund that is mostly used to promote educational achievement and holds Children's Celebration of Achievement days. Max cards are provided to foster carers to encourage and support access to leisure activities.

All children consulted said that they receive the right sort of help with their education and all said they are 'always', 'usually' or 'sometimes' helped to think about their future. Children said things like:

- "I get help with reading."
- "(Foster carers) help me in my work and make sure I understand my work, not just give me the answers and tell me to listen in school because if I don't I won't get a good job."
- "Don't like school, they make you read and write – its boring."
- "When I am big and my social worker is looking for a new mammy and daddy to live with."
- "We talk about what I want when I'm big."

Foster carers and social workers were mostly very positive about the support provided for children's education:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	60%	43%
Good	40%	26%
Adequate	0%	26%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	5% (1 response)

They were also positive about support for children to be able to undertake activities in the community:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	20%	33%
Good	70%	50%
Adequate	10%	13%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	4% (1 response)

Views about how well the fostering service supports foster carers to provide an environment in which the child can prosper were also very positive:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	50%	33%
Good	42%	52%
Adequate	9%	15%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

Foster carers' comments about 'Enjoying and Achieving' included:

- "Child has problems at school and we have received excellent support."
- "Very involved in education, attended meetings with me at school and home."
- "With help of link worker and social worker to move children to another school where they have now done really well."
- "I have received all kinds of help educationally like CD ROMs of all subjects."
- "Although the young person in our care is extremely reluctant to go out, a great deal of support has been given from the fostering service."
- "Information is always sent either offering a child a chance to attend or on activities in the local area."
- "Any new activities which start I have always been asked if the children are interested or if they want to join in any groups."
- "(Young person) is currently at college, he has also got a link worker from the leaving care team who promotes his independence."

Social worker's comments included:

- "There is a consistent focus on supporting children in educational provision based upon age and educational need."
- "The foster carer is very proactive in encouraging educational attainment of the children."
- "(Young person) is involved in a range of activities including army cadets, football and cricket."
- "I am aware of activities such as football and drama clubs which young people in foster care are able to engage in. This has been positive for two young people I have worked with."
- "Foster carers I have worked with have been very proactive in encouraging children to engage in activities in the community."

The social worker who considered the support for a child's education and community activities to be inadequate said, "The social worker does all of this not the fostering team." It was clear, however, that although a range of services are involved in helping support children's education staff from the fostering team do work hard with foster carers in this area.

It is evident from recording and discussion with fostering and social work staff members that the service has developed its short break fostering service greatly in the last year, formalising systems for foster carer support and supervision in line with those for the mainstream fostering service and a short break foster carer spoken to confirmed this view. Clear procedures are in place to reflect the special status of children looked after within this scheme to ensure that their families remain the primary decision makers. Matching arrangements are effective and the fostering worker said that new foster carers are undergoing their assessment to enable the service to develop further in terms of availability and choice of carers.

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.

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

10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children get good support to maintain contact with their family and friends. Children's views are important to the service; they are listened to well and can influence the care they receive and the running of the service. The service is developing excellent work in this area.

EVIDENCE:

The importance of promoting appropriate contact between young people and their families is set out in the foster care agreement and stressed in the foster carers' handbook. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection told inspectors about the actions they take to support contact and the support they receive from the fostering team and children's social workers. Evidence was available of good work being undertaken to maintain sibling contact in a fostering situation and this contact was planned to be specified into adoption arrangements for the children. The foster carer spoken to in this situation was concerned that contact with the children's parents was not planned to continue after their adoption and thought that the regular contact the children were having with their parents should be reduced gradually in preparation for this. The children's social worker said this reduction was planned.

The service's foster placement agreements contain information about the arrangements and responsibilities for contact and social workers and fostering workers said that these arrangements are discussed at the placement agreement meetings. All parties reported good arrangements for contact where it is in children's interests and foster carers and social workers questionnaires considered that children have good networks with their families where these are possible. One foster carer, however, stated in the questionnaire that she returned, "I do not agree with a lot that happens. I have a (young person) that would like a sleepover at (his/her) friends but they are still not doing a police check. (Young person) wants to be like (his/her) friends but this is the kind of thing that makes (him/her) feel different." The child concerned also raised this issue. "(Social worker) won't get any police checks done so I can have sleepovers with my friends." Fostering staff explained that the issue was not the need of a police check but, rather, a question about the suitability of the people the young person wanted to stay with." Another carer said, "Supervised family visits or help is there. Also friendship and bonds are encouraged and, hopefully, community ties are encouraged." Social workers generally thought children's networks are good, "Foster carer ensures all networks are there and encourages the young person to participate well" and "Foster carer is proactive in encouraging positive links with all these areas." One social worker did, however, point out that networks can be "inadequate for young people who are placed out of county due to lack of local foster carers for teenagers. For young children the networks will be good." As discussed in the Being Safe section of this report the fostering service is developing its ability to provide 'in-house' teenage foster carers to address this issue.

Evidence gathered during the inspection showed the work done to provide consultation events and activities for children and also of regular consultation events and activities. The authority runs a Looked after Children Focus Group and has undertaken an audit of children's participation across the local authority. The service has developed full use of Viewpoint (a method of seeking young people's views using a computer programme for children to use). Primarily used to seek children's views for their reviews the authority is also taking anonymous information from the system to seek views on wider issues. The authority has appointed a Looked After Children Development Manager at a senior level to develop services to and participation of young people. This post-holder links the authority's Corporate Parenting Board and the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) and coordinates multi-agency work with foster carers and children to promote involvement, consultation, participation events and activities opportunities to promote the abilities, skills, health and voice of young people. The authority is working with young people to help them develop their own magazine and young people have take part in various regional events and participation forums.

Foster carers and children spoken to said there are support groups and activities for fostered children and that birth children are not left out. All parties spoken to described how children's views are sought for foster carers' reviews.

In survey forms children said they are listened to and their opinions taken notice of by their foster carers and their social workers. Their responses were as follows:

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Foster carer:	78%	11%	11%	0%
Social worker:	33%	56%	11%	0%

Children said thing like:

- "She (foster carer) always helps me resolve my problems."
- "Any worries and they listen."
- "Because if I had a problem or something to say they would sit down and listen to me."
- "My social worker is looking for a new mammy and daddy for me – with a swimming pool."
- "I can get my own way with her (social worker)."
- "My social worker helps me."

Foster carers and social workers were very positive in their responses about how well children are consulted about their lives and their care:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	18%	30%
Good	64%	55%
Adequate	18%	15%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

They also generally thought that arrangements for consulting children about the running of the service were effective:

	Foster Carers	Social Workers
Excellent	17%	0%
Good	66%	63%
Adequate	17%	37%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	0%

Foster carers made comments about consultation with children including:

- "They are always consulted."
- "They offer lots of opportunities for the children to take part and have a voice but the children don't always take up the offer."

- “We feel we should have more visits from the young person’s social worker and from our link worker but they listen to children when they come.”
- “Viewpoint is available for young people to make comments as well as other opportunities for them to comment.”
- “Our backup workers have involved our placements all through the decision making process.”
- “I’ve seen lots of questionnaires and information aimed at the children and young people and its good they have a voice.”
- “They are always explaining about the service to the children.”

Social workers said things like:

- “Staff consistently endeavour to include children and young people in decision making, taking an approach appropriate to their ages.”
- “Children are consulted as to their preferences and their views are listened to prior to decisions being made.”
- “Children are fully involved in all meetings and are also seen on a regular basis by the foster carer’s link worker who discusses the placement and their views.”
- “Over the past few years this area has developed greatly children are becoming more and more involved in decision making about services.”

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)

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

29

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service has a good system of rewarding foster carers for their skills and for making foster carer payments that enables carers to meet children's needs well.

EVIDENCE:

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council fostering service has structured payments schemes in place for foster carers. These schemes include a specialist foster carer scheme, a newly developed teenage carer scheme as well as a family support foster care scheme. These schemes offer specialist carers a payment in addition to the fostering allowance paid to mainstream carers. Information about payment levels and the system of payments is contained in the foster carers' handbook. The manager said that the authority is working to be in a position to adopt the national minimum allowances for fostering recommended by Fostering network.

In a questionnaire returned, one foster carer said, "Although the monetary package was not the reason for undergoing foster carer I, along with many others in the care service, feel we get the short straw. We promote an activity based day when we care for children, this generally means days such as films, bowling, swimming, eating out etc. I feel the derisory payment the service gives only causes concern among carers." This, however, was an isolated view and not reflected in opinions given by any other foster carer consulted or spoken to or by other findings during the inspection. The authority is to be commended for the creative work being done in terms of the specialist schemes and rewards being developed in order to increase the range, capacity and quality of the foster carers it works with.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 32

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service is good at recruiting, assessing and approving suitable foster carers and arrangements for their support, training and review are excellent though the frequency of formal supervision could be improved. The quality of recording in children's files is not always good enough to properly support the care provided to them.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is effectively managed and organised with clear lines of accountability and procedures for decision making. The service has systems in place to ensure that work relating to the assessment, approval, management, support, supervision and review of foster carers takes place effectively. The manager effectively supervises and manages the team of staff and supervising social workers said that their case loads and the work within the team is very busy but manageable. Levels of clerical and administrative support are appropriate and the service is able to access advice, guidance and specialist services to support young people and their foster families. The service has created a senior practitioner role and provides foster carer support workers to provide additional support for carers.

The fostering service has an effective recruitment and assessment procedure. Forty-five applications to be foster carers were received in the last year and sixteen new foster carers recruited. Although some carers ceased caring during this period the service increased its number of carers during the year. All people consulted said that the service does well at attracting people interested in fostering. Those people interviewed said that the service has a good reputation for the levels of support and training it provides for foster carers. Findings during the inspection confirmed this. Assessments seen during the inspection were thorough and people spoken to confirmed this. One foster couple said they had previously fostered for an independent agency and found Redcar and Cleveland's assessment process and training much more thorough. Another fostering couple, however, said that they felt their assessment had been delayed when fostering panel questioned an issue that should have been addressed better in the supervising social worker's approval report. The manager said that this situation had caused the delay and that the service had learned from this situation. Another foster carer raised concerns about a delay in assessing her to become a specialist foster carer and questioned whether the delay was financially motivated. The manager explained that a series of events had caused the carer's assessment to miss one fostering panel but pointed out that the assessment process had still only taken five months.

It was clear the fostering staff are alert to people's change of situations or new events. The supervising social worker responsible for the short-break fostering

service had identified that a change in circumstances had lead to the partner of a foster carer needing to be assessed as a carer.

Generally people consulted said that communication between the fostering team and children's social workers are good, though a small number of social workers said that this area could be a problem. The fostering service had identified fostering social workers as 'links' with each of the children's social work teams to help maintain and develop effective communication. People spoken to said that this system has broken down with the re-structuring of the children's social work teams but that they understand it is to be implemented again. Independent reviewing officers said that in their experience there is a very positive supportive relationship between foster carers and supervising social workers.

The local authority has effective arrangements in place for the management and support of carers that include training, information, supervision and support, respite care and reviews. Carers receive a handbook, which contains useful information and guidance about their roles and problems they might face, including signposts to other sources of help. Case tracking during the inspection showed that the review process ensures that foster carers' review take place within the correct timescale, reviews contained reports from all people concerned including the foster carer, young person, and the placing social worker. Reviews seen were thorough and detailed and the recommendations from each review were clearly stated and evidenced and recommendations by panel about reviews taken to it were clear. The review forms used by the fostering service are satisfactory but they would benefit from being developed further to encourage more complete responses from foster carers. Independent reviewing officers and the fostering manager independently told the inspector that work is already being carried out by the Quality Assurance Manager and a supervising social worker to develop new review forms.

Foster carers' files examined did not contain records of any unannounced visit being made to foster carers by the supervising social worker though foster carers and supervising social workers confirmed that unannounced visits do take place. The fostering service should make sure that unannounced visits are recorded in foster carers' files so that their frequency can be monitored.

Foster carers spoken to and those who completed questionnaires were very positive about the support provided to them by the fostering service. All those spoken to were very positive about the support received from both supervising and children's social workers. One short break carer said that she had not felt very supported at all until last year but that support had improved 'drastically' and is now 'excellent'. Foster carer's records examined showed that they receive frequent visits and telephone support from their supervising social workers.

The frequency of formal supervision of foster carers recorded in their files was not sufficiently frequent. In the case of one carer doing task centred fostering, supervision had taken place on a six monthly basis. Given the nature of this foster carer's tasks it is strongly recommended that supervision should be more frequent than this. Supervision should be based upon the nature of the foster carer's work in that a short-break carer providing weekend foster care on a periodic basis is likely to need less supervision than a carer working full time with challenging teenagers. Supervising social workers spoken to said that supervision should take place on a three monthly basis.

In questionnaires responses about support to care for the child provided by the fostering team were:

Excellent	46%
Good	54%
Adequate	0%
Inadequate	0%

Comments from foster carers about this included:

- "We have had support from various agencies including Women's Aid and the Youth Inclusion Programme as well as from support workers."
- "We feel we always have good support and backup facilities should the need arise."
- "Plenty of support from my social worker, link workers."
- "Payments/allowance is always paid on time. Consideration is always taken on whether placements will have adverse affect on my own children."
- "Any advice or support I have needed is there on the end of the telephone."
- "Excellent!"

The service updates foster carers' agreements after each review to ensure that they are up-to-date. The manager said that different versions of this document are to be developed to reflect the various specialist fostering schemes operated by the service. The manager keeps well informed about the operation of the fostering service and any significant events occurring. A formal system of recording this monitoring is in place with reports produced every three months. This recording, however, only shows whether each of the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 have been dealt with satisfactorily or not. The system does not record information about the number of events taking place or brief information about the child or foster carer concerned. In this way it does not help to identify any patterns, trends or issues of concern and it is recommended that the record includes brief information about the date, names and outcomes of any significant events.

The fostering service places a high priority on providing a great deal of good training for its foster carers. All parties consulted during the inspection said that carers get good training and foster carers all said that they value this training. The service has approximately 70 fostering families and of these 28 carers have NVQ level 3 in child care with a further three undertaking this training. A number of carers have other relevant qualifications. Carers case tracked had undertaken relevant training in the previous twelve months. In the year leading up to this inspection at least fourteen courses had been provided for foster carers in a range of mandatory and optional topics. Topics ranged from child protection, bullying, challenging behaviour, legal aspects of fostering, attachment, adoption and permanence and life story work to specific training based on the needs of individual or groups of carers. Good records are maintained of training provided including records of foster carer's evaluation of its effectiveness; these records showed good numbers of carers attending. One foster carer said she asked for training in internet and telephone bullying and this was provided within five weeks.

This level of training for foster carers is excellent as it increases their skills and knowledge base and helps ensure that they regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as the childcare professionals they are.

The quality of the LAC documentation in children's social work files seen during the inspection varied. Files contained good review reports with detailed records of the preparation of and discussion at reviews. One file examined contained a very detailed 'Form E' and other information produced to assist the matching of the child to adoptive parents. Information produced for court was also clear and comprehensive in this file. Progress summaries completed by the foster carer and supervising social worker were also a good record of events happening to the child and other developments.

One child's file contained full and up-to-date LAC documentation. In another young person's file however, a Placement Plan 1 was in place but the Placement Plan 2 related only to the child's siblings and a different placement. There was no Essential Information Record Part 1 or 2 on this child's file; this had been identified in a quality audit in January 2006 but had not been actioned. Additionally, the contact recording in this young person's file contained a lot of detailed and confidential recording about one of the child's siblings within another placement. The file of a young person receiving short-break foster care from the fostering service also contained LAC documentation that was not all up-to-date or clear. Different copies of the same documents were in place on the file relating to different settings and containing different dates though positively the records for all looked after reviews were good and contained a lot of valuable information about the child.

The fostering service is working to develop its arrangements for the assessment of family and friends under the arrangements for emergency or immediate placements regulation further. A supervising social worker in the fostering team is dedicated to this work to ensure that assessments comply as closely as possible with the timescale requirements set out in the regulations. The service is increasing its numbers of family and friends carers as a policy of maintaining children with their extended family or established friends where possible.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	3

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	4

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	4
22	3
23	4
24	2
25	3
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.	FS15	7, 20	Staff recruitment records must contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a full employment history in respect of the staff member with an explanation for any gaps, ▪ the reason for leaving any previous position involving working with children. 	19/01/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS12 FS24	All children’s social work files should contain full, up-to-date and correct LAC documentation and information.
2	FS8	The authority should consider how it can develop its arrangements for carrying out life story work with children fostered on a long-term basis.
3	FS9 FS22 FS25	Records of the manager’s monitoring of matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 should be more detailed.
4	FS9	The service needs to make sure that children are seen

		alone and in placement by their own social workers at appropriate intervals.
5	FS15	Telephone enquiries should be made to follow up written employment references received for staff.
6	FS30	The fostering service should consult with carers to see how it could improve arrangements for foster carers who are waiting to attend panel so as to reduce the anxiety described by some carers.
7	FS22	The fostering service should make sure that unannounced visits to foster carers are recorded in their files so that their frequency can be monitored.
8	FS22	Foster carer supervision should take place with a frequency based upon the needs of the foster carer and the nature of work undertaken but should be more frequent than six-monthly for mainstream task centred carers.
9	FS24	The authority should ensure that confidential information about child is not retained in other children's social work files.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Tees Valley Area Office

Advance

St. Mark's Court

Teesdale

Stockton-on-Tees

TS17 6QX

National Enquiry Line

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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