



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**Foster Care Associates - Yorkshire and
Lincolnshire**

**5 Tallys End
Barlborough
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S43 4WP**

Lead Inspector
Sharon Treadwell

Announced Inspection
7th August 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

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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	Foster Care Associates - Yorkshire and Lincolnshire
Address	5 Tallys End Barlborough Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 4WP
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Fax number	01246 573 571
Email address	contactus@thefca.co.uk
Provider Web address	www.thefca.co.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Foster Care Associates Ltd
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Sally Melbourne
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 6th February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Foster Care Associates is a nationwide fostering Agency.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region consists of a regional office in Derbyshire and six area offices in Sheffield, Doncaster, Mansfield, Leeds, Lincoln and Hull.

Within each of the area teams is a Team Manager, a team of qualified social workers, resource workers and administrative staff. Educational Liaison Officers and Therapists provided services across the region and have attachment to specific office bases.

The Director/Registered Manager of the service, Sally Melbourne, is based at the regional office in Chesterfield, together with the Deputy Director, two assistant Directors and the recruitment and placement teams and administrators.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region offers a range of family placements including emergency, short term, assessment, bridging, long term and parent and child. At the time of the Inspection the Agency was supporting around 200 carers and had some 230 children in placements.

The Agency provides recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers and all related training and support. Supervising social workers and resource workers support placements, and work closely with both foster children and carers own children.

The Foster Care Associates Prospectus quotes placement charges as ranging from £650 per week for a Foundation Placement to £1,708.98 per week for a Solo Placement. Placement charges relating to specific requests are negotiated with placing authorities.

SUMMARY

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

This was a planned inspection carried out by two inspectors: Sharon Treadwell and Trisha Gibbs, with a pre-inspection visit being made to the Agency on May 23rd 2006. The inspection focussed on the Leeds Office with a visit being made to the Regional Office at Barlborough to examine personnel records and records of complaints and allegations.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire underwent a full inspection in February of this year and this inspection has therefore been proportionate.

No requirements were identified during the February inspection.

The inspectors have looked at all areas where good practice recommendations were made in February and in addition have case tracked three young people placed with two foster carers. Case tracking involved inspection of case files retained by the Agency, home visits and discussions with young people, foster carers, placing social workers and relevant Agency staff, either in person or by telephone. As part of this inspection the inspectors attended a barbecue held for carers and young people supported from the Leeds Office.

Policies and Procedures, the Carer's Handbook and other documents were made available and referred to throughout the Inspection.

At the time of preparing this report, questionnaire responses had been received from 11 carers, 7 placing Social Workers and 15 young people, and the views contained in these have been reflected in the report. On this occasion questionnaires were circulated only to carers supervised from the Leeds office. No comments have been received from the parents of the young people tracked.

Comments received were generally positive with placing social workers stating: 'FCA provides an informed, communicative and joined up social work service, which is very child focussed' and commenting that the fostering service achieves good outcomes for young people by 'building the self esteem and confidence of the young people, giving respect and support when young people need it most'.

Prior to the inspection the Registered Manager provided the Commission for Social Care Inspection with a range of written information about the operation of the Fostering Agency and information supplied in these documents has informed this report.

The inspectors did not attend a Fostering Panel. The panel was observed in February and no issues were identified. Panel minutes from three recent panels were however examined during the inspection.

No requirements have been identified during this inspection and only one recommendation has been made.

What the service does well:

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire provides a child centred service, and evidences a very high level of meaningful consultation and communication with children and young people. The Agency listens to children and foster carers and actively encourages them to represent their feelings and wishes.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire promotes an inclusive team working approach when working with children, carers and staff. Newsletters and information materials are age appropriate and colourful and children contribute to these. Activities and events are made available throughout the year and especially through holiday periods, for the whole family.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire provides a commendable level of supervision, training and support to their carers and staff.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire utilises an excellent range of comprehensive recording tools, pro-forma, and checklists.

Foster Care Associates comprehensive Policies and Procedures and other documentation are regularly reviewed, revised and updated by the Agency's Quality Assurance section and directly reference the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire provides focussed educational support for all children placed, and intensive educational support where this is necessary. Dedicated Education Liaison Officers work with children, carers and schools with the aim of achieving the best possible outcomes for children placed.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire makes available qualified Therapists to undertake Therapeutic Assessment and Therapy work with some children and young people. This is a valuable resource for both carers and young people.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The Agency has introduced a file audit system for carers' and young people's files.

The Registered Manager has revised the front sheet of the complaints register to clearly show when complaints are resolved and whether they were upheld.

The inspectors would note that there is clear evidence of ongoing efforts by Foster Care Associates to constantly improve all aspects of service delivery. Policies and procedures, the Carers' Handbook and a number of pro-forma recording tools have been reviewed and updated during the last year. A

handbook has also been produced, which specifically deals with education issues.

What they could do better:

The Agency should ensure that copies of placement specific Safe Care Policies are maintained on carer files.

During the previous inspection the Agency was recommended to review the layout and completion of the matching matrix form. The Registered Manager confirmed during this inspection that this was currently being undertaken. The inspectors have recommended that the Agency should better evidence how identified shortfalls in the matching process and potential risks in relation to individual young people's behaviours will be addressed within placement. In recording matching considerations the Agency should ensure that full consideration of the potential impact on young people already in placement is appropriately evidenced in written records.

During the previous inspection the Agency was recommended to strengthen its procedures for obtaining all essential information and LAC (Looked After Children) documents from the child's social worker. Files tracked during this inspection still do not contain all LAC paperwork and the Registered Manager was reminded of the need for stronger systems to chase this.

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.

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

The Health and development of children and young people is positively promoted and given good attention by the Agency and carers.

EVIDENCE:

The Agency provides, for each child placed, a separate Health Passport booklet for carers to complete and this is transferred with the child when they move placement or go for respite with other carers. Foster carers sign to confirm receipt of these.

During this inspection the inspectors saw evidence that carers were appropriately updating young people's health passports during placement, entering medical appointments and details of medication prescribed.

The Health Passport captures valuable medical and health information that will be important to children in the future.

Good Health related training is routinely provided to carers and this enables them to have a good awareness of their Healthcare responsibilities to children placed. The therapist is actively involved in the provision of carer training as well as in providing individualised support. Recent training provided has related to improving young people's self esteem, attachment issues and the Agency's Team Parenting approach.

The health needs of two of the young people tracked were being extremely well met by their carers, with good support from the FCA Therapist and CAMHS.

The inspectors spoke, during this inspection, with the Therapist at the Leeds Office who detailed her intensive involvement with one of the young people

tracked. Both carers tracked have recently attended the ADAPT (Attachment Disorders and Parenting Therapeutically) group facilitated by two of the Foster Care Associates therapists and have found these sessions extremely valuable in understanding and managing the behaviour of young people currently in placement.

Inspectors noted that in the three children's files looked at there was incomplete LAC (Looked After Children) documentation that should have been provided at the time of placement. This can provide important Medical history. The inspectors noted that, in all three files tracked, the LAC documentation was not signed to provide consent for medical treatment and the Agency has been reminded of the need to ensure that appropriate signatures are obtained on these documents at the earliest opportunity.

One young person tracked was receiving regular medication. The medication was subject to dosage alteration whilst a medical assessment of its impact on behaviour was undertaken. Although the carers demonstrated a commendable awareness of the monitoring requirements in relation to this, no running record of medication administration was being kept. The inspectors have advised that the Agency considers implementing medication administration records, which are routinely completed by carers.

Children and young people commented positively on carers' abilities to make sure they remained healthy: 'They always remind me to brush my teeth'; 'M helps us to get really fit'; 'We always have a fruit bowl'.

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 made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Agency provides very good support, training, and guidance to carers, to assist them to provide children with safe placements.

Written records do not always provide good evidence of the Agency's prioritisation of young people's safety, particularly in relation to the matching process.

EVIDENCE:

Both managers and staff have considerable knowledge, experience and skills in the field of social care and fostering to support carers in their provision of positive placements to young people.

Five personnel files were examined during this inspection and all contained comprehensive information and were retained in excellent order. The inspectors were especially impressed with the detailed appraisal process and by the introduction of an employment history grid to ensure that gaps in employment are identified and fully investigated. The range of checks undertaken prior to employment of staff is commendable.

The Agency completes a very thorough Health and Safety risk assessment of each carer's home at the point of initial approval and this is reviewed annually

at the time of the carer's review. The files tracked provided evidence that additional requirements were sometimes identified within this review process and were appropriately followed up.

Agency staff were noted to have a good awareness of Health and Safety principles, for example, at the barbecue carers were advised to collect hot food for the children.

Each carer prepares a household Safe Care Policy at the point of approval and the files of both carers tracked during this inspection contained a copy of the household policy. Additionally there was consistently good evidence that safe care was prioritised through carer supervision, contact records, reviews and carer records of young people's placements. The Agency, however, needs to ensure that the Safe Care Policy is regularly reviewed and is specifically pertinent to the individual needs of the young people in placement.

Addendums to the Safe Care Policy had been completed in relation to two of the young people tracked but these were extremely brief considering their complex behaviours.

Not all safe care policies examined were dated and signed.

From discussions with foster carers and staff it was clear that considerable work goes into ensuring that young people are appropriately placed with fosters carers capable of meeting their needs. Foster carers said that they had a say as to who was placed with them, and whether they felt they had the skills to meet the young persons needs. Staff members at the Leeds office particularly commented on the skills of the Team Manager there: 'J is excellent at matching, it's a real strength'.

The Regional Placements Team handles referrals for placement centrally and discussion of matching considerations is then undertaken with the relevant supervising social worker prior to contacting a carer. Matching considerations between a carer and a child are recorded on a specific matching form to support the process of matching young people to a placement, which would meet their needs. In addition a written risk assessment is completed in relation to each young person placed, to identify areas of potential concern. Currently the completion of these forms does not always include clarification of how identified shortfalls in the matching process or potential risks in relation to young people will be addressed in placement.

During this inspection a new placement was made with one of the foster carers being tracked. Records relating to the young person already in placement indicated that his needs had not been fully considered in the making of this second placement.

This issue was discussed with the Registered Manager, the Team Manager and other Agency staff, who confirmed that full consideration had been given to the needs of both young people and that full discussion had been undertaken with the young person already in placement and the placing authority regarding a second young person being placed.

There was inadequate evidence of this in the file of this young person already in that placement.

In recording matching considerations the Agency should ensure that full consideration of the potential impact on young people already in placement is appropriately evidenced.

In relation to one of the carers tracked, neither of the young people in placement was racially matched with the carer. One of the young people had a history of involvement in racial abuse. The potential implications of this were not addressed on the matching pro-forma

Good training on First Aid, Safe Care and Child Protection is routinely provided for carers, much of this linking in with NVQ awards. The Agency is also providing training for all staff and carers this year on Every Child Matters.

Discussions with young people and returned questionnaires maintained that young people felt safe in their foster home: 'I respect and love J and R and everyone else in what is now my family home'; 'They (carers) always look out for me'.

During the previous inspection in February this year the then Inspector observed the Agency's Fostering Panel held at Barlborough, which serves all offices across the region. The Panel was noted to have the required composition of panel members and to be well organised and suitably chaired. The panel was not observed on the occasion of this inspection but the inspectors examined the minutes of three recent panels. The Agency has been reminded that some care is needed in relation to the recording of which of the people present are panel members and which are not.

A number of complaints received by the Agency during the last year have been from or concerning one carer. The inspectors examined complaint records and confirmed that both complaints and Agency responses were fully recorded and that, where appropriate, independent investigation had been arranged. One complaint is ongoing.

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.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Agency provides an excellent level of support and delegated resources to promote both the positive identity and the educational achievement of children and young people.

EVIDENCE:

Inspectors noted the many positive initiatives provided by the Agency to promote equality and to meet the diverse needs of children and young people. Black identity is celebrated through an annual Black History Month, Black Children's Forum, and through the recruitment of a range of carers to meet different cultural and religious needs.

Staff are recruited from diverse backgrounds and the Agency provides a local and national Black Workers forum.

The carers spoken to demonstrated good strategies for and clear commitment to, promoting positive racial and cultural awareness and positive identity. One carer providing placement to an asylum speaking child had worked particularly well, in a very short time, to help the young person to establish links with young people who shared his ethnicity and cultural background, whilst also promoting a good awareness of British culture and helping the young person to learn the English language as well as supporting him to access appropriate educational opportunities.

In a questionnaire one asylum seeking young person spoke positively of the support provided by his carers in developing reading and computer skills and of the help given in 'solving my problems'.

One placing social worker commented: 'L has dual heritage. The foster carers are very resourceful and skilled in meeting his ethnic needs'.

Agency documentation makes continual reference to Diversity and Equal Opportunities, and states all that training for carers includes equality and diversity within its stated objectives.

The Agency provides young people with a memory box and carers encourage them to collect photographs and memorabilia. Young people are also provided with a memory book in which to record details and thoughts about their placement. Two of the young people tracked showed the inspectors their memory boxes, which contained a whole range of memories and which the young people clearly valued highly. The carers were dealing particularly well with the potential for one young person to destroy items collected.

One set of carers tracked were commended by the inspectors on their commitment and dedication to pursuing and effectively challenging the statementing process in relation to two young people placed. These carers were additionally offering a high level of support to maintaining a particularly challenging child within school by maintaining daily contact. Another carer tracked had supported and encouraged a young person with a very negative attitude to education to maintain a pattern of attendance and to achieve some good outcomes.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire places a commendable level of commitment and resources to achieving positive outcomes for children in their education, whatever their starting point is. The Education Liaison Service holds the Leading Aspect Ward for Education. Education Liaison Officers attend a range of meetings in order to advocate for and support both carers and young people in relation to school placements. These services are highly valued by carers: 'Education Liaison Officers are extremely helpful in all educational matters'; 'We have three children, all with special educational needs and the Education Officers are fantastic'

Statistics supplied by the Registered Manager prior to this inspection detail that 66% of young people in placement achieved one or more GCSE with 33% achieving five or more. One young person said: 'M helps us out with loads of hard school work'.

Placing social workers made some extremely positive comments about the commitment of the Agency and its carers to young people's educational achievement: 'The fostering service and carers did a lot of work to enable the child to attend an appropriate school due to behaviour problems'; 'Carers give positive encouragement to attending school with praise when things are going

well and talk when they don't go well. They also explain the importance of education'.

Carers are provided with a detailed excellent Education Handbook and with training sessions in key areas of the education system to support this.

The Agency invests in the provision of a very good range of activities, sports events and holiday breaks for all children, carers and their families. Carers and children said how much these were enjoyed. Information about forthcoming events are detailed in colourful newsletters and literature. At the time of this inspection carers and young people had just returned from the annual FCA Holiday. Several of the Leeds carers and young people spoken to had been to Centre Parks and had thoroughly enjoyed their holiday.

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):

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Agency works creatively with children and young people to ensure that they are consistently consulted in a meaningful manner, and to ensure that their views and wishes are listened to and acted upon.

EVIDENCE:

Foster Care Associates has an excellent range of literature for young people entering placement, with Toby bear books for young children and a 'File of Facts for the older group. The latter contains excellent information about health, personal safety, education and the law as well as details of young people's rights and responsibilities and contact details for several advocacy services. The Agency has additionally developed a CD Rom, with young people, containing all this information for those who need to access the information in other than written form.

Foster Care Associates has a commendable range of processes and systems for consultation with young people at local, regional and national levels. Each area has nominated young people's representatives who represent their area at the Regional Children's Forum and a National Conference is held for children and young people from all areas. The conference for this year, 'You matter' is already being planned and young people are actively involved in that planning.

Immediately prior to this inspection young people in the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region had been consulted about pocket money. All had completed a questionnaire and during the inspection the area representatives met with

carer representatives and the Registered Manager to discuss the findings of this survey and to agree how the Agency would proceed. Children also contribute, through paintings, poetry and letters, to newsletters, and FCA literature.

The Agency promotes an inclusive approach towards all children within the family, and consults with carer's own birth children, providing a dedicated group for 'children who foster'.

The Agency organises various social events, fun days and holidays, where all members of the family including carer's birth children are invited. Recently the annual FCA holiday was held and several of the Leeds carers and young people spoke to the inspectors about the fun they had at Centre Parks.

The Children's Charter For Choice (written by the Children and Young People's National Forum) details the rights and opportunities they wish to have in key areas of their care experiences. This is commendable.

Within their core curriculum training foster carers attend a Consultation and Communication course and are provided with written material outlining their key tasks in doing this.

Young people confirmed that they felt consulted: 'If I don't like something they (carers) will change it for me'. Carers confirmed this: 'The FCA always ask the children if there is anything that should be done differently'.

Where children and young people were attending for contact in cases tracked during Inspection, this was managed in an efficient manner and appropriately recorded. The young people's files clearly detail where contact is not appropriate or must be monitored and the reasons for this are clearly stated.

Children/young people spoken to were aware of their right to complain about the service and had received information on how to complain.

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):

14, 29.

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

Carers are aware of their financial obligations to children and young people in placement, and are given good information about meeting their material and developmental needs.

EVIDENCE:

The Agency is currently concentrating considerable efforts into developing services for young people leaving care and is working to establish supported lodgings and supported accommodation schemes in all regions. A booklet has been produced detailing the support systems available to care leavers.

Foster Care Associates has a National Co-ordinator for leaving care services who is overseeing developments. The Registered Manager provided information about the introduction of a new assessment format to be implemented for young people aged fourteen plus-‘Steps to Independence’, which will provide additional information to carers about the specific skill areas, which individuals need to develop further. Statistical information provided by the Agency details that 80% of young people in placement currently have a ‘Pathway Plan’. Foster Care Associates will undertake pathway planning if commissioned to do so by placing authorities.

The Foster Care Associates Policy Manual has been updated to reflect new developments in relation to leaving care services.

Carers are provided with good information about allowances and financial responsibilities in the Carers’ Handbook and reported that they receive

payments promptly. No issues were raised in relation to payments within the cases tracked.

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):

1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region is efficiently and professionally managed, providing clear lines of accountability and strong leadership and a good level of support to staff and foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Foster Care Associates produce a range of professional informative documents and leaflets about the Agency. A National Prospectus/Statement of Purpose with an inclusion of a local Statement of Purpose provides essential information. Excellent, age appropriate, children's guides are provided for all children at time of placement.

During the last year there have been significant staff changes to the Leeds office with only one member of the original social work staff team remaining. A new Team Manager (internal promotion) took up post in January of this year and three full time supervising social workers are now in post with a fourth due to join the team imminently. The newly appointed Team Manager confirmed that she had been provided with a full induction into her new role and management training.

A good level of support has been provided to the Leeds office by senior management, with one of the Assistant Directors being based there for much of this period.

Staff, carers and management confirmed that the new team had 'gelled well' and had developed a strong team identity. Both the Leeds staff team and the Agency management are to be commended on the efforts made to ensure that these changes have not impacted on the support received by carers in the Leeds area. All the carers spoken to and carers' questionnaires confirmed that they received excellent support: 'FCA are a good Agency-they allow you to get on with the job but are there to help whenever you need them'; 'We have two very challenging placements but with all the staff at FCA helping us the placement is doing well and the children are settling'; 'FCA is efficient and reliable and maintains excellent communications with carers by face to face contact, letters and phone calls'.

The Agency has in place very good and consistent strategies for supporting carers. Carers reported an excellent level of support, both through personal supervision sessions and a relevant training programme. Carers spoken to particularly valued the 'out of hours' service and the Agency's commitment to providing respite. The inspectors were especially impressed with the Agency's immediate offer of respite to carers returning from an extremely difficult holiday, on the first day of this inspection.

During this inspection staff were observed to work well together and to value the level of support and supervision they received from their managers. All staff received monthly planned supervision and a good appraisal system was in place.

A Senior Resource Worker is based at the Leeds Office. Several carers commented to the inspectors about her excellent relationships with the children and the value of the work she undertakes.

The number of foster carers and children placed within Foster Care Associates Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region has continued to increase, and the compliment and skill mix of staff within the area teams has increased accordingly. The Recruitment and Placement teams based at the regional office have established clear procedures relating to the assessment of new foster carers and placement referral systems.

There are sufficient qualified staff plus experienced resource workers supporting carers, plus support from professional educational and therapeutic officers. Some staff spoke positively about opportunities provided by the Agency for them to pursue training and professional qualifications, and on occasions promote their career, within the Agency.

There is a comprehensive training programme provided for carers, and internal and external trainers provide this training. Carers are expected to attend a minimum of four courses from the annual training programme and all carers this year have been expected to attend the Every Child Matters training.

The foster carer review system is thorough and there is evidenced input from placing social workers, children in placement and carers' own children as well as from the carers themselves and Agency staff.

Form F assessments of carers, which were viewed during this inspection, were completed to a good standard with appropriate emphasis on competencies.

Children's records and files were well managed and organised. The Agency provides a good range of forms, checklists, monitoring forms and recording tools. Some LAC documentation was absent from young people's files and the system for chasing this up, when Local Authorities did not respond to initial requests, appeared inadequate, in that the files tracked related to young people in placement in excess of two years and evidenced several requests for missing paperwork, which was still missing.

A recommendation was made during the previous inspection that The Agency needed to strengthen its procedures for obtaining all essential information and LAC documents from the child's social worker. The Registered Manager confirmed that this would now be addressed.

The agency retains a separate file of carers' weekly summary reports. These were examined in relation to the young people placed and were completed to a good standard.

Clear arrangements are in place for monitoring all aspects of the fostering service to ensure it is well managed and efficiently operated. The Foster Care Associates Director of Quality Assurance circulates a bulletin to all Team Managers on a quarterly basis and this ensures that staff are kept fully updated on policy and procedural developments.

The Quality Assurance Department monitors activities across the whole service through inspection reports and internal audits to strive for consistency of operation and has oversight of all complaints received.

The inspectors would particularly wish to comment on the efforts made by staff at all levels to make the Foster Care Associates offices welcoming and attractive to all visitors. A wealth of attractive and informative literature is displayed and young people's contributions are well displayed.

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	3
15	4
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	4
13	4
31	X

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

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

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

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

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	The Agency should clearly record how identified shortfalls in the matching process and potential risks in relation to individual young people’s behaviours will be addressed within placement In recording matching considerations the Agency should ensure that full consideration of the potential impact on young people already in placement is appropriately evidenced. Safe Care Plans should be specific to young people in placement.

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