



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

**London Borough of Greenwich Fostering**

**50 Wellington Street  
Woolwich  
London  
SE18 6PY**

*Lead Inspector*  
Elizabeth Brunton

*Announced Inspection*  
16th January 2006      10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** Greenwich Council

**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**      21st February 2005

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

Greenwich Social Services fostering service provides fostering placements for children looked after by the council. It consists of three teams: the Recruitment, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) Team, which is responsible for the recruitment, assessment and reviewing of foster carers, the Family Placement Team, which is responsible for the support, supervision and training of foster carers and the Access to Resources (ART) Team, which is responsible for arranging placements for children and young people with in-house and independent fostering agency carers and in residential establishments. Each team is staffed by a manager and a number of social workers/placement officers and administrators. Overall management of the service is provided by the service manager for looked after children, who reports to the assistant director for the children's service.

At the time of the inspection, there were 568 children and young people looked after by Greenwich Council. 110 of these young people were placed with 91 Greenwich foster carers, including friends and family carers. 244 young people were placed with foster carers provided by independent agencies.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and undertaken by one inspector over six days and a second inspector over two days. Four foster homes were visited and the young people placed there spoken to, where they agreed to this. The placing social workers and supervising social worker for these foster homes were also interviewed. The service manager and managers of the three fostering teams were interviewed, together with other staff working in these teams. A meeting of the Fostering Panel was observed and the Panel chair interviewed. Discussion was also held with the children's safeguarding manager, representatives from the Greenwich Foster Care Association and the Fostering Support Task Group. The designated nurse and educational achievement support officer for looked after children were spoken to and the rights and participation worker from an organisation Youthreach, who was also working with looked after children.

Policy and procedure and other records were looked at, including staff recruitment files, foster carers' and children's records. The office premises were also inspected. Questionnaires were sent out before the inspection and seven completed questionnaires were received from foster carers and from young people in placement and eighteen from placing social workers.

## **What the service does well:**

Greenwich Council was providing a very good fostering service. The service was well managed and staffed and staff were qualified, experienced, able and committed to providing a good service. Assessment of prospective foster carers was very thorough and the supervision, support and training provided for foster carers was of a high standard. A group of foster carers providing practical support to other carers had been particularly successful. Foster carers were doing very good work in meeting the needs of young people. Young people were kept safe in foster homes and said that foster carers had helped them to stay healthy, in touch with their birth families and with their education. There had been few allegations or complaints against foster carers during the past year and those which had been made, had been very thoroughly dealt with. The work of the Fostering Panel was also of a high standard.

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

A draft policy on smoking and safer caring risk assessments had been developed. Foster carers were being consulted about the structure and content of support groups, joint training for foster carers and social workers

had been provided and detailed training profiles for foster carers were maintained. Foster carers' allowances had improved and friends and family fostering was being developed, with the addition of a second dedicated post in the fostering service. Some improvements had been made in the fostering service's office premises.

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

More recruitment of new foster carers was needed, so as to provide closer matching for young people. The fostering service should also be more involved in placement agreements and in the long-term placement planning for young people. Foster carers were not always provided with all the information they needed about young people. References for staff applying to work in the fostering service needed to be verified and CRB checks regularly updated. The Fostering Panel needed to ensure that it was quorate before conducting business. More suitable office accommodation was needed, which would be accessible to foster carers and with space for meetings and training.

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

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

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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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 was doing well in meeting the health care needs of young people, with support from other services.

## EVIDENCE:

Those foster carers seen appeared to be meeting the health care needs of young people and this was confirmed by placing social workers. Young people said that foster carers helped them stay well by eating healthy food, taking part in energetic activities and attending to personal hygiene. One young person wrote " we eat healthy food and always have the things we need to keep ourselves clean and tidy and looking presentable".

Foster carers said they had been provided with health care information about young people. Training had been provided for foster carers in a number of health related issues during the past year and the last annual foster carers' conference had focused on health care. Foster carers and social workers praised the energy and commitment of the designated nurse for looked after children, in ensuring that young people had the necessary immunisations and medical checks and in providing individual health care advice and guidance. The designated nurse felt that health promotion and particularly the targeting of vulnerable children, such as unaccompanied minors, plus advice and training for foster carers, could be further developed by an increase in this specialist staffing. **(see recommendation 8)**

Foster carers praised the support and help given to young people and themselves by CAMHS and social workers confirmed that this service had recently expanded.

# 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 & 30

Staff recruitment had been thorough but there had been delay over updating CRB checks. Foster carers were giving a high standard of care and the safety of their homes was monitored. Matching was generally sound but would benefit from a wider choice of carers. Greater involvement of the fostering service in placement agreements and in planning for long term placements is recommended. Young people had been kept safe from abuse and neglect and allegations had been very well dealt with. However, foster carers had not always been provided with pertinent information about young people. Both the assessment of foster carers and the work of the Fostering Panel were of a high standard.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Recruitment references and checks for the managers of the fostering service were checked at previous inspections and not inspected again on this occasion. All the managers either had up-to-date CRB checks or these had been sent for. However, there had been delay over some of these and the service manager said that the fostering service was taking over this responsibility from the HR department, as a result.

Those foster carers seen were giving excellent care and this was confirmed by young people in placement and by placing and supervising social workers. Of

the eighteen placing social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaires, thirteen said that foster carers were looking after young people very well indeed and four said very or quite good care was being given. Placing social workers praised foster carers' warmth, caring, commitment, consistency and understanding with comments such as "the foster carers provide a warm, caring environment and make young people feel part of the family. There are realistic boundaries and commitment to young people". Four of the eighteen social workers felt there needed to be some improvement in particular foster carers' communication skills or behaviour management.

All homes seen provided safe, warm and comfortable accommodation. Foster carers were aware of health and safety issues and annual health and safety checks of foster homes were seen on file. These included checks on car safety and insurance. One foster home visited had been inspected by the supervising social worker before a young child was placed and the necessary safety equipment had been provided. A smoking policy was said to be in draft form and smoking was included in recently introduced safer caring risk assessments for each foster home.

The matching of young people with foster carers appeared to be generally sound. There was a robust same race placement policy and the only trans racial placements were made by the emergency duty team and these were very temporary. However, there were a number of trans cultural placements and an increase in the number and range of foster carers was needed, in order to improve this aspect of matching. The independent sector was extensively used and twice as many young people were placed in foster homes provided by independent agencies than with in-house foster carers. Though this could have budgetary implications for the council and may reduce the number of young people placed locally, the fostering service is to be commended for looking outside its own provision for the best match for a young person. Placing social workers gave examples of where this had happened and foster carers did not report being pressurized to take unsuitable placements. The written agreement of fostering managers/Fostering Panel Chair had been sought before young people were placed outside foster carers' terms of approval. However, one such placement had continued for almost a year, without the foster carer's terms of approval being reconsidered by the Fostering Panel. There should be a clear policy on this. **(see recommendation 2)**

The responsibility for completing placement agreements for new placements lay with placing social workers and supervising social workers were rarely involved. Not all LAC placement plan forms seen had been fully completed. It is recommended that supervising social workers or ART placement officers are more involved in this process, in order to ensure that all necessary issues are covered and information provided. **(see recommendation 3)** The fostering service was also not routinely involved in identifying the long-term placement needs and best available long term fostering placements for young people. An

example of this was two young people who were approved for long term fostering by the Fostering Panel. They had been placed with an independent agency foster carer for over a year, who lived outside London and with whom the young people were not racially or culturally matched. The placing social worker and manager indicated to Panel that they would like the young people to remain in this placement long-term. The fostering service would not be involved in identifying these young people's placement needs or in seeking the best long-term placement, unless the placing social worker asked the ART team for an alternative placement. The final match would, of course, have to be approved by the Fostering Panel. The lack of involvement of the fostering service in this important process does not make the best use of their experience, expertise and knowledge of resources. **(see recommendation 4)**

All foster carers spoken to were very aware of the importance of safe caring and male foster carers said they had benefited greatly from discussion of these issues within the men's support group. All placing social workers, who gave their views, considered that young people were safe in their foster homes. There had been five allegations made against foster carers during the previous year, all of which had been robustly and independently managed by the children's safeguarding manager. The foster carer's future had then been considered by the Fostering Panel. In one case, where a young woman had made a serious allegation against her foster carers, it was said that the carers had not been given important information by the placing social worker, which would have shed light on the young person's behaviour and how everyone in the household needed to be protected. **(see requirement 1)** Safer caring risk assessments for each foster home were being introduced, as previously mentioned. Foster carers had written information about child protection and safe caring in their handbook and training was provided. However, the take-up of training by foster carers varied greatly, as mentioned under a later standard.

Those foster carers seen had worked hard at maintaining boundaries and consistency in their approach to young people's behaviour and with good results. Most placing social workers confirmed this in their pre-inspection questionnaires. Young people did not report that unfair or inappropriate sanctions were being imposed. Training was provided for foster carers, who also received support from placing and supervising social workers, CAMHS and other outside agencies.

Staff recruitment was managed by the HR department, where a sample of staff recruitment records was inspected. All the required documents and checks were in place, though there was no evidence of verification of references or of the reasons why applicants had left previous work involving contact with children or vulnerable adults. A member of staff in the HR department said that references were only verified "where this was necessary". **(see requirement 2)** All staff working in the fostering service were said to either

have up-to-date CRB checks or these had been sent for. However, there had been delay over some of these; for example, one social worker's CRB check had not been renewed for five years. **(see requirement 3)** As previously mentioned, the fostering service had now arranged to take over this responsibility from the HR department.

The assessment of prospective foster carers was competency based and those assessments seen were very thorough and of a high standard, as confirmed by a recently approved foster carer who said that "no stone had been left unturned!" All references and checks had been carried out and a very efficient system was in place for ensuring that foster carers' CRB and medical checks were regularly updated.

A meeting of the Fostering Panel was observed and the Chair spoken to. The panel was very professional, child-focused and well chaired. Cases were considered fully, pertinent issues raised, additional information asked for and sound recommendations made. Minutes of previous Panel meetings demonstrated that this had also been the case at these Panels. Panel membership was in line with the regulations, diverse and covered a wide range of knowledge and experience. This also contributed to the high standard of the Panel's work. However, there had been a recent occasion when the Panel had considered cases and made recommendations, despite not being quorate, which is in breach of the regulations. **(see requirement 6)** Panel discussion and recommendations were well recorded by an able administrator and there was evidence that the Panel Chair had raised relevant practice issues with managers. A selection procedure for Panel members was in place and CRB checks were being confirmed. Training had been provided for Panel members in 2003 and was about to happen again. It is suggested that training should be provided for the Panel each year. **(see recommendation 15)** Finally, it is suggested that Panel members should receive management information about placement disruptions and the outcome of foster carer reviews. **(see recommendation 16)**

# 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

Young people's diversity needs appeared to be met by the fostering service. Foster carers provided good support to young people with their education, though the department's provision could be increased. Foster care was not currently provided as short-term breaks for young people living with their families.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Both the staffing of the fostering service and the pool of in-house foster carers were from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, placements were made in line with the department's same race placement policy. There were a number of trans cultural placements and an increase in the range and number of foster carers could improve this aspect of matching. **(see recommendation 1)** Additional support had been given to some placements, where foster carers did not share the cultural and religious background of young people placed with them. Foster carers had been provided with training in valuing diversity and in working with asylum seekers.

Those foster carers seen and spoken to stressed the importance of supporting young people in their education. Young people said that foster carers helped them with homework, encouraged them with their schoolwork and made sure that they got up in time for school. Foster carers seen had worked hard with young people in helping them get back into school and had showed very good understanding of what support the young people needed. Foster carers had liaised with teachers and had advocated strongly for young people who were having difficulties in school or were at risk of exclusion. Foster carers and

young people seen were proud of their achievements. Training had been provided for foster carers in aspects of education but these sessions had not been well attended. Additional support was provided by an educational advocate and an achievement officer for looked after children, though the latter post was currently vacant. These staff attended some PEP meetings and LAC reviews and worked with young people and foster carers, particularly where there was a risk of exclusion or a young person was out of school. An increase in this provision was recommended, so that more educational support could be given to more young people, more input made into PEPs, more training could be provided for foster carers and a handbook, plus accompanying educational materials, could be developed for foster carers. **(see recommendation 9)**

The fostering service did not provide short-term break care for young people who were living with their families, though some young people, already in foster care, were placed for occasional periods of respite care with other carers. Efforts had recently been made to establish a service providing short-term breaks for young people with disabilities but it had not proved possible to recruit carers.

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10 & 11

Foster carers were giving good support to young people in maintaining contact with their families. Young people's views were sought by foster carers and they knew how to make complaints. Feedback from young people at the end of their placements and their involvement in the general development of the fostering service, would be welcome developments.

## EVIDENCE:

Foster carers seen and spoken to were giving good support to young people in their contact with birth families. They showed understanding of the issues and of young people's feelings. The four young people who responded to the part of the pre-inspection questionnaire which asked what the worst thing about being fostered was, all said that it was not living with their own family or not seeing them as much as they wanted. Of the placing social workers who completed pre-inspection questionnaires, seven said that foster carers worked very well with young people's families and nine said they worked fairly well or that this work was average. The fostering service may want to explore this response further. **(see recommendation 5)** Foster carers were provided with training in contact before and after approval. Through the Fostering Support Task Group, foster carers provided valuable practical support to each other over contact, including help with escort and the supervision of contact.

Young people said their foster carers asked for their opinions and ideas often/sometimes, about activities, decoration, food, clothing and school. One young person said "my foster carers are quite open with me and ask my opinion about certain things regarding my activities and day to day care". Young people gave examples of where changes had been made because of what they had said. One young person commented "I usually get what I

want". All but one of the young people said that they had been asked what they thought of their foster carer(s). Advocacy for young people was commissioned from an outside organisation, when needed. Foster carers seen and spoken to said that they attended LAC reviews, where their views were listened to and that they were consulted about important decisions in young people's lives. Training had recently been provided/was scheduled for foster carers in listening skills, talking with children and in play and direct work.

Young people were not currently involved in the development of the fostering service in general and this was identified by the service manager as an area for improvement. Feedback questionnaires were sent to foster carers and placing social workers when placements ended but few of these were seen on file. It is recommended that these are also sent to young people and their birth parents. **(see recommendation 6)** An enthusiastic rights and participation officer, employed by Youthreach, had recently organised a conference for looked after young people and was now working with young people on changes in the way LAC reviews should be carried out and on young people's expectations of social workers. A magazine was circulated to all looked after young people. The rights and participation officer said that he would like to work with young people on developing job descriptions for foster carers and on young people being involved in the recruitment of foster carers and social workers. However, it did seem that only a tiny proportion of looked after young people were currently involved in these ventures and that an expansion in the service was needed, in order to engage more young people. **(see recommendation 7)**

All young people spoken to and who completed questionnaires said they knew how to complain. Information about making complaints was included in the children's handbook. Records showed that the few complaints made had been responded to promptly and fully looked into. Foster carers also said they knew how to complain on behalf of any young person placed with them.

# 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 level of payments to foster carers and the system for making them were satisfactory.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers spoken to were satisfied with the level of payments, which were linked to the rates recommended by the Fostering Network. Foster carers were pleased that annual holidays and respite breaks were funded and reported that payments were promptly made. Some concerns were expressed about the current system for paying retainers to foster carers with vacancies and for making annual reward payments for attending support groups and training. The service manager was setting up a working group, including foster carers, to consider these issues.

# 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):**

5, 17, 21, 23, 24, 26 & 32

The fostering service was well managed and staffed. The number of in-house foster carers was steadily decreasing and strategies for recruitment and retention were needed. Friends and families fostering was being developed. Very good support, supervision and training was provided for foster carers. Foster carers kept good records but did not always receive adequate information about young people placed. The office premises were unsuitable,

though some improvements had recently been made and IT problems were very frustrating for staff.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service was very well managed by an able and experienced service manager, three team managers and two assistant team managers. The service manager and team managers all had management qualifications. The fostering service was well staffed and additional posts were to be recruited to in the Access to Resources team. Those social workers and placement officers spoken to seemed competent, committed, experienced and knowledgeable, as evidenced by their work. The staff group was relatively stable, the great majority of staff in post were permanent, morale appeared to be good and caseloads were said, by staff, to be reasonable. Good support was provided by an able administrative team.

Mention has already been made of the shortfall in the range and number of in-house foster carers, though extensive use of the independent sector had bridged this gap. Staff within the fostering section expressed concern about the shortage of in-house foster carers and felt that a recruitment strategy was needed. A number of friends and family foster carers had been recruited but only four 'stranger' foster carers had been approved during the past year. Given the difficulties in recruiting foster carers everywhere and especially given the demographic features of a locality such as Greenwich, it seems imperative that the specialist skills of a recruitment and marketing worker are retained. Staff were very concerned that this currently vacant post might not be recruited to. **(see recommendation 10)** Ten foster carers had resigned during the past year, bringing the total down to 91, including friends and family carers. The fostering service were already providing many of the services needed to retain foster carers, such as support, training and good payments but further discussion with the foster carer groups, including the GFCA and the FSTG, might provide useful feedback and contribute to a retention strategy. **(see recommendation 11)**

The supervision of and support provided for carers by the Family Placements Team was of a high standard. Records showed that supervising social workers visited foster carers regularly, visits were structured and purposeful, supervision agreements were in place and unannounced visits had been made. However, one foster carer seen had not had an unannounced visit during the past year. **(see recommendation 12)** Supervising social workers had taken up issues on behalf of foster carers and had worked hard, on occasions and together with placing social workers, to support and save placements. Those foster carers seen and most of those who completed pre-inspection questionnaires said that they felt very well supported. As one foster carer said "the best thing about this fostering service is the support and encouragement given by our supervising social worker". Foster carers also reported improved

support from placing social workers. Out-of-hours support was available from the emergency duty team and also via a mobile phone link with staff of the fostering service. A good number and range of support groups was provided, including groups for black and Asian carers and a group for male carers. Groups were reasonably well attended. Consultation questionnaires had recently been sent to foster carers about the structure and content of support groups. Excellent practical support was given to carers by other carers, through the Fostering Support Task Group. Foster carers and the manager and staff of the Family Placement Team are to be commended for this very successful scheme.

Annual reviews of foster carer's were competency based, comprehensive and carried out on time. They were chaired by social workers from the Recruitment and Assessment Team. Reviews had been considered by the Fostering Panel, where necessary and all others were seen by the Panel Chair. Greater use of post-placement questionnaires would provide additional feedback information for reviews. As previously mentioned, attendance at support groups and training was recognised by a financial payment, following annual reviews. Information was provided in the foster carers' handbook about how foster carers could make complaints and how allegations against foster carers were handled. A confidential counselling service was available to foster carers. There was a comprehensive foster carer agreement, which all foster carers had signed on those files seen, apart from friends and family carers. This agreement needed to be amended if necessary and extended to this group of carers. **(see requirement 4)**

A very comprehensive programme of training was being offered to carers during the current year and the staff responsible for organising and administering this are to be commended. Records of attendance were maintained and each carer had a training profile. Most training courses were reasonably well attended. Those foster carers spoken to said they had enjoyed the courses attended. However, some foster carers had attended little recent training and some none at all. Foster carers were sent the annual training programme in advance, reminders were sent, supervising social workers encouraged foster carers to attend, training plans were made at annual reviews and reward payments were made, as previously mentioned. Foster carers should be expected to attend certain basic training courses. One suggestion made was for there to be more training courses held during evenings and weekends. Discussion with the fostering groups, including the GFCA and the FSTG could contribute to a strategy for ensuring that all foster carers undertake training. **(see recommendation 13)** Foster carers and staff are also to be commended for the fact that almost half the foster carers had gained the NVQ Level 3 qualification and a further 15 carers were about to enrol.

Children's case records were held in the children's teams but some information about young people placed was held by the fostering service and available on

Framework. However, not all LAC forms seen on Framework had been fully completed and not all foster carers spoken to had received copies. While some foster carers reported that they had received adequate information about young people's needs and backgrounds others reported that this had not been the case. One foster carer, who reported not being adequately informed, said "it has not yet caused difficulties but, if we knew more, it would help us put safeguards into action". Another foster carer commented "more information about his history would have helped me understand his behaviour better". This has already been mentioned under a previous standards and a requirement made. Those foster carers seen were maintaining records, storing them safely and making scrapbooks of photos and cards, as a record of important events for young people. Foster carers' files were comprehensive, well organised and maintained.

The fostering service's premises continued to be unsatisfactory and scarcely fit for purpose. Staff and foster carers were frustrated by the building's inaccessibility, due to steep stairs and lack of any suitable facilities for foster carers' meetings or training. The need to hire meeting rooms for all such events must have very significant budget implications. Another key concern was the lack of any 'shop-front' facility, which must make it even more difficult to attract potential foster carers and add to the cost of publicity and advertising. The service manager said that a capital bid had been made to develop a stand-alone office facility but that this might not be accepted. **(see requirement 5)** The main office had been redecorated and re-carpeted since the last inspection. New desks and flat computer screens had also been provided. Problems with the current IT system were wasting staff time and causing immense frustration. It is hoped that these will soon be remedied. **(see recommendation 14)**

Increased responsibility for the assessment, support and supervision of friends and family carers was gradually being taken on by the fostering service. An additional social work post had recently been created and the existing worker was enthusiastic and keen to develop the service. Those friends and family carers seen were providing very good care. They felt well supported and were satisfied with the level of payments made. Dedicated support group meetings and training were not currently on offer and these needed to be developed, following consultation. **(see recommendation 17)** A number of applications for approval of friends and family foster carers had recently been presented to the Fostering Panel by social workers from the children's teams. These had not all been sufficiently comprehensive, information was missing and not all the necessary checks had been completed. Social workers in the children's teams undertaking these assessments should be given the necessary training/guidance in the work. **(see recommendation 18)**

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS9	17	Foster carers must be provided with sufficient information about young people placed, to enable them to safeguard them and to meet the young person's needs.	01/06/06
2	FS15	20	The reasons why applicants for posts in the fostering service left previous employment involving contact with children or vulnerable adults, must be verified, as far as possible.	01/04/06
3	FS15	20	CRB checks must be regularly updated for all staff working in the fostering service.	01/04/06
4	FS22	28	The department must enter into a foster care agreement with all approved foster carers, including friends and family carers.	01/07/06
5	FS22	23(1)	The fostering service's premises must be suitable for achieving its aims and objectives, as set out in the statement of purpose.	01/09/06
6	FS30	25	No business must be conducted by the Fostering Panel unless the minimum number and range of members are present, as defined by the regulations.	01/04/06

## 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	FS7	A recruitment strategy should be developed, in order to recruit a larger pool and wider range of foster carers, so as to facilitate good matching.
2	FS8	When a young person is placed with foster carers outside their terms of approval, a change in these should be considered by the Fostering Panel after a specified length of time. A policy on this is needed.
3	FS8	Consideration should be given to supervising social workers or ART placement officers being more involved in the placement agreement process, in order to ensure that all necessary issues are covered and information provided. LAC placement plan forms should be fully completed.
4	FS8	Consideration should also be given to social workers/managers in the fostering service being more involved in identifying the long-term placement needs and best available long term fostering placements for young people, in order to make the best use of their experience, expertise and knowledge of resources
5	FS10	The fostering service should explore the mixed response from placing social workers about how well foster carers were working with young people's birth families.
6	FS11	Feedback questionnaires about placements should be sent to young people and their birth parents and responses from foster carers and placing social workers chased up.
7	FS11	Young people should be more involved in the development of the fostering service. This could be facilitated by an expansion in the service currently provided by the one rights and participation worker.
8	FS12	Consideration should be given to expanding the health promotion service, currently provided for looked after young people by one designated nurse, particularly in order to increase the targeting of vulnerable children and the advice and training provided for foster carers.
9	FS13	Consideration should also be given to expanding the education support service for looked after young people, so that increased support can be offered to more young people, more input made into PEPs, more training provided for foster carers and a handbook developed for foster carers.

10	FS17	The specialist skills of a recruitment and marketing worker should be retained, as part of a foster carer recruitment strategy.
11	FS17	A strategy for the retention of foster carers should be developed, based on consultation with foster carers.
12	FS21	Unannounced visits should be made to all foster homes, at least once a year.
13	FS23	A strategy should be developed, in discussion with the fostering groups, for ensuring that all foster carers participate in training.
14	FS26	The IT system should be improved, in order to decrease the time spent and frustration currently experienced by staff.
15	FS30	Annual training should be provided for Fostering Panel members.
16	FS30	The Fostering Panel should be provided with management information about placement disruptions and the outcome of foster carer reviews.
17	FS32	Dedicated support group meetings and training should be provided for friends and family carers, following consultation.
18	FS32	Training/guidance should be provided for social workers in the children's teams, who are undertaking assessments of prospective friends and family carers.

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