



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Stockton Borough Council Fostering

**Council Buildings
Town Centre
Billingham
Stockton-on-Tees
TS23 2LW**

Lead Inspector
Stephen Smith

Key Announced Inspection
5th February 2007 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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Stockton Borough Council Fostering
Address	Council Buildings Town Centre Billingham Stockton-on-Tees TS23 2LW
Telephone number	01642 526218
Fax number	01642 526210
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Jackie Ward
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 23rd January 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has an integrated fostering and adoption service. The Child Placement Team is located within the authority's department of Children, Education and Social Care. The fostering aspect of the service provides placements in respect of short term/temporary, long term/permanent, bridging, parent and child, short breaks/sharing the caring (children with disabilities), respite care and emergency carers. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 120 children placed with foster carers, most of whom live within the boundaries of the borough. A number of these carers are approved as family/friends foster carers and have children placed under Regulation 38 (emergency placements with family/friends) and the team has a supervising social worker to work specifically with this group of people.

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 the 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 19 completed surveys from fostered children, 26 from foster carers and 3 from social workers were returned by the date this report was written. All together, 6 inspector days were spent with the fostering team and a further day was spent reading questionnaires and sorting out the information in them.

A team of two inspectors carried out the inspection and information was gathered by:

- Talking individually with children and foster carers;
- Group discussions with fostering staff;
- Group discussions with children social workers;
- Group discussion with foster carers;
- Visiting foster carers' homes;
- Discussion with an independent reviewing officer;
- Reading children's, carers' and staff files;
- Reading records and panel minutes;
- Interviewing the fostering manager;
- Studying the surveys and other information sent back to us.

People who told inspectors what they think about Stockton Borough Council Fostering Service generally said very good things about the service and the authority. The overwhelming majority of people said that the service gives excellent support to foster carers and provides very good outcomes for fostered children. Every foster carer and social worker consulted said that the service has either remained as good as last year or improved even further.

When asked how things could be made better, few people made any suggestion to make it better. Suggestions made by social workers referred to the need for more foster carers. The suggestions from foster carers were varied and none repeated by more than one foster carer; suggestions included better communication, more notice about training and the need to listen to carers more. The majority of carers, however, felt that support for children and foster carers is very good.

The majority of carers said that things could not be improved from their point of view. Comments included, "My link workers have always supported me, I don't think there is any improvement needed" and "I haven't had a problem, so I don't see how it could be better." One carer summed her views up simply by saying, "They offer full overall support and help in every way" and another said, "All I would like to say about the family placement team is a huge thank you!"

It is good that so many people think the service works well works well and that 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:

- "If I was a foster carer. I would have to learn from the best (my foster carer), and to keep my anger down I would learn from (social worker)."
- "I feel that I get enough support and get everything I need and more. Thank you very much."
- "(Foster carer and social worker), always help me when I am down and angry."
- "I am always given nice food and clothes. I get cuddles, when I want them."
- "I am well fed, clothed, and I have a loving family around me."
- "If I get upset (foster carers) will comfortably have made me feel better."
- "I like being cared for where I live. I like being where I live with (foster carer) and her family."
- "I am looked after very well."
- "I love my foster carers, I don't want to leave them."

What the service does well:

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

- The fostering service is very good at assessing 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. A social worker said, "I think the standard of carers has improved, I've been more than happy with the ones I've worked with."
- New foster carers cannot foster until a group of experts called a panel make a recommendation that they are the right sort of people and have the skills they need to look after children properly. This panel is very careful, gets a lot of information and thinks very hard about people before it recommends that they can foster. This is good for children as it helps keep them safe and have a good life.

- 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 very 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. It also works very hard to make sure that carers get to know all they need to about the child they are going to be looking after. A social worker said, "Although we are rarely offered a choice of placement, the child placement social workers are on the same wavelength as us and know the carers they have available well. The great majority of the time the placement offered is right for the child..." Foster carers said that they usually get to know everything that is known about children before they are placed with them.

- The service is also good at making sure that foster homes get checked and regularly to make sure they are safe places for children to live. Carers get good training and help to think about the things they have to do to keep children safe. Children told inspectors things like, "I feel safe," "I am always given nice food and clothes. I get cuddles, when I want them," "I am well fed, clothed, and I have a loving family around me" and "(Foster carers) are always doing their best for what's right for me."

- 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. A child said, "(Foster carer), helps me keep clean and healthy and at school I have a social worker at school. She helps me in a different way."

- The fostering service is very 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. A young person said, "The help (foster carer), and my school's social worker, gives me is helpful in lots of different ways. (Foster carer), helps in my education outside of school and (social worker) helps inside of school."

- The fostering service is good at finding out what children think about things and using this to make their care better. The local authority is working hard to make sure that children keep their social worker for a long time, get to know them well and are able to talk to them about their problems. Children said things like, "Because of my problems my foster carer and social worker listen and help me with my opinions" and "My social worker does listen to me. (Social worker) helped me to see my family, and she asks me if I like living where I am now. And I like it where I am living."

- The service is excellent at supporting foster carers to look after children. Foster carers get visited regularly and get lots of help and good advice about how to help the children they are caring for. Foster carers get good training and this helps them to look after children well. Foster carers said very good things about the support and training they get like, "My link worker never stints her time or energy in any help I need, whether practical or seeking the advice I need" and "If I need any help or need anything I only have to ring my link worker or her team and they support me and help as best they can."

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the service has:

- Made sure that all foster carers have 'safe caring policies'. These policies show how the carer will look after children in a way that will keep them safe. This is talked about by the social worker, foster carer and fostering social worker when children go to live with foster carers, so everyone knows what needs to be done to keep children safe.
- Worked hard to make sure more carers do training so that they become better at looking after children. The service has done lots of training for carers in first aid and bullying so that carers can keep children safe. It has also started to get more foster carers to do their NVQ level 3 in childcare.
- Since the last inspection the manager has finished doing the NVQ Level 5 in Management. This means that she is now more qualified as a manager than the rules say she needs to be.

What they could do better:

The inspection did not find many important things that the service should do better. The most important things it should do better are:

- Keep on working to get children's LAC medicals and other health appointments to happen out of school time so that children do not miss school for these appointments. It should also ask schools to think about whether children who have to have health appointments in school time because they are looked after should not get marked absent for these appointments.

- Make sure that all 'Placement Information Record Forms' are filled out fully by children's social workers when children are placed with foster carers. This is important because these are the forms that tell foster carers how children need to be looked after and who will have to do what to make sure the child gets the help they need.
- Make sure that children get to tell the service what they think about their foster carers and the care they get when it is the foster carer's review. This is important because children in a foster placement know most about what the carers are like.
- The authority should make sure that social workers do not write private things about children in the files of their brothers or sisters. It needs to do this to make sure that private things are kept private.

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.

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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 very well met and their health is promoted by the fostering service and authority's effective arrangements.

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 places importance on promoting the health of looked after children and is working hard to ensure that children receive annual Looked After Children (LAC) medical checks. Over 80% of fostered children have received their annual medical and work is taking place to develop this further. Arrangements are in place to enable the LAC nurse, health visitors and school nurse to undertake these checks. Foster carers confirmed that the arrangements for ensuring children's health is monitored are getting better. Some carers told inspectors that LAC medicals currently take place at a central location and happen during the school day, consequently young people miss sessions of school and often receive an absent mark. They said this can also be the case for children's ongoing medical or therapeutic appointments. The manager said that, as work continues, it will be possible for medicals to take place in children's own homes and at more suitable times. It is recommended that these arrangements are implemented as soon as practicable.

The authority provides its carers with a range of appropriate training in health matters including healthy eating, sexual health, drug awareness and misuse as well as health and safety and first aid. First aid training is included in the 'mandatory' training required of foster carers. Case tracking during the inspection and examination of training courses demonstrated that the service works hard to make sure that carers undertake appropriate training.

The fostering service has also developed good links with the Child and Adolescent Mental health Service (CAMHS) in addition to the authority's own working relationships. Carers receive training in the role of CAMHS, jointly facilitated by a CAMHS worker. This link ensures fostered children have 'fast track' access to CAMHS services if needed.

Children visited and spoken to during the inspection were all registered with doctors and dentists. Young people case tracked had up-to-date LAC medical reports in place in their files and health plans where appropriate and LAC documentation contained appropriate health information. Case tracking provided some examples of very effective work to ensure the health needs of a young child with a disability were being met.

Social workers consulted said that children have their needs met well and foster carers were also very positive about this support as follows:

	%
Excellent	43%
Good	43%
Adequate	14%
Poor/Inadequate	0%

Foster carers' comments included:

- "They promote healthy lifestyles through training."
- "We all encourage healthy lifestyles, hygiene is also a priority need for young people. I promote both to build up a young person's self esteem; social workers support this contribution to the young people I care for."
- "They offered training on food technology etc. which was good."

A social worker said, "The carers have worked very hard to make sure that (young person) is kept healthy and has a good role model to follow."

All children spoken to who could express a view, said that they get good help with their health and 84% of children said, in questionnaires, they always get the right help. The others said they usually or sometimes get the right help. Children said things like:

- "I eat healthy and have regular checkups."
- "Yes, (foster carer) has told me about smoking and lung cancer."
- "Healthy cooking."
- "My carers provide healthy food for me and make sure I get plenty of support (exercise)."
- "Because my carers help me by encouraging me."
- "Yes I do get support, because we think of our figures."
- "I am trying to lose weight, so I tend to eat healthily anyway."
- "(Foster carers), always tell me to eat the right food, clean my teeth, how to cross roads properly."
- "Because (foster carer), helps me keep clean and healthy and at school I have a social worker at school. She helps me in a different way."
- "I get advice about eating fruit and veg. and not too many sweets, and exercise."

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 excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children's safety is promoted by the authority's in-depth assessment process, effective matching arrangements and the provision of safe homes with foster carers, who get good training and excellent support, to help them keep children safe. Recruitment practices keep children safe and 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. Safety checklists were also in place about any pets owned by foster carers.

These checks are undertaken as part of the foster carer assessment process and regularly updated.

The authority's arrangements to match children with foster carers taking into account their specific needs are good. Social workers' consulted acknowledged that the service needs more foster carers and said that they rarely have a choice of foster placement offered to them. One said, "There is not enough provision to offer choice."

Despite this view of a lack of placement choice, social workers consulted were generally very positive about the quality of foster placements available. One social worker said, "Although we are rarely offered a choice of placement, the child placement social workers are on the same wavelength as us and know the carers they have available well. The great majority of the time the placement offered is right for the child and only rarely does a child have to move placement because the carer used in an emergency was not right for the child." Social workers said that a great deal of care is taken to get placements right and said that in their experience things worked well when there is time to plan. An example of a young person having nine introductory visits to a foster carer as part of a planned process was cited. Fostering staff described the careful work they carry out make sure that any placement offered is appropriate for the child in question. All long-term placements are carefully matched by the fostering panel and a child's file examined showed the very careful family finding and matching process that had taken place.

Children's social workers said that there are good relationships between themselves and the fostering team and said that this helps when placements are made, as worker know their carers well and pay attention to the needs of the children. They were generally positive about how well information is shared between foster carers, the fostering team and themselves. One social worker said, "(Foster carers), understand that it is their responsibility to look after (young person) and manage his behaviour. Information I receive outside of my visits is always accurate, concise and delivered in a calm manner."

The authority works hard to ensure that foster carers receive good information about the child at the time the placement is made. Fostering social workers said that they liaise with social workers to get as much information as possible about the child being placed. Foster carers' views about the quality of information received about a child before a placement is made were generally very positive and confirmed the work done in this area, as follows:

Excellent	26%
Good	37%
Adequate	30%
Poor	7% (2 responses)

This level of satisfaction about the information provided to foster carers is commendable for a local authority which has to make placements in line its statutory duty to protect and provide for children.

The service operates an effective 'gatekeeping' or planning system regarding access to the fostering service with all placements being referred to a placement panel before (or immediately after in an emergency situation) the placement is made. All parties spoken to said that placements are matched as well as possible and all parties cited very good support to maintain placements when they are made. The service is working hard to reduce the number of foster placements made in an emergency; the manager said that, overall, there are more emergency placements made than planned placements, but that this figure is monitored by the fostering service and resource panel. Social workers spoken to confirmed this and said that they are encouraged and supported to plan ahead for placements in case they are needed rather than to wait until an emergency arises.

Foster Placement Agreements made are recorded on 'Placement Information Record' (PIR) forms. All placements examined had such an agreement in place, though the PIR forms were not always completed in sufficient detail by the placing social worker and, as such, did not give foster carers enough detailed information about the day to day care arrangements needed by the young person. It is recommended that the authority give attention to ensuring that these agreements are completed as fully as possible for all placements made. A range of other information sources is used to give to foster carers to offset any lack of detail in these documents. The fostering manager said that the fostering service plans to take a lead on coordinating foster placement agreement meetings for a short period to try to improve the detail of the information recorded in the agreement forms.

The fostering service is effective at managing the need to apply for exemptions for foster carers. Few exemptions are sought for placing more children with carers than the usual fostering limit and its matching arrangements are such that, where children are placed out of the foster carer approval category, the variations are minor. This demonstrates the efforts made to match children closely with foster carers.

Where the authority needs to use placements with independent fostering agencies these need to be agreed by a senior manager within the authority to monitor the appropriateness of the placement and to ensure any 'in-house' provision has been considered. Social workers spoken to said that placements could be agreed for specific situations such as a large sibling group. And a number of people spoken to acknowledged that placements with carers in the independent sector are sometimes made because the authority does not have sufficient numbers of carers, with the particular skills, to meet the child's needs. The fostering service is the point of contact with independent agencies in these situations.

Social workers spoken to were confident that they would be able to access an independent placement for a child if a suitable internal placement was not available. Case tracking during the inspection provided confirmation of this. And showed how careful work had been undertaken to find an appropriate placement for a young person when no suitable alternative was available.

The child placement team analyse placement disruptions and discuss placement stability on a weekly basis to consider and arrange any additional support required to help maintain placements. The Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) studies the views of children who have had disrupted placements to see what lessons can be learned.

Children’s social workers consulted were generally very positive about how well the fostering service promotes placement stability and works with carers to ensure that children are well cared for in their placements. Foster carers’ views about the same issues were as follows:

	Help received to maintain placements	Support to ensure children are well cared for
Excellent	44%	58%
Good	48%	31%
Adequate	4%(1 response)	11%
Poor	4%(1 response)	0%

Comments from foster carers about matching included:

- "I was given plenty of information."
- "We can only be given the information that has been divulged we get all of that."
- "This varies, long-term placements are excellent. Emergency placements, little information available. This is unavoidable."
- "Both children were placed as an emergency, so information was basic on the first night, but as full a picture and details as they had followed the following day in both cases."
- "I have always had plenty of information due to the children I've had in respite have all have special needs."
- "Sometimes important information, especially about past history isn't always passed on."
- "This is varied, but overall it has not been good or met the needs of the children. Had there been an emergency it would have caused the potential of delay in treatment."
- "On most occasions, excellent, if it's available I've had it. Of course, if I have taken an emergency the office don't always have a lot to work on."
- "My link worker is very good with helping me maintain placements."

- "My link worker is great, she would try any amount of time or support to maintain a placement. I have never had any problems in the support the family placement team have offered or given. The children's social workers could do better."
- "We work together with the planning and move the child on in the best interests for the child."

Social workers said things like:

- "(Foster carers) understand how important it is for (young person) to be attached to the carers. They do have a long-term commitment to him and tell him that they want (young person's) placement with them to be the last looked after placement he will have."
- "Physical standards within the home are high. (Young person) is provided with time and opportunity to talk, though he is usually reluctant to do this. (Foster carers.) Now insist that he has a teatime to ensure that they all spend some time together. (Young person) is encouraged to take an appropriate level of responsibility for looking after himself. Education and health issues are prioritised. (Young person) is continually encouraged and reminded to take responsibility for the decisions he makes for himself."

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. Foster carers receive child protection training during their initial assessment training and in the 'mandatory' training that carers are required to undertake. A range of other training in safety issues is provided to carers including, safe caring, bullying and behaviour management which is provided as part of the attachment training offered to carers. Foster carers visited had undertaken training in these 'child safety' issues and a relatively new carer, who had received this training as a foster carer with a different organisation had enrolled to take part in the next training session available.

All of the foster carers' files examined contained safe caring policies. These policies have a general element about the home and the carers and also have a supplementary section setting out any specific safe caring issues relating to each child in placement. These are shared with the social worker at the time that placements are made and referred to in the foster placement agreement. Social workers said that they are informed if another child is placed in the same foster home as a child they have already placed. Children's social workers and members of the fostering team both said they undertake joint visits to foster carers where needed to discuss any issues surrounding the 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 child placement team manager has an effective system in place to monitor any complaints, allegations or incidents taking place as well as any incidents of unauthorised absence and other incidents set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. An independent local authority undertakes any investigations of allegations against foster carers and outcomes are fed back to senior managers via the authority's scrutiny panel.

The authority employs a children's participation worker to visit and consult with children placed both with local authority foster carers or those employed by independent agencies. The authority also uses 'Viewpoint' to seek children's views for their own looked after reviews and also uses opinions sought to guide and develop practice.

All children visited and 95% of those who returned survey forms said they 'always' feel well cared for by the foster carers they are living with. The remaining children said they 'usually' feel well cared for. All children said that they know who to speak to if they are unhappy or have a personal problem and all except one young person said that they know how to make a complaint. The remaining young person was not sure whether they knew how to complain or not.

One young person said, in the survey form returned, "I get bullied at school sometimes." This information was passed on to the fostering service to ensure the situation is being addressed. No other young person said that bullying is a problem for them.

Foster carers, social workers and fostering workers told inspectors that children's social work teams have a significant number of vacant posts as is the case in most authorities nationally. Social workers said, however, that agency staff are employed to fill vacant posts and that work is managed so that temporary workers carry out shorter term pieces of work, so as to allow longer term cases to remain allocated to the same social worker. Case tracking during the inspection confirmed this and showed that children do not have excessive numbers of changes of social worker. Children who returned survey forms generally said they have good relationships with their social worker

Children's comments about being safe included:

- "(Foster carer and social worker), always help me when I am down and angry."
- "I feel safe."
- "I am always given nice food and clothes. I get cuddles, when I want them."
- "Because I am well fed, clothed, and I have a loving family around me."
- "(Foster carers) are always doing their best for what's right for me."
- "If I get upset (foster carers) will comfortably have made me feel better."
- "They support me in any way they can."
- "I like being cared for where I live. I like being where I live with (foster carer) and her family."
- "I am looked after very well."
- "They are helping me with my life."
- "If I'm not happy or I have a personal problem. I talk to (foster carer), or my social worker. They can help me with what I need to say. "
- "I would go and speak to my carer or if my carer isn't around I would talk to my friends, family or social worker."
- "(Foster carer), lets me phone my social worker, if I want to speak to her, or (foster carer) will phone for me."
- I would speak to "either (foster carer) or (social worker). Both I would trust with my life."
- "If I had some problems, I would speak to my carers."

Recruitment records for fostering staff examined during the last inspection demonstrated that a thorough, robust and careful recruitment procedure is in place. No staff members have been appointed since the last inspection. Social work staff within the fostering team receive good supervision, management and training.

Stockton 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. Minutes showed that recommendations are specific in terms of the terms of the foster carer's recommended approval and panel is robust at requiring further work and information where necessary. Panel is correctly constituted in line with the regulations and national minimum standards.

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 get very good support with their educational and leisure needs and are assisted to attain academic achievements that will help them in later life. Foster carers get good support to help them care for children with different needs and from different backgrounds and the service is working to improve its provision in this area.

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. Staff members have received training in diversity issues to help them deliver this training effectively. Good arrangements are in place to provide ongoing training for foster carers. The service is involved with the Sahara project, which provides support for the recruitment and support of carers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Sahara also offers consultancy and support for specific situations where there are needs relating to culture or race and has provided direct training to foster carers.

The authority employs a Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Development Officer, this person is based within the child placement team and offers ongoing support and guidance as well as training and 'informal' guidance. 'Buddying' arrangements are being developed so that white carers looking after children from a black or minority ethnic background can access support from someone from a similar background.

The service also provides its carers with training in disability issues and offers practical support and help for carers. A foster carer visited who was caring for a child with severe disabilities spoke very highly about the support provided to the child and the arrangements made between Stockton Borough Council and an adjoining authority, where the foster carer lives, which have led to very good health, education and specialist services being provided to the child.

Social workers consulted were satisfied with the authority's provision for children in this area but said that the service needs more foster carers from black and minority ethnic communities. Foster carers' views about the support they receive from the fostering service to deal with issues of diversity were as follows:

	%
Excellent	59%
Good	32%
Adequate	7%
Poor/Inadequate	0%

Comments made by foster carers included:

- "If I'm in any doubt my link worker helps and supports me in the child."
- "Any help in this area is actively given to support the child or carers."
- "I have dealt with this a few times and been given help and support. I have a baby in my care that is mixed race and have no problems."

A small number of carers commented that they had felt personally challenged by the training provided by the Sahara project. The manager was informed of this and said that she had received feedback from the Sahara project to this effect and regarded it as positive that carers are being helped to confront issues.

Foster carers are provided with good information about promoting education for fostered children and working with the different services involved. The service has worked hard to ensure that all fostered children have up to date Personal Education Plans (PEPs). Children of school age spoken to during the inspection and those whose files were examined had PEPs in place and Statements of Special Educational Need (SEN) where appropriate. The authority is working hard to promote school attendance and levels of unauthorised absence from schools are low.

A number of carers spoken to cited good relationships between themselves, the school and children's social workers to monitor and promote attendance. One foster carer said that a young person is now achieving 98% attendance at school after around two years in placement, when on arrival at the foster carers the young person had not attended school for a number of years. This carer said that a very high level of support had been provided by the young person's social worker to achieve this. The social worker said that the foster carer had shown a great commitment and skill in promoting this attendance.

Foster carers spoken to and those who returned survey forms clearly demonstrated the importance they place on children's education. A group of foster carers spoken to discussed, at some length, the need for services for looked after children to reflect children's school hours. And ensure that children do not have to miss school regularly for ongoing appointments. A number of carers suggested that schools need to be more flexible in these situations. One carer gave an example of a situation in which a foster child has to be taken to school on a morning to be marked in before being taken to a weekly appointment with CAMHS. The carer said that this results in the young person missing more of the school day than going to an early CAMHS appointment and then going on to school late. She said that extra time is also spent travelling because the school would otherwise mark the young person absent for the morning session. Other foster carers provided similar examples. In situations such as this it is recommended that the authority liaise with the school to find a way in which this situation can be resolved.

Evidence from reading files and talking to children and carers during the inspection shows that fostered children are getting good support at school. The authority has a Raising Achievement and Performance (RAP) Team to work to encourage children's educational attainment and a number of people consulted cited examples of the very positive help and support provided by this team. The fostering service told inspectors that young people are provided computers and, though there had been some problems with the software provided to children the situation is being addressed. The authority runs Celebrating Achievement Events for looked after children and provides awards and cash incentives to promote and reward educational achievement. A LAC teaching team is in place to support children in school and their foster placements and focuses on the different key educational stages. Foster carers get good training in educational matters with educational staff involved in, or leading, the delivery of this training and nearly half the authority's carers have undertaken this training. Training to foster carers includes educational matters, examination techniques and pathway planning.

50% (2 out of 4) children whose last placement was a foster placement who took their GCSEs in 2005 achieved at least 1 GCSE at A* - G or a GNVQ. All fostered young people aged 15 or over have Pathway Plans in place.

A range of leisure activities and events take place for children and the authority has worked hard to ensure that young people have things to do that they can enjoy. Foster carers are provided with leisure cards to allow children discounted access to a range of leisure facilities.

74% of children consulted said that they 'always' receive the right sort of help with their education; the other 26% said they 'usually' get this help. 79% said they are 'always' helped to think about their future with the others saying they 'usually' or 'sometimes' get this help. Children said things like:

- "The help (foster carer), and my school's social worker, gives me is helpful in lots of different ways. (Foster carer), helps in my education outside of school and (social worker) helps inside of school."
- "I go to reading club after school. (Foster carer) goes to my school to see the teacher and watch me get my certificates."
- "My carer helps with work, by social worker helps with my work. I make sure that my work is done."
- "I get told not to nick off, so I get enough education."
- "I get told to do my homework, and if I get stuck I get the amount of help that I need."
- "(Foster carers) talk to me about my work and if I'm struggling try to think ways to help me. And make sure I do my homework and help if needed."
- "(Foster carer) asks me about my homework and helps me with my schoolwork."
- "Sometimes the teachers can't help you, but I get help at home."
- "I get to go to after-school clubs."
- "(Foster carers), talk to me about things that might or will happen in the future and answer any questions I have."
- "My (foster carers), assure me that it is okay for me to think about my future, and they say stuff like 'I am sure that you are going to be very happy'."
- "I have to do jobs for when I am older, so I have enough skills."
- "My carer is getting me ready for moving out in a couple of years. By getting the little bits and pieces for my house or flat."
- "People take me to colleges for interviews."

Social workers consulted were generally very positive about the authority's arrangements to support children's education and leisure activities and to provide young people with an environment in which they can prosper. Foster carer's views were, also generally very positive about educational support and the help to provide a environment for children to prosper. Their views about the support for children's activities in the community, though still positive were slightly less so. The results were as follows: -

	Support for children's education	Support for activities in the community	Support to create an environment for children to prosper
Excellent	32%	30%	38%
Good	55%	39%	46%
Adequate	13%	14%	16%
Poor	0%	17%	0%

Foster carers said things like:

- "Many meetings with school, if I need help with them both social workers will attend (if needed). Their PEPs are always kept up-to-date. Both are always on the end of the phone."
- "Foster carers provide the support and encouragement to young people to achieve. I'd plant seeds as a child can have in the future and motivate them towards these possibilities. Social workers support my enthusiasm."
- "The educational Department appears to be functioning well to start with, and has continued to improve."
- "Each one more of the social workers I have worked with have always been interested in how things are going and at certain times have gone to school or college meetings."
- "Computers were given to most Foster carers. Social workers make sure teachers attend children's reviews and work together to make sure the child is getting the most educationally."
- "There is not much offered for children of different ages and needs."
- "Mileage is paid for any meeting that the child or I need to attend."
- "I am given training, there is help with transport if we needed."
- "Lots offered for all age groups. (Little uptake though!)"
- "They support and encourage the children and me in any activities we choose to do as a family or the children on their own."

Social workers comments included:

- "Expectations are high; school in educational attainment is a priority. (Foster carers) are in regular contact with (young persons) school. (Foster carers) have taken responsibility for the ensuring that (young person) completes homework."
- "The fostering service does not do this, it is left to social workers and others. Laptops are available, however, these have not yet been distributed due to incorrect software."
- "(Foster carers), understand that (young person's) community is extremely important to him. They support his involvement in it as long as that involvement is safe and appropriate."

The authority provides short break care for children with disabilities. Arrangements are suitable to ensure that responsibility for decisions regarding these children remains with their parents.

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 good. 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.

EVIDENCE:

The importance of promoting appropriate contact between young people and their families is made clear to foster carers and set out in the foster care agreement. The foster placement agreement used by the fostering service ensures that information about contact arrangements is shared with all parties and that the foster carers are clear about what is expected of them. 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. Foster carers receive training in attachment to help them understand issues for children arising from their relationship with their families.

Foster carers and social workers consulted reported good arrangements for contact where it is in children's interests. Responses in foster carers' questionnaires considered that children have good networks with their families where these are possible and the views of social workers confirmed this. Where networks were identified as not being good, respondents cited specific reason for this relating to the child's needs or circumstances.

One young person said, "I see my dad every Saturday or Sunday and my mum in the holidays, I get help with this when things don't go right." A foster carer said, "Contact with (young person's) family continues to be difficult but (young person) and I both get good support from the social worker and I unload any difficulties on my link worker."

Evidence gathered during the inspection showed the consultation events and activities for children that take place. The authority runs a looked after children group and uses Viewpoint to seek children's views for their reviews. Children who foster help provide training to new foster carers and fostered children are involved in recruitment campaigns for new foster carers and in the selection of new fostering staff

The authority has good arrangements in place for seeking the views of children at the end of foster placements and also seeks their views for foster carer's reviews. The system for getting views for foster carers' reviews, however, is not as effective as it could be. Children's social workers are responsible for consulting with children for foster carers' reviews and supervising social workers often do not get written forms back from children and have to rely on verbal comments sought from the social worker. The service should further develop this process so that children's views are gained in a more detailed manner and can be given full consideration at foster carers' reviews.

The authority has a participation officer in post who works with children to seek their views and give them a voice in the running of the authority. Children's views about the care they have received are sought when they leave the care system and the participation worker has supported young people to produce their own consultation document for their looked after reviews.

As stated earlier, the authority, like many others, has difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers in children's social work teams. Commendably, its arrangements to address this difficulty have allowed it to maintain consistency for children and allow good relationships develop between children and their social workers. The very positive views about their social workers expressed by children below provide good evidence of the efforts made for children in this area.

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

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Foster carer:	84%	11%	5%	0%
Social worker:	63%	7%	15%	15%

Children said thing like:

- "Because of my problems my foster carer and social worker listen and help me with my opinions."
- "We have little meetings to discuss things like what we want to do or where we would like to go for a day out."
- "They have always noted and passed on and tried to improve or do whatever is said."
- "They listen, if I have a problem and ask what I think about things."
- "They talk to me about my opinions."
- "(Foster carer) does listen to me, and she asks me where I would like to go out to or asks me what take-away I would like to have."
- "My social worker does listen to me. (Social worker) helped me to see my family, and she asks me if I like living where I am now. And I like it where I am living."
- "She listens to what I would like to happen and tries to sort it out."
- "If I ask her about my future, she sometimes listens to me."
- "Tries his best for what I want."
- "When my sister did come to contact (social worker) spoke to them for me and they came to the next contact."
- "They ask questions of what I want to happen in my life."

One young person who said that their social worker never listens to them qualified this view with the statement "It's not because she is a bad social worker, don't think that. It is because she does not have time to come around to see us and talk to us. We don't have nothing to say."

Social workers consulted were generally positive in their views about how well children are consulted about the care they receive. Their views were more mixed, though still generally positive about how well they are consulted about the running of the fostering service.

Foster carer's views of the effectiveness of consultation with children were as follows:

	Consulted about their care	Consulted about the running of the service
Excellent	24%	18%
Good	60%	50%
Adequate	16%	27%
Poor/Inadequate	0%	5%

Foster carers made comments about consultation with children including:

- "There is an excellent attitude to the children who are cared for, even though they have communication difficulties."
- "There is a range of activities for children and children's wishes are listened to."
- "Participation workers get children involved and find out what they think."

Social workers said things like:

- "(Young person), often appears reluctant to comment/contribute to decisions that affect him. Despite that, I believe that (foster carers) make every effort to empower him and always seek his views/opinions on day-to-day issues."
- "I recently had a discussion with (foster carers), and (young person) about their expectations around teatime is and what they expect of the young person. (Young person) was offered the opportunity of commenting on and negotiating around his carers' point of view."

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 an appropriate and effective system of rewarding foster carers for their skills. This enables carers to meet children's needs well and helps promote a high quality of foster placements for children.

EVIDENCE:

Stockton Borough Council fostering service has a structured payments scheme in place for foster carers that includes three payment levels. Foster carers at level one receive the fostering allowance payable by the authority. This is set at the recommended minimum rate set by Fostering Network. Training and experience allows carers to progress to level two, which includes the allowance and an additional fee. The authority has recently been trying to recruit foster carers to work at level three which includes a higher fee level in return for carers working with more difficult and hard to place young people. At the time of the inspection it had not succeeded in recruiting carers to this scheme. Foster carer allowances enable carers to receive paid respite care as an additional support and carers receive expenses to cover the costs of purchase of necessary items. In addition incentives can be paid to young people to encourage them to attend further education or gain apprenticeships and jobs.

Information about payment levels and the system of payments is provided to foster carers. No foster carer who responded had any criticism for the level of foster carer payments.

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 excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service's arrangements for the assessment, support, training and review of foster carers are excellent and promote high quality outcomes for children. Management is effective and works to improve standards further. Children's, foster carers' and miscellaneous records promote good quality care for children.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is effectively managed and organised with clear lines of accountability in procedures for decision-making. Systems to ensure that work relating to the assessment, approval, management, support and supervision of foster carers is well carried out work well. The manager effectively supervises and manages the team of staff and supervising social workers said their caseload and the work within the team is busy, but manageable. Fostering social workers said they receive good formal and informal support from the manager and other members of the team and said they have good access to training. The fostering team has efficient clerical and administrative support, foster carers consulted spoke very highly of the telephone service provided by the administrative team.

The fostering service works hard to recruit new foster carers. The service has been working hard to recruit 'level three' carers for the more demanding or hard to place young person but had not, at the time of the inspection been successful. This recruitment effort had, however, succeeded in recruiting new carers of a more 'mainstream' nature. Foster carers consulted expressed the view that the service has a good reputation for the level of support and training it provides for foster carers and findings during the inspection confirmed this. Children's social workers and fostering workers said that good relationships exist between the fostering team, foster carers and children's social workers. The manager said that, although the authority still makes more placements in an emergency than it would like, it is working hard to ensure that it plans as many placements as possible. Children's social workers consulted confirmed this view and said that good relationships with the fostering team help this process.

Assessments of new foster carers seen during the inspection were very thorough, and people spoken to confirmed this is the case for other assessments. Assessments contained very detailed and careful checks on applicants' suitability and competence to foster, as were checks on foster carers' backgrounds and records of visits to the referees of applicants. Background checks include the local authorities in which applicants have lived, NSPCC and probation and references are taken up from applicants' employers, family members and previous partners as well as from the more 'traditional' referees.

Referees are visited as part of the assessment process and the records of these visits are included with the assessment presented to panel. Records of visits contain an analysis of the robustness of the reference.

The authority has effective arrangements in place for the management and support of carers. Carers receive useful information and guidance about their roles as foster carers and receive very good support from their supervising social workers and in the great majority of cases from children's social workers. The fostering service works well with the Independent Reviewing Officer responsible for foster care reviews to ensure that they take place on time. Good arrangements are in place to seek the views of the foster carer, supervising social worker, placing social worker as well as the fostered child though records showed that the service does not always receive detailed feedback from fostered children or their social workers for carers' reviews. The independent reviewing officer spoken to confirmed that this is the case, and fostering social workers consulted said that they often have to telephone or email social workers to find out their views and the views of fostered children as the forms used to gather their views had not been returned to them. The manager explained that, currently, the responsibility for seeking children's views lies with the children's social worker. The service should further develop its process for seeking children's views about their foster carers so that they can be given full consideration at foster carers' reviews.

Files of foster carers approved more recently contained a copy of the relevant panel minute, a notice of approval and a foster carer agreement clearly showing their terms of approval. In the case of a foster carer approved since 1991, records did not clearly show how her approval status had changed over the years and there were some inconsistencies in the record of her changes of approval terms. In such cases it is recommended that a summary sheet is retained on file showing the dates and reasons for approval changes.

Foster carers have access to respite care to help them maintain placements in times of pressure and the child placement team has a duty worker system so that someone is available to support carers throughout the working week. Foster carers said that this service is effective and they get good help from the fostering team. Out of hours, the authority's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) is available for foster carers to contact for support. The manager said that this arrangement is being looked at to see how out of hours support for foster carers can be improved. During the inspection some carers expressed the view that the current arrangements does not offer them very good support but others said they have been very happy with the support it provides.

In foster carers' survey responses about the quality of support provided by the fostering team for them to care for the child views were as follows:

Excellent	65%
Good	23%
Adequate	12%
Inadequate	0%

Comments from foster carers about this included:

- "My link worker never stints her time or energy in any help I need, whether practical or seeking the advice I need."
- "If I need any help or need anything. I only have to ring my link worker or her team and they support me and help as best they can."
- "The fostering service has been very good, we can meet, talk, discuss issues. When we need to. We get plenty of support when needed."
- "We have been well supported, particularly by our link social worker. Communication by e-mail is excellent. We enjoy and will continue to work with the fostering teams."
- "At present, the services good from Stockton. No problems with social workers or family placement."
- "All I would like to say about the family placement team is a huge thank you!"
- "I love working for social services, I meet a lot of lovely people. More like my family, always helpful and supporting when I am upset moving babies on for adoption and afterwards."

This level of satisfaction from carers about the support provided to them is noteworthy and the service is to be commended for supporting carers to this level.

Records and interviews showed that foster carers receive very good levels of supervision and unannounced visits take place at least yearly. Records examined provided examples of carers receiving supervisory visits with supervision records being completed as frequently as every ten days to two weeks. In other situations, where placements were long term and settled visits were, appropriately, less frequent.

The fostering service provides a range of good training for its foster carers. All parties consulted during the inspection said that carers get good training and foster carers said they value this training. One social worker said, "There always seems to be a lot of training going on for foster carers; this is something that has got noticeably better over recent years." Training at NVQ level 3 in child care is available for foster carers; the manager said that there has been some difficulty accessing a relevant NVQ for carers but that the service is now promoting this qualification further. At the time of the inspection over 10% of carers had completed, or were about to complete, this qualification and another seventeen carers had other relevant qualifications.

Carers are offered training in a wide range of issues. As well as 'mandatory' training in first aid, child protection, safe caring and bullying there is a wide range of training and the service works with carers to identify their specific training needs and to run courses to meet these. Training is provided in topics including diversity issues, education, healthy eating, sexual awareness, attachment, preparation for adulthood, bereavement, drug awareness and so on. Take up of training from foster carers is generally good with significant numbers of carers undertaking training. The authority monitors those carers that it knows are reluctant to undertake training, training needs are discussed at carers' supervision and reviews and supervising social workers work individually with carers where necessary.

The quality of LAC documentation in children's social work files seen during the inspection was generally very good. Files viewed contained all the appropriate LAC documentation in the Children's Integrated System format. The majority of this information was up-to-date and well completed with Care Plans and review records being particularly well completed. These documents are long and take a lot of time to complete fully and the authority's social workers should be complimented for the quality of recording in these documents. As stated earlier, the Placement Information record forms were not always completed in such detail, however, and it is recommended that attention is given to this issue to ensure that foster carers receive as full information as possible about a child at the time a placement is made.

In two instances during the inspection a significant amount of confidential information regarding one child was found in the contact recording section of the child's sibling and in one situation the placement information record contained information about a child's sibling rather than the child himself. Contact record sheets had been completed about the group of siblings then copied for each child's file. In some situations an entire sheet related to one sibling with no information about the child in whose file the record was maintained. The authority should ensure that, in order to protect confidential information about children, separate records are maintained in each child's file.

All long-term foster placements are matched through the fostering panel and a family finding file is established for this purpose. A file examined was well completed and contain detailed useful information to assist the matching process. The fostering service retains documentation in respect of children currently placed with foster carers with foster carers' files for ease of reference, and this information to was complete and up-to-date. Miscellaneous records including foster carer records, panel records, records of allegations, complaints, training and so on are also well maintained and monitored.

The fostering service arranges assessments of family and friends carers promptly and effectively. A nominated worker within the fostering team is responsible for the assessment and support of family and friends carers. Supervising social workers said that family and friends foster carers get good support, training and management and high levels of support to a family and friends carer were noted in the file of a difficult situation the service was working with.

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	4
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	4

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

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	4
17	4
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	4
23	3
24	3
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

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	The authority should continue to develop its arrangements for children’s LAC medicals and other health appointments to address foster carers’ concerns that these currently take place within school time and result in children missing lessons.
2	FS8 FS24	It is recommended that the authority give attention to ensuring that the Placement Information Record Forms are completed as fully as possible for all placements made.
3	FS13	The authority should liaise with school regarding the flexibility of their attendance marking arrangements for looked after children who need regular appointments in school time.
4	FS11 FS21	The service should further develop its process for seeking children’s reviews about their foster carers so that they can be given full consideration at foster carers’ reviews.
5	FS21	It is recommended that a summary sheet is retained on foster carers’ files showing their approval history with the

		dates and reasons for approval changes.
6	FS24	The authority should ensure that, in order to protect confidential information about children, that confidential information about one child is not recorded in the file of a sibling.

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