



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### North Tyneside Fostering Service

**Children`s Services  
Camden House  
Camden Street  
North Shields  
NE30 1NH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Hilary Stewart

*Announced Inspection*  
27th February 2006      09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	North Tyneside Fostering Service
<b>Address</b>	Children`s Services Camden House Camden Street North Shields NE30 1NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 200 5561
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 200 8945
<b>Email address</b>	elaine.liddle@northtyneside.gov.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	North Tyneside Council
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Ms Paula Gibbons
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	0
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      7th March 2005

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

North Tyneside Fostering Service is part of the Local Authorities Family Support and Placement Service, based at Children's Services, Camden House, Camden Street, North Shields. The fostering service recruits, assesses and supports foster carers to provide a range of placements for children and young people. This includes a short break care service for children with disabilities. The fostering team have responsibility for assessing and supporting long-term foster carers, the service includes an immediate placement scheme and assessment foster carers.

A planned joint project with Northumberland County Council is currently underway. This 'Treatment Foster Care' scheme (which is named Chrysalis) will provide therapeutic placements for up to six children.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Service was supporting approximately 119 foster care placements. The service was operating with a staff team of 14 including the administrative support staff.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspectors would like to thank all the children, carers, staff and children's social workers consulted about North Tyneside Fostering Service for helping the inspectors do their job and find out what the fostering service is like. All staff in the fostering team, carers and children were very helpful and many people spent time filling in questionnaires and sending them to the inspectors before the visit to the service.

A team of three inspectors spent a period of four days with the fostering team and gathered information by:

- Talking individually with children, carers and fostering staff;
- Visiting foster carers homes;
- Group discussion with carers;
- Reading children's, carers and staff files;
- Reading records;
- Studying the questionnaires sent back to us;

All this information was used when this report was written.

## What the service does well:

- North Tyneside Fostering Service is good at supporting it's foster carers to make sure children are safe and well looked after whilst they are living away from home.
- The fostering service provides good training for foster carers to teach them how to look after the children who live with them.
- When people are interested in becoming foster carers the staff go and see them quickly so people know that their enquiries are taken seriously.
- Foster carers get a lot of support to work with the children so they feel confident and stay being foster carers with North Tyneside Council for a long time. One foster carer said that "there is always someone to talk to" and "the manager is very helpful and staff are very approachable".
- The fostering service will help to arrange for a young people to stay with their foster carers when they move into adulthood if it is the best thing for them.
- It is very good at checking out and training new foster carers and making sure that they provide good homes to the children they care for. The work they do to find out if applicants are the right type of people to foster children is very thorough. They write very detailed reports to the panel about the people who apply and the panel considers the reports very carefully before they approve them.

- The fostering service is also good at making sure when children need foster care for a long time, foster carers are found especially for them who will be able to meet their needs.
- The fostering service is good at helping foster carers work with children and giving them the support they need. One foster carer said, "I have a great support worker" and another said, "The staff are very friendly and professional."
- The fostering service is good at keeping children safe. Children see their social workers alone so they can tell them about any worries they have. Nearly all of the children said that they know how to complain and their foster carers and the fostering service asks them what they think about the important things in their lives. Children told inspectors things like, "It's as if you are part of the family" and "I've got a new mam and dad."
- Most of the time foster carers get to know all that they need about a child who is going to live with them and this helps them look after the child properly. Foster carers, fostering social workers and children's social workers are good at talking to each other to make sure that everyone knows what they need so they can help the child.
- The fostering service is good at helping children be healthy and get a good education. It works well with foster carers to make sure that children are helped at school and with their health so they what they need. The fostering service also helps foster carers to support children have contact with their own families and friends.
- The fostering service is good at including the children of foster carers and has a support group for them.
- The manager of the fostering service is good at making sure that she knows all the important things about what is going on in the fostering service and what is happening to foster carers and children. She is good at making sure that any problems are sorted out as well as supporting the staff.

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

- The fostering service has improved how it checks out staff that work for them. Staff records show that they have been checked properly so the children and young people are kept safe.
- Foster carers now get better written information about the children who stay with them. A meeting is held as soon as possible to make sure the foster carer knows as much as possible.

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

- The staffing level's need to be reviewed to ensure that sufficient staff are employed by the fostering service. This is to make sure the foster carers are supported to meet the needs of the children cared for by them. Also to meet the demand for foster care in the area.
- Some foster carers are not getting enough information from the child's social worker about the child, to enable them to care for them properly.

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

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



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12

North Tyneside Fostering Service effectively monitors and promotes the health of children placed with the service's foster carers. This helps to ensure the well being of all children in foster placement.

## EVIDENCE:

The manager said that the agency promotes children's health and well-being. Supervising social workers remain in regular contact with foster carers and children in placement and regular checks are made of carer's recordings. The children's care plans showed that information had been recorded about the their health needs. The children and carers' records showed that the children have regular health checks.

Foster carers said that they were aware of the health needs of the children placed with them and their training covered health issues of children. If there are any issues relating to children's health they are recorded by the agency.

Some of the things children told us were " I get fed healthy food and there is always fruit in the house" and "I get a balanced diet and have all of the equipment I need to keep myself clean".

One foster carer said that they ensure children are given information about how to have a healthy lifestyle and they are provided with nutritious meals. The carers records showed that they had been given relevant information about the health care needs and histories of the children placed with them. Foster carers had arranged for the children to be registered with a doctor and dentist and they have written guidance about how to look after the health of the children and young people in their care.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

3,6,8,9,15 and 30.

North Tyneside Fostering Service is managed by staff that have the necessary training and skills to ensure children are well looked after and are living in a placement where their needs can be met.

Staff and the foster carers know about child protection procedures and how to safeguard children.

People who apply to be foster carers are checked out thoroughly before they are approved to do so, so children are kept safe.

Staff are vetted before they can work for the service and the 'Fostering Panel' monitors the children in foster placements to make sure they are kept safe and well looked after.

Complaints are dealt with so any problems are dealt with quickly which helps good relationships to be maintained.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The manager said that whenever possible planning meetings and introductory visits take place prior to a child moving into a foster placement.

Staff said that the service tries hard to make safe, caring and secure placements where children's welfare is safeguarded. Foster placement agreements showed the needs of the child had been taken into account when planning the placement. Where possible planning meetings and introductory visits take place. The manager and staff have worked very hard to make sure

that all of the children and young people have a foster placement agreement completed as they are required to by the Fostering Service Regulations, 2002, to make sure foster carers have the information they need. Some foster carers said that they did not always get sufficient information about the young person before, or when a placement commenced from the young persons social worker. One foster carer said she received very little information about a young person who is currently placed with them and this had made it more difficult for them to manage the young person's behaviour. When they were given more information they then understood why the young person was behaving the way they were. Foster carers said that their supervising social workers try to get as much information as they can but sometimes, they are not told everything.

Foster carers received training about child protection issues and safe caring. Training is also available on recognising and dealing with bullying.

Records showed that foster carers are required to prepare a written safe caring policy for their household with their supervising social worker, which is updated where necessary. Copies were available in foster carers' files.

Foster carers files showed that the fostering service carries out checks on new staff and foster carers.

One staff file showed that telephone enquiries had been made to follow up written references prior to their appointment. An examination of individual staff files confirmed that staff members' who work within the fostering team are professionally qualified and continue to develop their skills and competencies through ongoing training and development. The manager said that enhanced 'Criminal Records Bureau' checks are renewed every three years for staff and for foster carers.

Throughout the inspection the manager showed that they have the necessary skills, experience and competencies necessary to promote and ensure both the welfare and safety of children. Staff said that they were supported and well supervised by the manager.

The chairperson of the 'Fostering Panel' and staff said that recruitment of foster carers; foster carer assessments and review processes are both thorough and comprehensive.

Most of the young people said that they were happy with their foster placements. Some of the comments from young people were " People think it's cool to be in foster care and you get to go abroad" and " It's good being in a great family".

As part of the inspection, one inspector spoke to the chair of the fostering panel and looked at the records. It was found that the panel was efficient and well run and centred upon positive outcomes for young people. The chairperson said that the panel was able to question decisions made by the service if they needed to. They said that the service always listened to comments made by the panel and acted on them. The chairperson and panel advisor are responsible for writing a report on the panel's work each year. Staff said that they have been trained in child protection procedures and the identification of abuse. They knew what to do if an incident was reported to them.

Most of the carers and children know what to do if they want to make a complaint. Records showed that complaints were being dealt with. The foster carers' homes that were visited during the inspection were adequately furnished, decorated and clean. Health and safety checks of foster carers' homes and vehicles were done as part of their initial assessment and at their annual reviews. Foster carers who look after disabled children are provided with specific training.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7,13 and 31.

The service through its foster carers provides placements, which promote equality and value diversity to ensure that the child's self worth and confidence are enhanced.

Children placed with the service's carers are provided with good support, which actively promotes educational achievement so they will have more choice of work and further education when they are older.

The service has policies and procedures for the provision of short break (shared care) services.

## EVIDENCE:

The assessments of potential foster carers showed how their capacity to look after a child from a different cultural, religious, or ethnic background had been looked into. Foster carers received written guidance and training that covered the principles of valuing diversity and anti-oppressive practice.

The 'Raising the Health and Education of Looked after children' (RHELAC) team promotes the educational attainment of children. Part of their role is to provide support to children in foster care with their educational placements and to maximise the educational attainment and aspirations of each child. The staff and foster carers said that this service provides very good support to children and carers. Levels of attendance at school are high and reductions in children missing school have been achieved with the support of the RHELAC team. Children have opportunities to access additional tutor support and special help to achieve recognised qualifications. Foster carers have access to written guidance and training on educational issues.

Systems were in place to monitor the attendance and educational achievement of children in foster care.

'Personal Education Plans' (P.E.Ps) were in place for the young people who were 'case tracked'.

All the young people spoken to and those who completed questionnaires said that their foster carers help them with schoolwork. One young person said "When I get stuck on my homework they will help me" and another said "They help me a lot".

Short break carers access the same training as other foster carers and this covered shared care/working with parents. The scheme has its own policies and procedures in respect of meeting the particular needs of children receiving short-breaks. Mainly the parents of children with disabilities use the short break service. Foster carers interviewed who provide this service commented that they have a positive relationship with children's birth parents. The manager of the short break care service said that care is taken to identify carers with appropriate skills. She said that there are good relationships with the occupational therapists and that equipment is supplied to suit the needs of individual children. Support is available from the paediatric team to ensure that carers receive training in specific techniques to suit the needs of the children cared for.

One foster carer (who has a young person in placement who has a physical disability) said that they had not been provided with the necessary overhead tracking for the young person to use the bathroom when the placement began. The tracking has now been installed. At this house the child is unable to access the kitchen because of its layout. There have been discussions about making alterations, but no decisions have been made about doing this work. In response to the draft inspection report the manager said that this case has been reviewed. They found that the Occupational Therapist assessed had identified a way to adapt the foster carers kitchen so it would be accessible to the young person in placement. However the foster carers had refused the suggested changes and offered their preferred option, which was considerably more expensive and not value for money.

The young people who were spoken to and those who answered questionnaires said they were generally happy with their foster placements and foster carers. They said that foster carers ask their opinions about things. One young person said they had changed schools as a result of talking to their foster carers and them listening to them. Another young person said that their social worker talks to them alone if they want.

## **Making a Positive Contribution**

### **The intended outcomes these Standards are:**

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

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

### **JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

10 and 11.

When appropriate children are supported to have regular contact with their family and friends so they can keep relationships going and still be part of their family. Children would benefit from their carers being trained in the skills needed to facilitate and supervise contact arrangements.

The fostering service seeks the views of the children in their care so the children know they are listened to.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Young people's files showed and foster carers said that individual arrangements for contact between the young people with their parents and families have been made. Recordings showed that contact was taking place as set out in the care plans (of the young people case tracked). Foster carers were able to give examples where they have supported contact for instance arranging transport. The young people who had completed questionnaires said that they had regular contact with their families. One young person said that they did see their friends often but would like to see them even more.

Foster carers have guidance about supporting foster children to maintain and, where appropriate develop, their family contacts. Whenever possible contact arrangements are agreed before a placement starts. The manager said that training for foster carers is planned in the near future about the skills required to encourage and facilitate contact.

Training for carers includes sessions on listening to children. The majority of children who were seen or completed a questionnaire said that their foster carers listened to their views and opinions. One young person said " When we are at the caravan they (foster carer and their daughter) ask me what we



should do as they can't agree " another said that " They ask me about what I want my bedroom like, what I want to eat and about other placements". Young people are encouraged and supported to contribute to the reviews of their placements.

Foster carers, staff from the fostering team and young people themselves all confirmed that their opinions are sought and where appropriate acted upon. The fostering service sends out questionnaires to seek people's views. Families' views are also acted upon where appropriate.

Records showed that young people are involved in their reviews.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

## **JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

29

Foster carers receive appropriate allowances and expenses for looking after children. Most foster carers are paid promptly and at the agreed time so they know that they are valued by the service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers said that they had always received their payments. If they did have any problems they would contact their supervising social worker. There are policies and procedures available to staff and carers in respect of fostering allowances and payments to carers.

# Management

## The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

5,16,17,20,21,22,24 and 32.

An appropriately qualified and experienced manager manages the fostering service. The service is well managed and provides effective support to its carers through the provision of staff who are experienced and competent so children are kept safe and well cared for.

Each child has an individual record of their care and life events so they can look at it if they choose to.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The foster carers had favourable things to say about the service. They commented positively during the group and individual interviews. Foster carers were pleased with the help and support they receive from the team. They said that the staff " Give a lot of commitment to the foster carers" and " They have a readiness to help".

Records maintained by the service were generally well ordered and accessible. Each child has an individual record.

Arrangements were in place to monitor the fostering service and the quality of its performance.

Staff said that the administrative staff are very helpful and they are good at their work. Administrative staff said they feel well supported. The role of the supervising social worker seemed clear to both the social work staff and the carers.

Fostering service staff work hard to carry out assessments for family and friends carers on time. The manager said that there had been an increase in referrals for family and friends assessments, this has resulted in staff having to prioritise their work.

The service has systems in place to ensure that the operation of the fostering team is monitored effectively and efficiently.

Staff members have clearly defined job descriptions and when interviewed were clear about their individual roles and responsibilities. All staff spoken to were positive about the management of the service.

Records showed and staff said that they receive regular supervision from the team manager. The team are appropriately qualified and experienced and training is available for staff to continue to develop their skills and competencies. Staff were friendly and welcoming during the inspection.

Foster carers receive regular supervision and contact with their supervising social worker. The foster carers were positive about the service and they liked the staff. All foster carers that were spoken to said that they were well supported by the foster care team.

Foster carers confirmed that they had training as part of their recruitment and assessment process. They thought it was very good. There is evidence available to confirm that training is an on-going process and continues after registration as a foster carer. Foster carers are also encouraged to undertake NVQ training in childcare.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	2
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	3
<b>30</b>	4

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	3
<b>31</b>	3

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	3

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

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

no

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS8	34	The fostering provider must ensure that foster carers get all of the information necessary to enable them to care for the child (schedule 6).	01/05/06
2	FS17	19	The fostering service provider having regard to the size of the fostering service must ensure that a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff work for the purposes of the fostering service.	01/08/06

### **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

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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