



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Calderdale Fostering Service**

**Children & Young People`s Services  
Fostering Team - Care Services  
Ground Floor, Carlton Mill  
Wharf Street  
Sowerby Bridge  
HX6 2AS**

*Lead Inspector*  
Jacqui Malcolm

*Key Announced Inspection*  
27th November 2006      09:15

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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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Calderdale Fostering Service
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      27th February 2006

## Brief Description of the Service:

Calderdale fostering service provides a range of fostering services to children and young people. These include a range of carers who can provide short term, long term and 'friends and family' placements, along with a number of respite care (short break) and remand placements. The service also supports a small number of foster placements, approved by Calderdale, who reside outside the Calderdale area. The service also provides support carers who offer care for a limited 28-day period. This is designed to prevent admission into long-term care.

In March 2006, the team moved to more suitable premises in Sowerby Bridge following the closure of the main office in Halifax.

Calderdale pay foster carers the following weekly rates of allowances:

0-4 years	£76.58
5-10	£87.36
11-15	£108.57
16+	£138.60

Family and Friends Carers £76.00 to £380.00 per week.

# SUMMARY

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

This visit was planned and took place between 27<sup>th</sup> November and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and involved one inspector. It was done using a proportionate methodology because the last inspection was completed in February 2006. This inspection was conducted jointly with two inspectors from the CSCI Adoption Team. Private fostering was the main focus of this inspection. The information gained at the last inspection was used to inform this inspection. This approach was discussed with the managers of the fostering and adoption service of Calderdale local authority at a pre-inspection meeting held with senior managers of the service.

Written responses to questionnaires were received from over 143 foster carers, local authority social workers and young people over the age of 8 years who are placed with foster carers. The inspector also visited four foster care households.

The case files of foster carers, children and young people were read, together with a number of other records. Discussions were held with the principle manager and manager of the fostering service, members of the fostering team, the co-ordinator from the Looked After Children Education Service (LACE) and workers from the Looked After And Adopted Children's Health Team (LAACH). The fostering panel was not attended, however, telephone contact was made with the independent panel chair for his views. Visits were made to four foster carer households to obtain the views of foster carers and young people about the service. Additional time was spent preparing for the inspection.

Initial verbal feedback was given to the registered manager and head of children's service at the end of the inspection.

The registered manager made a range of documents available, including policies and procedures.

If you want to get a full picture of what this service is like, you might like to read the last report as well. You can get this from the address at the front page.

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

The previous inspection noted that the service is well managed by a manager who is experienced and understands the needs of the service and how staff will be managed. There are clear lines of responsibility and a commitment to providing and developing a good service to foster carers, children and young people.

The service continues to have a child-focussed approach to meeting the needs of young people and to making sure children and young people are properly matched as far as possible with foster carers. Some placing social workers said:

***"Where possible placement matched in term of culture, ethnicity and disability, however, not always possible due to lack of foster carers"***

***"...ethnicity and culture is met in placement. He has visited Pakistan with carers"***

***"Carers try to encourage ...to have equal opportunity"***

***"Matching process – ensures child is placed where his/her needs can be met. Maintains monitoring/supervision of carers"***

***"Carer recognises her difference in ethnicity to ...but tries to compensate by enquiring, reading and considering ways of minimising...encourage self reflection and exploration"***

***"... is matched with carers who can meet all of her needs"***

***"Matching process – ensures child is placed where his/her needs can be met. Maintains monitoring/supervision of carers"***

***"Due to lack of foster carers it is not always possible to find appropriate matches but wherever possible this is done"***

A number of foster carers said that the fostering service manages equality and diversity issues in an **"excellent"** manner. One foster carer said:

***"Children are placed where it's in the child's best interest"***

Foster carers said they are well supported and some spoke highly about their fostering social workers and on the whole feel valued. Some foster carers said:

***"The fostering service is a team of dedicated people who do their jobs very well. I have no problems with this service"***

***"We chose Calderdale as they were the only service that didn't have an issue with our sexuality"***

***"Over the 7 year period we have fostered children and young people, we have dealt with various children that have been remand cases, sexually exploited, violent and aggressive and never once have we not been able to ring or see someone within fostering to offload. Our experience would not have been possible without the dedication of our fostering link worker and her colleagues"***

***"Support to foster carers, assessment of carers, carers encourage individuality, provide emotional support, help maintain family links, understand care experience and encourage experience of family life"***

***"Provide excellent placement via carer"***

***"Very good support and planning to carers"***

***"...has received a very good service from the fostering service"***

Foster carers said that support is also available from the Emergency Duty Team outside of office hours and foster carers have recently set up a telephone support service for carers who may need advice and support on low-level issues.

The recruitment, assessment, checks and selection of foster carers continues to be thorough and the reports are informative.

Young people said they feel listened to by their foster carers and feel well cared for. Some young people said:

***"Because they know that I am entitled to my own opinion and sometimes it can help"***

***"Yes, because I talk all the time"***

***"Yes, they listen to me all the time. They are always there for me every time I have to talk"***

***"When I am not talking rubbish"***

***"Because my opinions always help"***

***"They'll listen to what I have to say but don't take them on board, only if really serious."***

***"If I have problems or worries about the placement then they do listen"***

***"I am cared for and they look after me decent"***

***"They treat me like one of the family"***

***"I am fed well and live in a nice warm house. We go out and do things together like parks and picnics, swimming, bike rides, etc, I am loved"***

***"I'm glad I'm living here, sometimes I feel like I wanna move, I feel like I'm the only one that gets told off 24/7 – does my nut in!"***

***"They give me confidence. They do everything to look after me well"***

The fostering service continues to have good links with health and education and the work of the Looked After Children Education (LACE) team shows excellent links with the fostering service, school, foster carers and young people and continues to exceed the standards. Foster carers spoke positively of the work of the Looked After And Adopted Children's Health Team (LAACH). The young people who responded to questionnaires about education said that they **"always"** receive the right help to help them become successful in their education and the majority of young people confirmed that they **"always"** get support and advice about being healthy.

What young people said about their education and health:

***"Because my foster carers are encouraging to do well in school to help me in my further life, achieve my targets"***

***"They supported me when I changed schools and I am going to Leeds for a visit to the university"***

***"Because I learn to get my homework in on time"***

***"I am always asked how's my day being at school and if I need any help with home work. Also am asked what I want to do later in life"***

***"Because LACE come in and help me"***

***"LACE and my carers have my best interests in mind, whenever I ask for advice"***

***"My foster carers keep me at a balanced diet and if I eat something bad then I sum it up eating something good afterwards"***

***"Because I take packed lunch which is like a packet of crisps, grapes, apple, sandwiches"***

***"My foster carer reminds me about what is healthy"***

***"I see the nurse"***

***"I really know how to keep healthy and if I have any questions my carers are there to ask"***

Foster carers receive 52 weeks payment. The payment to foster carer's is currently being reviewed and there is a working party that includes foster carers and workers from the fostering service.

Foster carer's files are well kept and are easy to follow.

The fostering service provides safe placements for children and there are 'safe caring' policies in place. One young person said:

***"...I feel safe with my family and I love being with them"***

The recruitment/publicity officer provides a professional face to the service and acts as a good point of contact to people who want to be foster carers.

This inspection came to the same conclusions.

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

The principle manager and manager of the fostering service are now in permanent posts and the staff team is now fully staffed with workers who are qualified and experienced.

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

The fostering service still needs to make sure that training is sought after to help develop foster carers whose first language is not English.

There are some foster carers who do not have a supervising social worker. Some comments from foster carers and placing social workers include:

***.....was found a kinship placement by default – however, there was a lack of involvement from the fostering services in supporting the carers other than financial support"***

***"Employ more social workers. The people who work there are all ready overstretched"***

***"The only negative thing is that our family placement worker retired she was replaced straight away but new worker only lasted 3 months. We are now without a family placement worker"***

Foster carer reviews should be more independent.

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

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

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

## Being Healthy

### The intended 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

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

The health and developmental needs of children and young people who are fostered are well met by the fostering service. Foster carers and workers make sure that children and young people have good access to health care and promote a healthy lifestyle.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The previous inspection reported positively on the way that health care needs are delivered to children and young people in foster care.

The health needs of fostered children and young people continue to be well supported. Children and young people, foster carers and placing social workers who were consulted, all confirmed that they were satisfied with the level of support received by the fostering service to promote a healthy lifestyle. Most of the foster carers were clear about their responsibilities in respect to registering a child with the Doctor and Dentist and taking the children/young people to health appointments as needed, including therapeutic appointments and medical consents were seen in the children and young people's files. However, some foster carers commented that they sometimes had to wait for this information to be delivered by placing social workers. Discussions with foster carers and returned questionnaires showed that they still feel supported by the fostering service to make sure that they are meeting the needs of children and young people and are provided with the relevant specialist equipment where this is needed. Placing social workers commented that the fostering service report to them any accidents or injuries that children or young people might have.

The fostering service continues to work closely with the 'Looked After Children' (LAC) health team, who have the prime responsibility for making sure that young people who are fostered can have access to the full range of services they need. The manager reported that since the last inspection, the 'LAC' nurses have moved premises and are now located in the same office as the Agency Medical Adviser; the manager reported that such a move will improve links with respect to health issues for children and young people. Also, the manager reported that the establishment of the 'LAC' Health Steering Group will further serve to strengthen the links for improving the health needs of looked after children. The fostering team manager also reported that he had attended a school nurses forum to discuss fostering and make closer links between school nurses and foster carers and between the two services.

The 'Looked After and Adopted Children's Team (LAACH) provides psychological input to children and young people and they talked positively about the range of services that they offered to 'looked after' children and young people. A view was formed that positive working relationships had been formed with the fostering service, which was supported by the views of a number of placing social workers and foster carers.

Foster carers reported that they had attended a number of health related courses and found these useful. At the last visit, some foster carers said that they had to wait to receive training in health, hygiene and first aid because they were often fully subscribed. This is an area that the service should still pursue.

# 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

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

Overall, staff and foster carers working for the fostering service are appropriately recruited and vetted.

Foster carers provide a good standard of accommodation and care for children and young people placed with them.

The fostering service has suitable systems to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect.

The matching of children and young people with foster carers has contributed to stability of placements and good life chances for children and young people.

The fostering service panel is efficiently organised and functions in a fair and democratic manner.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Since the last inspection, a permanent appointment has been made of the fostering manager. He has significant child-care experience and holds a recognised social work qualification. The manager continues to understand the needs of the fostering service and how staff will be managed and along with the management team, has clear plans about how the service will be developed.

Information contained in the foster carers files show that children and young people are placed with foster carers who have been assessed as being able to meet the child or young person's needs. Also making sure that the welfare of the child is safeguarded, including as far as possible, the matching process, meeting the cultural, ethnic and religious identity needs of the child for the period of the placement. A large number of foster carers confirmed that they have written information about the children and young people placed with them to help them to provide safe care to them. However, some foster carers said this information was not always received at the time of the placement, particularly in emergency situations. Foster carers spoken with confirmed that where needed, they are supported by the fostering service to obtain specific equipment needed to keep children and young people safe.

Visits were made to a random selection of foster carers, the majority having been foster carers for the service for a number of years. They were aware of these visits and information is included in their Foster Care Agreement that clearly states that foster carers may be visited by CSCI as part of the inspection process. Foster carers who were visited continued to show a positive and welcoming attitude and they were open and honest, sharing their opinions about the fostering service and the care provided to children and young people. Foster carers homes were clean and homely. Foster carer records showed evidence of health and safety checks that form part of the foster carer's assessment and these documents continue to be reviewed at the foster carer's annual reviews. Foster carer preparation training also includes health and safety issues and the foster carers handbook included health and safety guidelines. The majority of foster carers use their own motor vehicles to transport children and young people and the rules are very clear that all children must be suitably restrained in vehicles in line with the updated legislation. There is evidence to show that information is provided to make sure that foster carers are aware about these safeguards.

To make sure that children and young people are appropriately matched to foster carers, the fostering service continues to make sure that they are obtaining as much information about the child or young person from the placing social worker and that written matching considerations are recorded in the foster placement agreements and followed up in practice to show what additional support may be required. The fostering service continues to provide mainly white foster carers, which generally reflects the ethnic background of

children and young people using the service in the Calderdale area. The fostering service continues to take seriously the need to match children and young people properly with foster carers as opposed to being resource led and they continue to use the services of independent fostering agencies to meet the needs of young people from Black and minority ethnic groups as appropriate. Some placing social workers reported in returned questionnaires that more could be done to recruit more foster carers in general, particularly from Black and Asian communities to improve the matching process. At the time of the inspection, two exemptions were made out the foster carers approval range.

It was positive to see the young people in placement, who were settled, had made great progress and were well cared for. A large number of positive responses were received from young people both directly and through questionnaires regarding the quality of care provided to them by their foster carers. Again, these comments were repeated by the positive responses received by placing social workers.

The personnel files of three new fostering staff were examined. This included references, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance and identity checks. However, clearer photographs of the employees are needed and good practice would indicate that written references should be followed up by telephone contact in all instances.

A child protection policy is in place and there is a clear process regarding complaints, strategy meetings and how this all links in with the fostering service. Foster carers talked about the Child Protection training that they had attended and they showed a good awareness about protecting children and young people that they were looking after. The procedure to deal with allegations made against foster carers has been followed and evidence of the process was seen in one of the files. Two male foster carers spoken with had attended the 'Men in Foster Care' course that included information about allegations against foster carers. One of them said that they had thoroughly enjoyed the course, whilst another male foster carer said they found the course off putting. All foster carers are members of the Foster Care Network, who give independent support and advice and the local Foster Carers Association also offers general support to foster carers and during an investigation of allegations. The manager reported that no allegations had been made against foster carers since the last inspection.

Safe caring guidelines are contained in the foster carer handbook and files examined showed that carers complete individual safe caring policies for their households. These were well prepared and sufficiently detailed. Individual risk assessments for children and young people were also seen in the files sampled.

The foster care handbook and good practice guidance contains information about minimising the risk of bullying behaviour. A very small number of young

people who responded by questionnaire highlighted bullying as a problem encountered in school. Details of these comments were fed back to the manager who agreed to review.

The fostering service has a non-corporal punishment policy, which forms part of the foster care agreement and foster carers spoken with understood this. The fostering service has procedures in place about restraint and holding children and young people. The procedure states that physical restraint should only be done "as a last resort when all attempts to diffuse the situation have been exhausted and there is a danger that the child/young person is putting themselves or others in danger or there is a serious risk of property damage". Some foster carers spoken with about using restraint said that they had attended Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training. Other foster carers, however said that had not attended this training and had found themselves in situations where they had to restrain young people who were at risk to themselves, others and to property. Training in this area was discussed with the manager who said the meetings with the local authorities training section would be taking place to discuss the re-introduction of this important training, specifically designed for foster carers.

The fostering service has policies and procedures regarding children and young people missing from home. One foster carer spoken with confirmed their awareness about what action to take when a young person accommodated by them had gone missing.

Foster carers spoken with about attending panel said they had never attended due to the arrangements at the time. They appreciated that it is now current practice for foster carers to attend. None of the two fostering panels were observed on this occasion, however, recent panel minutes were read and a telephone discussion took place with the independent panel chair. There was enough evidence to show that the panel process continues to be organised in an efficient and democratic manner and the quality of assessments continue to be scrutinised by the panel processes. Meetings of the panels are recorded and decisions and recommendations were seen in foster carers files.

# 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

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

The fostering service promotes the diverse needs of the children and young people as far as possible and gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of children and young people to help them to reach their potential.

The short breaks service is well organised.

## **EVIDENCE:**

As identified at the last inspection, the fostering service continues to recruit foster carers who can meet the diverse needs of the children and young people who need placements. The manager reported that the service provides racially and culturally appropriate placements wherever possible, including the purchase of external placements to make sure that the best possible matches are found. Foster carers and placing social workers generally agreed that the fostering service values diversity issues and foster carers have access to services that recognises their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

The fostering service continues to work closely with the Looked After Children Education (LACE) service, whose role is to support young people in the school setting and in educational activities. Young people's feedback and discussions with some young people and their foster carers during visits showed that they value the importance of education and the support provided to them was

described by a large number of foster carers and placing social workers as "excellent". Statistics kept and provided by LACE show that an increased number of young people are achieving from 1 to 5 or more GSCE results at A\* to C grades.

The young people's files continue to show educational information, including personal education plans (PEP), education statements and other key documents. The co-ordinator for LACE said that the service continues to challenge schools who exclude young people and will continue to support and guide social workers with the appeals process.

As with the last inspection, the fostering service continues to provide a support care scheme/respice service to support parents with disabled children and young people and these are supported by the services procedures. Evidence from the records and during a visit to the foster carers home, indicates that the foster carer works in partnership with birth parents and with the fostering service, recognising the central role of the birth parents. One of the foster carers visited spoke positively about the support provided to her by the fostering social worker, which she said had been a major improvement in recent months.

# **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

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

The fostering service promotes contact between children, young people and their families and friends, with good support provided by foster carers. Foster carers and young people are given frequent opportunities to express their views about how the service is run.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Initial foster carers training continues to makes clear the importance of contact that children and young people should have with their family, friends and significant others. Foster carer's spoken with were clear about their responsibility to promote contact and where appropriate, provide transport or supervise contact, depending on the child or young person's circumstances. Foster Carers, young people and social workers consulted, confirmed that contact was happening. The children and young people's records showed the type of contact arrangements in place and review reports seen provided a clear indicator of the levels of contact that children and young people are having and the quality of these contacts.

There were comments made by some foster carers about the general shortage of social workers employed by the local authority and the fact that some of them previously or currently had no link worker for a period of time and were therefore not contacted, although they said that they were aware that they could contact the fostering service if they need advice and support.

There was evidence to show that the fostering service consults with young people as part of the wider group of 'Looked After Children' (LAC). A number of 'Looked After' young people were consulted as part of the development of the wider 'LAC' strategy and young people had the chance to raise a lot of issues that has been implemented into the overall strategy. Young people who are fostered said that their views were listened to by the fostering service, their foster carers and their social workers and in a number of instances; their views make a difference to the things important to them and aspects of their lives.

Review reports seen in the children and young people's files show that the young people are invited to attend and when they do, they are encouraged to contribute to them. Annual reviews show how birth children's views are also listened to.

# 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 reached using all the evidence available including a visit to the service.

There is a clear written policy on fostering allowances and expenses, which foster carers understand and are satisfied with.

### EVIDENCE:

Fostering allowances are supported by a written policy. These allowances, known as 'payment for skills' is based on four levels of competency and paid to approved foster carers in recognition of their skills and payments are made over 52 weeks whether there is a child or young person in placement or not.

Although this standard was not fully assessed, foster carers who were consulted express no general concerns about the system for payment. At the time of the inspection, the manager in conversation said that a review of the payments scheme was underway. This involved the setting up of a working group, including some social workers and staff about how the scheme will operate.

# 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, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

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

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

Overall, foster carers, children and young people benefit from a fostering service that offers sound leadership, qualified and experienced staff who offer sound supervision and support to foster carers and there are good recording systems in place. However, an outstanding training issue and a number of

unallocated placements has the potential to undermine the good service currently provided to foster carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Principle Officer (Placements) and the Fostering Team Manager are now in permanent posts, which has given the team a consistent, well-qualified and experienced management team. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. Discussions with the staff team showed that they appreciated the value of having a permanent management team. The supervising social workers said that they continue to have regular supervision and they continue to benefit from an 'open door' policy to discuss issues with managers outside of supervision. Staff confirmed that they have access to training courses, including external courses.

The fostering service continues to be supported by the publicity and Recruitment Officer who has responsibility for advertising and marketing in both the fostering and adoption services. Potential foster carers are able to have one point of contact during the initial stages of their application and this continues to work well. The worker uses a number of methods to recruit foster carers such as advertisements in the press and public transport, wage slips, displays, word of mouth, etc and they manage a small budget. A number of placing social workers reported in returned questionnaires that there are not enough foster carers recruited, particularly from the Black and Asian community. One placing social worker also commented that the recent draft publicity material did not include any images of Black and Asian young people.

Some assessments of potential foster carers were seen on the fostering 'Form F' document, which is skill based. Evidence of recent assessments were thorough and gave a detailed impression of prospective foster carers and their ability to look after children and young people. The independent panel chair commented positively about the quality of the assessments that arrive at the fostering panel.

The fostering team is now fully staffed with permanent, qualified and experienced supervising social workers. Within the team, a second worker has been promoted to a senior practitioner post with the aim to improve the advice and support to the team and also to retain existing staff. Some of the staff said that they still thought they had a large caseload and did not believe there was sufficient staff in the team and this was evidenced by some unallocated cases and the views of some foster carers who reported that they did not have a supervising social worker allocated to them. Some placing social workers also supported this shortfall. However, the general view is that the service has improved, workers continue to do an "excellent" job, support them and treat foster carers with value.

Foster carers said that support, even if this was not from their own supervising social worker, could always be found at the end of the telephone. The 'out of hours' Emergency Duty Team and more recently, the foster carers telephone line is available to foster carers who may need low level advice and support out of office hours, is still in place. Foster carers confirmed in conversation and during visits that they are given the necessary equipment that they need to properly look after children and young people.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting foster carers. Foster carers who were visited confirmed that they had received an updated copy of the Foster Care Handbook with a lot of useful information to keep them informed and up to date about what the service expects of them.

The fostering service continues to make training available to foster carers to help them in their work and foster carers are involved in delivering some of the internal training. At the last inspection, the service has accepted that they need to pursue training to foster carers whose first language is not English. The service has yet to resolve this matter. Some foster carers should also have access to training in health, hygiene, first aid and approved behaviour management.

The fostering service has written information that includes all of the information that needs to be contained in children and young people and foster care files. The files seen contained up to date information, including the 'Looked After Children' (LAC) documents and other relevant paperwork. A number of foster carers spoken with and respondents to questionnaires said that they had received copies of 'LAC' documents and other relevant paperwork, although some continue to report that they are not always promptly forwarded by some placing social workers. Foster carers said that they were generally aware about the circumstances leading up to the placements and kept information about children and young people securely. It was noted that there were differing views from foster carers about expectations of keeping records about children and young people and some foster carers said they kept records and some said that they did not.

The separate foster care records were seen and these continue to be well maintained and include the foster care assessment, safe caring information and records that give a clear picture about how foster carers and their placements are supported and reviewed. All files showed evidence of management audits. The children and foster care register has been further developed to make sure that more accurate information can be produced and stored. All of the records that are contained by the fostering service are kept securely in the new premises. Staff said that there was limited storage space, however.

Family and friend carers are assessed, approved and have the same training and support opportunities as mainstream and fee paid carers. One of the files

seen contained the proper information to support this view and the carers and a young person spoke positively about the services received and said they know who to contact in the fostering team for advice and support. There was evidence however to show that not all family and friend carers have a supervising social worker, who visited them as required. During discussions with the manager and members of the team, it was acknowledged that some family and friends carers did not want local authority intervention and did not always see themselves as carers in the same way as mainstream foster carers. However, this is an area that the service must still address to make sure that they are meeting their duty towards supporting all foster carers.

# 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>	3

<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>	3
<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>	3

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	4

<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>	X
<b>16</b>	3
<b>17</b>	3
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>20</b>	X
<b>21</b>	3
<b>22</b>	2
<b>23</b>	2
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	3
<b>26</b>	X
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X
<b>32</b>	3

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.	FS22	Schedule 5(2)	The fostering service must make suitable arrangements to make sure that all foster carers are supervised by an appropriately qualified supervising social worker.	30/03/07
2.	FS23	17(1)	The fostering service must make arrangements for training to foster carers whose first language is not English.  <b>(Previous timescale of 30/10/06 not met)</b>	30/03/07

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS21	Foster carer reviews should be independently chaired.
2.	FS15	Written references should be followed up by telephone contact.
3.	FS23	All foster carers should receive training in health, hygiene first aid and approved behaviour management training.

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