



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Poole Fostering Services

**Borough of Poole
14a Commercial Road
Parkstone
Poole
Dorset
BH14 0JW**

Lead Inspector
Sue Shaw

Announced Inspection
1st February 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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	Poole Fostering Services
Address	Borough of Poole 14a Commercial Road Parkstone Poole Dorset BH14 0JW
Telephone number	01202 261501
Fax number	01202 714410
Email address	l.pujol@poole.gov
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Adoption & Fostering Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 23rd February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Borough of Poole's fostering service is managed within the Borough's Children and Families Services structure. There is a Children's Services Manager and a Team Manager responsible for the fostering team. The Shared Care Scheme is located within the Children's Health and Disability Team, line managed by a different Children Services Manager. The two teams have responsibility for the recruitment, assessment, training and support to all of the borough's foster carers and shared care families.

The service has a Statement of Purpose which states:

The fostering service aims to meet a diverse range of need by providing:

- *Regular short break care to support families and prevent family breakdown e.g. when a child or parents has a disability or long term illness*
- *Short term foster care to support families through crisis or in an emergency to protect children from harm*
- *Permanent substitute family care by way of adoption or long term foster care, for children who cannot return to their birth family.*

At the time of this inspection the fostering service had seventy-two approved foster carers and twenty-seven carers providing short-term break placements for children with disabilities. Ninety-three children are placed with foster carers for short or long term care. Seven children are placed with independent agencies and approximately twenty-eight children each month receive shared care. Out of the above number of carers employed, thirteen are employed under the Project or Key Scheme, where an increased allowance is paid due to children requiring additional supervision, guidance and requiring specialist skills from carers.

Poole Fostering Service has its own fostering panel which is responsible for recommending the approval of all carers and changes to their approval status.

The fostering service has access to a clinical psychologist who has time allocated for use in a consultation role with carers and workers. An Education Welfare Officer, and an Educational Psychologist both have input into the fostering service in reviewing and assessing the educational needs of the children placed with Poole carers. The Borough also employ one specialist nurse and a Health Visitor to oversee the health needs of 'Looked After' Children.

SUMMARY

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

The fostering service was provided with two weeks notice of the inspection. The inspection was carried out over three days by two inspectors on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd February 2006. During this time four carers were visited, six children seen and six workers interviewed plus the team manager, children's services manager, an administrator and panel chairperson. An inspector observed a fostering panel session and a team meeting. Recruitment files were checked as were a number of foster carer and children's case files, including those where complaints or allegations had been made.

At the time of writing the report questionnaires were received from twenty-four children/young people, 10 from placing officers, and twenty-three from foster carers.

What the service does well:

The service is well managed and has an established team which provides a good level of support to foster carers. There were many positive comments made about the support provided by individual family placement officers, and the inspectors noted commitment and competence from team members. There was clear evidence that the foster carers are suitable and competent at meeting the needs of children placed with them. The foster carers visited were dedicated and caring and again children's questionnaires included many positive comments about their carers - "they are really helpful", "getting a new loving family", "my foster carers are never nasty". No negative feedback was received about carers and workers which is commendable to the service.

Case files showed that carers were efficient at working within the child's care plan, including the promotion of contact with birth families.

Priority is given to ensuring that the health and educational needs of children are met. Links with educational and health services are well established as are agreed working protocols to ensure that children placed with Poole carers receive the necessary input. Valuing diversity is a theme promoted in all areas of service delivery, including assessment, training, recruitment and placement planning.

Workers and carers have been recruited following safe and robust recruitment practices. Further more, the thorough assessments and close supervision of carers by workers is providing good safeguards to protect the welfare of children.

The shared care scheme is providing a beneficial service to children with disabilities, recruiting a variety of carers and offering a high level of individual support and training.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Although the handbook has not yet been sent to all carers it is now available and provides clear information and guidance. This will ensure that a number of good practice recommendations are met.

Of importance to the service is that a Children's Services Manager is now in post. This will allow for more quality assurance and reviewing of the service, as well as better management support for the team. A positive effect has already been noticed in relation to the functioning of the panel, moving the service forward in relation to good practice, and auditing case files.

There are now individual workers identified for having a lead in training for carers, recruitment of carers, and kinship assessments and placements. The service is now providing consistency and good practice in these areas. A future training package is now in place and training portfolios for carers, with training outcomes for carers good.

A recent recruitment drive has focused on the need for carers for teenagers, and ensuring "looked after" teenagers remain in the Poole area. It is hoped that this will be successful to meet the current unmet need for these placements.

What they could do better:

There continue to be a number of requirements and recommendations made which affect the outcomes for children. Of most importance is the need for more control and management of placements by the fostering service. Breaches of regulations had taken place in relation to placing children with carers without appropriate checks or inconsistent with the approval status of the carers. Information sharing was also found lacking in some cases. Although no risks or any negative impact had occurred, there was the potential for serious consequences around the safety of other children in placements.

Although the management team report that matching is considered thoroughly for each placement, there was insufficient documentary evidence of this. The service needs to ensure it obtains more detailed information about the child's needs before planning a placement. This and further evidence gathered related to the need for better communication between the child's social worker and family placement officer, including clarity of roles and responsibilities.

At present neither files for children or carers comprise a comprehensive record, with gaps in recording and lack of essential documentation (summary of placements, complaints, and foster placement agreement).

Although on a whole the panel is well organised, panel members have lacked training, guidance and procedures in being able to effectively give good practice advice, recommendations and monitor the effectiveness of the fostering service. The panel does not include a foster carer representative, but the inspector is aware that all these areas are currently being addressed.

Workers, carers and management agreed that the current arrangements for agreeing allowances to carers are ineffective. It left some carers with inadequate payments and/or delays in payments. A continued concern to the inspectors and workers is the working environment for the fostering team. It is cramped and does not allow for appropriate supervision of workers.

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

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

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The fostering service ensures that the looked after children receive sufficient health services and assesses and monitors their health appropriately.

EVIDENCE:

The Handbook is now available for carers and provides information about the health services children should receive and how the carers should promote the health and development of children. Poole Children and Families service employ a specialist nurse for looked after children (LAC) and have dedicated time from a clinical psychologist. The inspectors were told that the nurse is informed of any new looked after child and carries out an assessment to identify any health issues and how these are to be addressed. The inspectors were informed that each child has an annual health assessment and a health care plan, and the foster carers seen confirmed that the children they looked after had seen the LAC nurse. The four foster carers seen further confirmed that they have been provided with sufficient health information for the child. However, some of the children's files seen did not evidence that an assessment had taken place or that the carers had been provided with a written health record for the child.

The majority of questionnaires received from the children confirmed that foster carers helped them to be healthy by providing fruit and vegetables, and encouraging exercise. ("They encourage me to do sport. They have fruit in the house", "gives us a healthy diet, tells us to play games outside like riding bikes", "brushing my teeth and eating fruit").

The family placement officers confirmed that the clinical psychologist has run sessions for carers on attachment and working with parents and that this service was thought very beneficial to carers and workers.

The Shared Care Team has developed links with the Community Paediatric nurses. Where children need specialist feeding or invasive medication treatment (tube feeding, rectal diazepam etc) there are procedures arranged for carers to receive this training from the community nurses. There was evidence seen on file to confirm that the carers have received necessary training by a competent person who has signed to say the carers are competent. The Shared Care Scheme also complete a 'Child Profile' which includes medical consent and health details which was again seen on the carers file.

A further development of the Shared Care Scheme is medication administration records that allow for an audit and more safe controls over the medication given by carers.

There was no evidence on foster carer files that they had undertaken necessary training on health and hygiene issues and first aid. A family placement officer has now got responsibility for developing and tracking the training of carers, and it was confirmed that carers have received first aid training (although a written record of this was not available). This will be further monitored at the next inspection once the information is collated.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

The manager and staff are suitable and qualified, providing a service that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children.

The service provides suitable foster carers, where children have safe, healthy and nurturing environments.

Thorough 'matching' of children to carers has been limited, which can have an affect on the stability of placements.

Systems and guidelines are in place to protect children from abuse, although consistency in safe care guidelines and prompt responding to allegations is needed.

The fostering panel is appropriately fulfilling its functions of approving foster carers, and should now ensure that it provides more of a quality assurance role.

EVIDENCE:

Evidence gathered from recruitment files and discussions with the manager and administration staff showed that references and CRB checks are obtained for staff and carers. Telephone enquiries are made to follow up written references and records kept of the outcomes of checks. There is a system in

place to ensure CRB checks are renewed every three years, and evidence seen to show that this is working in practice.

The foster homes visited by the inspectors were comfortable and in a good state of cleanliness and hygiene. Children's accommodation allowed appropriate space and privacy. Approval assessments took into consideration the living environment as did panel discussions. Family Placement Officers regularly and appropriately ensured that consideration and assessment was carried out for when children were being placed with other children. The workers also followed good practice in ensuring health and safety checks were carried out yearly on foster homes. There was no evidence provided to show that carers are provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.

The service has practice guidelines setting out the need to 'match' children's needs to the abilities and circumstances of the carers. The manager has confirmed that matching is extensive and considered thoroughly at team meetings and following receipt of a referral. However case records of placements did not show sufficient evidence of matching. For one child a transition took place to introduce him to new carers, but records evidenced that he did not want to move to these carers. There was no detailed consideration recorded as to why he could not remain with his preferred carers. For another child it was a planned placement but nothing on file indicated a matching report or where carers may need additional support. This placement then broke down. Although there is a matching form that has been developed this was not seen consistently on files. Some families have now developed their own "profile" giving a pen picture and photos of the home and family members and this is good practice to share with children.

When a referral is received, the fostering team is not getting full information from the social work field teams, and this therefore reflects on the ability of the service to match appropriately.

Observation of panel and file reading further evidenced that the child's views are not proactively sought when considering long term placements for children. Again, this may be due more to the lack of documentary evidence rather than actual practice.

Training has been booked for panel members in the forthcoming months, in order to support panel members in meeting their regulatory functions. The inspector was also made aware that the shortfalls relating to the panel receiving regular management information and a foster carer representative on the panel are being actively addressed by the service. There is an education and medical representative on the panel, and the chairperson is knowledgeable and suitable to the post. While observing the panel the inspector noted that the panel members were not clear on the regulations concerning two important aspects (providing short term foster care when approved as adopters, and in

relation to kinship approvals). There are terms and reference for the panel and a statement outlining the expectations of foster carers. However further written procedures are needed outlining the panels functions and decision making processes.

The inspectors were provided with some management information about the number of child protection allegations / misconduct by foster carers. Since the last inspection there have been five incidences recorded. One investigation (concerning two incidences) has resulted in a carer being de-registered, another carer resigned (but the service was considering de-registration) and two other investigations are continuing. One investigation highlighted that previous concerns about a bruise to a child had not been followed up appropriately. The other cases were all being, or had been, actioned appropriately and thoroughly with full consideration given to the welfare of the children. Unfortunately the inspectors were made aware through examining case files that carers were not informed of important information concerning a child's potential harmful behaviour prior to the child moving in with them. This however was not seen to be repeated or to be common practice.

Training for carers in child protection has been provided. The inspectors were further informed that 'safe care' guidelines had been produced and a 'safe care' assessment carried out for each foster carer. Evidence of some safe care guidelines were seen for fostering households, but these were not always consistently seen on all files.

There are clear guidelines for carers available on punishments and intervention. All but one questionnaires received from children confirmed that the punishments they had were appropriate, and these included no TV for a set period, and going to bed early.

The inspectors did not assess the monitoring of restraint or bullying issues, and this will be carried forward to the next inspection for consideration.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

7, 13, 31

The fostering service values diversity, with children's needs in relation to gender, ethnicity, culture and disability being well considered.

The fostering service has prioritised meeting the educational needs of children, putting systems in place to encourage children to attain their potential.

The fostering service has an effective and established shared care scheme, providing a good level of care to children with disabilities.

EVIDENCE:

Discussions with family placement officers and shared care worker evidenced that the cultural needs of children are considered and promoted within foster placements. Their cultural and religious needs are assessed as part of the placement planning. There are relatively few foster carers from black or ethnic minority groups, but there continues to be work undertaken in recruiting carers from these groups. The inspector examined one file of a young person with mixed heritage who was placed in a foster family with similar heritage. The case recording evidenced that this child had made positive comments about this ethnic match.

The inspector spoke to the Spirituality Worker who works within the Children and Families services and is employed by Faithworks. This is reported as an innovative post and is seen as beneficial to the fostering team. The worker informed the inspector that her work involves: supporting carers with religious issues and spirituality; signposting workers and young people to specialist

resources in relation to ethnicity and culture; and direct work with children to improve self esteem. There should be further discussion around the level of direct work undertaken to ensure that the worker has a suitable qualification to carry out this work

Borough of Poole has prioritised the educational attainments of looked after children over the past years. The fostering service now links with an Educational Welfare Officer who has the responsibility for supporting looked after children. This person is informed of all new child looked after. The Borough also employs a teacher to specifically address issues for looked after children. There is also an Educational Psychologist for looked after children, who has responsibilities for supporting foster carers, monitoring personal educational plans of children and providing training to carers and teachers.

Educational needs were a focus of discussion at children's statutory reviews. Family placement workers addressed educational issues during their supervision sessions with carers and placing social workers referred (in the foster carer review forms) to carers being active in linking with schools and helping children. Of the four carers seen none of them had any concerns about the educational provision. Children's questionnaires were positive about carers helping them with school work.

Poole has a Shared Care Team, which is managed by the Child Health and Disability Team. The three workers in this team recruit, train and support their carers, currently having 27 shared carers. This is a respite service for children with disabilities, and ranges from day care once a month to over 100 overnight stays per annum. The scheme has clear policies and procedures. Good assessment information is obtained about the child's needs. A file seen showed that the parents work closely with the shared carers with a good sharing of information. Responsibility for health and education remain with parents and there are clear protocols governing this.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10 and 11

Contact with family and friends is promoted well ensuring young people maintain these links where appropriate.

Consultation with children, their families and foster carers is adequate, but improvement is needed in ensuring children's views are taken into account regularly, formally and in a meaningful way.

EVIDENCE:

In case files there was limited evidence to show that children's views about their placements are sought and documented. Again this could be a lack of recording rather than a lack in practice. In relation to foster carer reviews, the placing social workers are meant to ascertain the views of the young people about the care they receive from the foster carers. However, few review forms seen included children's views. The supervision visits to carers by Family Placement Workers also included very few comments about the children's opinions and no evidence seen that children were actively asked their views.

However, of the questionnaires sent to children asking whether their foster carers asked their opinions, 8 said "often", 13 "sometimes", 1 "not often" and 1 "never". This result was similar to the answers of whether their social worker asks their opinions. 12 answered "yes", 8 "sometimes" and 1 "never". When asked whether they have been asked by the fostering service how they could do things better, 12 replied "yes" and 10 "no". Foster carers responses included 12 stating that they are asked their opinions and 9 saying they are not. Its apparent therefore that procedures are not formalised (with no strategic procedures) but reliant on individual carers and workers.

In relation to contact the inspectors noted good arrangements taking place where foster carers had supported contact with the child's family. Information about contact arrangements were recorded in the looked after children essential information paperwork which foster carers stated they had copies of. Foster carers were aware of their responsibility to help with contact, and the new handbook for carers describes the need to promote and manage contact arrangements for the benefit of the child. The carers seen confirmed that any issues around contact are fed back to the placing social workers, and any significant event recorded in their diaries.

Questionnaires sent to Placing Social Workers asked the question "how closely do they consider the foster carer works with the child's family". 9 workers answered this question, with 5 stating "very well" and 4 "fairly well". This shows that foster carers are competent and willing to engage in contact arrangements.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

29

The systems for agreeing payments for project and assessment fees to carers needs to be improved to ensure carers receive their money promptly and at the appropriate fee level.

EVIDENCE:

By examining files and talking to carers there were issues highlighted about payment of enhanced allowances. Project fees were either not being paid although the carers considered it to be needed, not being backdated or a length of time taken to agree to the allowance. One carer explained that the lack of project fees for one child had meant that the placement could not continue due to the amount of input the child needed. Another carer stated that it had taken a long time to get project fees paid for a child, but they had not been backdated to the beginning of the placement. Discussion with staff also confirmed that it has been difficult for carers to get the project fee allowance even following their assessment that it is needed. Carers views are not sought for this decision making process. The current system is that following a new child, who has some challenging needs, being placed with carers, a 6 week assessment fee is paid followed by the standard allowance being paid. It is however difficult for a thorough assessment to be undertaken in this time.

Inspectors were informed that the council's budgetary constraints meant that allowances remained at a lower rate than the minimum recommended by Fostering Network. The manager of the fostering service is aware that a review of payments is needed, and the draft review linking payment to skills has not been implemented yet.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32

The fostering team has qualified workers who provide valued support to carers. However, the lack of full time workers and staff retention difficulties affects the continuity of support for carers and assessment of carers is slow.

Lack of clarity in the roles of family placement officers and that of placing social workers has led to ineffective work with, and lack of information provided, to carers.

Files for carers and children do not provide for a comprehensive record of events.

There have been recent improvements to foster carers training, ensuring it is prioritised and based on children's needs.

The fostering services premises are inadequate and do not allow for staff to work in an organised or effective way.

Considerable improvement is needed in the processes for assessing family and friends as carers to ensure regulations are not breached.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is staffed by a team of qualified social workers (family placement officers) and social work assistants (swa). There are two senior practitioner posts, one for mainstream fostering and one for the shared care scheme. A senior practitioner and a shared care post are currently vacant. The wages paid by Poole Social Services are lower than in neighbouring authorities and the inspectors were informed that this has caused difficulty in retaining staff. In the team there is only one full time family placement officer and one full time swa. This has reportedly caused difficulty in providing appropriate cover in the office on Mondays and Fridays. Thirteen carers (out of nineteen who replied to the question) stated that they do not think there are enough staff in the fostering service. However the majority expressed positive comments about the support given; "excellent support", "a lot of support", "family placement social worker is extremely supportive and efficient", "well supported and offered good training". The inspectors also spoke to staff that were committed and knowledgeable about fostering.

The inspectors noted that the number of carers the workers support are appropriate. However there is a waiting list of assessments of new carers outstanding, and the inspectors noted that several new carers approved had assessments that took from nine months to over a year.

Following discussions with staff, managers, carers and by examining paperwork the inspectors gathered evidence that indicated that the placing social workers often undertook roles and made decisions about placements that should have been done by the fostering workers instead. This led to difficulties in matching, breakdown meetings not being held, placements made outside of approval status, and necessary checks not being carried out. Information on the child's needs and care plan were also not consistently made available to the fostering workers which again affected matching and communication/information sharing. Negative comments made by carers were directed at placing social work teams rather than the fostering service – "lack of communication from child's social worker to family placement social

worker"; "can't contact the person you most need"; "long term placement planning too slow".

There were a number of cases seen by the inspector where children were placed with carers for long-term placements although panel had yet to approve this status. Files did not clearly record the decision-making or reasons for delay.

Case tracking also highlighted that a young child was also moved from a foster carer to a family member without full discussions with the fostering team and with inadequate checks being made on the family members (although this placement move had been planned by the placing social work team). There had been serious breaches in regulations in relation to this case.

Case tracking was made particularly difficult for inspectors due to unclear recording and organisation of case files. Case notes did not include a comprehensive record of the placements. At the beginning of the files there is a record sheet detailing the children placed with the carers. In most cases this record was not accurate. The handwritten case notes were also difficult to read. Records on carers files about complaints or allegations were also not clearly distinguishable. However, supervision visits of carers were clearly recorded and included a record of full discussions and were signed by the foster carer and worker. Unannounced and regular announced supervision visits were made by family placement officers. The inspectors also noted that assessments of new carers were thorough and detailed. Satisfactory checks were undertaken and records of these kept appropriately. Each carer had an appropriate foster care agreement, with a signed copy kept on the carer's files. Unfortunately the fostering service has yet to ensure foster care reviews are kept up to date, with twenty reviews overdue as of 31st January 2006. This is a continued breach in regulation since 2003.

Information on the child's file kept by the fostering team was inconsistent and minimal. Some contained the "looked after children" documentation, and not all contained information on health or education. Statutory review discussions were also not routinely kept. In discussion with fostering team members they are attempting to collate more detailed information on the children, so that this information can be passed on to the new carers if the child moves placement. It was stated that the children's files kept by placing social workers were not easily accessed by the fostering service.

Previous inspections have highlighted the inadequate premises used by the fostering service. The space is limited in size. The team manager does not have his own office, making supervision of staff difficult. Three administrators also share one room, which is very overcrowded. The Children's Services Manager is in a different part of the building to the rest of the team. There is further overcrowding in the team room, especially as there are two students who have joined the team. The inspectors were informed that there are plans

to relocate to another part of the building but no date for this move has been proposed.

Team members have been designated specific roles within the team. One worker is now responsible for carer training. Unfortunately she was not available at the time of the inspection therefore this standard has not been fully assessed. The manager informed the inspectors that a database has been set up detailing the training carers have undertaken. Team members also confirmed that a number of training courses have been made available to carers. Carers seen confirmed that training opportunities are sufficient. However the previous recommendations made will be carried forward for review at the next inspection.

Standards 18 and 20 were not assessed in full, however the previous recommendation made under these standards have been carried forward as they have not been fully actioned by the service.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	2
9	1
15	3
30	1

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	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	2

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? Yes

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	FS9	12	<p>There must be safe care guidelines and assessments for each carer.</p> <p>The Fostering Service Provider must ensure that satisfactory procedures are followed when an allegation of abuse is made about a carer.</p> <p>Satisfactory information must be passed to carers to ensure they can protect all children in their household.</p>	30/04/06
2	FS21	29, 34	<p>Reviews of approvals must take place at intervals of not more than a year.</p> <p>Previous timescale of 01.09.03 not met.</p> <p>Placements made with carers must be consistent with the carers terms of approval.</p>	30/06/06
3	FS25	34	<p>Before making a placement the authority must have a foster placement agreement with the foster carers which covers the matters specified in schedule 6.</p>	30/07/06
4	FS26	23	<p>More suitable premises must be provided for the fostering service.</p> <p>Previous timescale of 01.12.05 not met.</p>	30/07/06

5	FS30	24, 26	<p>The fostering panel must include at least one person who is, or within the previous two years has been, a foster parent.</p> <p>The panel members must receive further training and guidance to enable them to effectively carry out their duties under regulation 26 (give advice, make recommendations).</p>	30/07/06
6	FS32	38	<p>Suitable checks, including CRB, must be carried out on family and friends before a child is placed in their care by the authority.</p>	30/04/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS8	<p>There should be clear evidence recorded on carers files about why a particular child was placed with them, including the matching decision making and considerations.</p> <p>Referrals taken for children needing placements should include the child's views, wishes and feelings about matching considerations.</p>
2	FS9	<p>Management monitoring should include matters relating to bullying of children in foster placements and restraint by foster carers. There should be evidence that these incidences are monitored and addressed.</p> <p>This recommendation was first made at the inspection dated February 2004.</p>
3	FS11	<p>Foster carer reviews should include views of the children placed, or previously placed, with the carers.</p> <p>Formal arrangements should be developed for obtaining the views of children and young people about the fostering provider.</p>

		Change of status of approval of foster carers should include a discussion of the child's views.
4	FS17	<p>There should be a review of the staffing terms and conditions, including wages, to assess whether this is having an affect on the retention of staff.</p> <p>There should also be a review of the full time staffing hours provided by the fostering team to assess whether it is adequate to meet the needs of the service.</p>
5	FS18	<p>The health and safety policy currently in draft form should be finalised and made available to carers.</p> <p>This recommendation was first made at the inspection dated February 2004.</p>
6	FS20	<p>The fostering service manual that includes all policy and procedures pertinent to the fostering service should be further reviewed and updated to ensure that staff have a clear reference resource.</p> <p>This recommendation was first made at the inspection dated February 2004.</p>
7	FS21	<p>There should be clearer guidance and protocols set up to ensure that the roles of the family placement workers are understood by other workers within the Children and Family service.</p> <p>There should be better communication and effective working relationships between the fostering service social workers and the child's social worker.</p> <p>The family placement workers should be fully involved in placement planning, reviews, or changes to a placement.</p>
8	FS22	<p>The foster care handbook should be completed and made available to all carers.</p> <p>This recommendation was first made at the inspection dated February 2004.</p>
9	FS23	<p>There should be a clearer record of the training foster carers have undertaken, so that this can be monitored.</p>
10	FS24	<p>There should be clear guidance and protocols followed about the information to be kept by the fostering service on the child.</p> <p>The fostering service should have easy access to the child's file for obtaining necessary information to fulfil its duties.</p>
11	FS25	<p>Case note entries in files should be legible and clearly expressed.</p> <p>Details of complaints, allegations and serious incidents should be clearly recorded in files – including details of the</p>

		<p>investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.</p> <p>The case file record listing the children placed with carers should be accurate and kept updated as necessary.</p>
12	FS29	<p>The financial assessments and agreements in relation to the payments to foster carers for specific children needs to be reviewed to ensure consistency and fairness.</p>
13	FS30	<p>Fostering panel should have clear written policies and procedures about the handling of their functions.</p> <p>The panel should receive management information about the outcome of foster carer reviews, and information to enable monitoring the range and type of carers available.</p>

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Poole Office

Unit 4

New Fields Business Park

Stinsford Road

Poole

BH17 0NF

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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