



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Peterborough City Council Fostering**

**Peterborough City Council  
Bayard Place, Broadway  
Peterborough  
PE1 1FB**

*Lead Inspector*  
Lindsey Blickem

*Announced Inspection*  
5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
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<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

**Name of service** Peterborough City Council Fostering

**Address** Peterborough City Council  
Bayard Place, Broadway  
Peterborough  
PE1 1FB

**Telephone number** 01733 746019

**Fax number** 01733 746090

**Email address**

**Provider Web address**

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

**Name of registered manager (if applicable)** Clive Rushworth

**Type of registration** Local Auth Fostering Service

**No. of places registered (if applicable)** 0

**Category(ies) of registration, with number of places**

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      6th December 2004

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

Peterborough Fostering Service is managed within the Children's Social Care Division of the Local Authority's Education and Children Department.

The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, approval and supervision of foster carers in order to provide foster placements for Looked After Children and Young People. The service has discrete specialist foster carers categorised as long term (permanent), extended term (task-centred), short term, friends and family, respite, remand, parent and child, link (disability) and emergency care.

Full details of the Fostering Service are contained within the Statement of Purpose.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was conducted over five days by three inspectors, Lindsey Blickem, Jacqui Barry and Nicky Hone. Each inspector tracked three cases within three discreet areas of foster care: friends and family, link and time limited where carer's households consistently exceed the 'usual fostering limit'. The case tracking methodology used involved interviewing placing social workers, fostering social workers and foster carers. Both the foster carers and child's files were seen during the inspection.

There was a good response by placing social workers and foster carers to the questionnaires sent out prior to the inspection.

Five young people and three parents were individually spoken to during the inspection.

The Looked After Children Specialist Nurse and the Education Team for Looked After Children (ETLAC) team manager were interviewed as well as the Training and Recruitment Officer and the Children's Participation Officer.

The fostering manager and service manager were both individually interviewed. Staff personnel records were also examined.

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

The fostering service had been very successful at recruiting new carers and particularly successful with recruiting friends and family as carers.

The training available to carers was accessible and high quality.

Carers received good support from the fostering team.

The fostering team had remained focused and committed to their respective roles during a difficult year.

The health needs of young people were being met.

Young people were being supported and encouraged to attend education and to achieve academically.

The fostering manager and service manager in spite of a very challenging year had managed the service efficiently.

The link service was providing a very high quality service to parents and young people.

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

There has been considerable success in recruiting new foster carers.

The high quality social work seen during the last inspection had been maintained despite many challenges faced by the team.

There had been a reduction in the number of carers exceeding the 'usual fostering limit'.

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

Foster placement agreements are not in place for the majority of children and young people placed with foster carers.

The standard of recording in children's case files was at times poor.

There must be greater access to mental health services for children and young people looked after by foster carers.

The fostering service is poorly staffed relative to the workload and the staffing compliment must be increased.

The fostering service must ensure that the post of training and recruitment is maintained beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.

The location of the new premises is less accessible to staff.

The panel membership must include an elected member.

The City Council must ensure that investigations of foster carers are concluded in a timely manner.

The fostering service must not have the Emergency Duty Bed in households where it is likely to disrupt other young people's placements.

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 outcomes these Standards are:

- 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

12

The health needs of children and young people in foster care were generally met although there must be greater accessibility of mental health services to looked after children.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The health needs of young people in placement with foster carers were generally met. Fostering social workers had ensured that children's health needs were reviewed during carer's supervisory visits.

The information available at the time of the inspection relating to the health needs of children looked after supplied by placing social workers was at times poor.

Two junior nurses had been appointed to support the existing Senior LAC Nurse providing an even more accessible service to foster carers and children. A drop in service was also available to looked after children and each LAC Nurse was family planning trained. The professional relationships between LAC nurses and the fostering service seemed very good.

LAC health assessments were completed annually for children in placement, this system was working well.

Previous courses for carers on sexual health matters for looked after children had been poorly attended, although many carers had signed up for courses in 2006.

There were issues relating to one case tracked that indicated a rather slow response to young people who may have mental health issues. The accessibility of mental health services to looked after children must be improved.

## Staying Safe

### The intended outcomes 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, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

### JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30

Young people were provided with a safe environment to live in although using the EDT bed in some foster carer households was inappropriate.

### EVIDENCE:

Foster carer's homes provided the necessary space to comfortably accommodate children. The physical environment was safe and adequately furnished and decorated. Children had their own beds and there were no obvious hazards. Safety assessments had been carried out where carers had pets. Transport was provided either by carers or drivers to facilitate children's needs.

The previous assistant team manager had been appointed as the Adoption and Fostering Unit manager just prior to the inspection. The manner of the previous manager's departure had had a significant impact on some members of the team. The present manager was considered suitable and appropriately experienced.

In three of the homes seen during the inspection there were six or seven young people in placement. Physical space however did not appear to be a particular problem and the homes provided good quality accommodation.

The service openly declared that they did not have enough foster carers to meet the demand for placements although the recruitment of carers in the preceding twelve months had been highly successful. The increase in family and friends as carers was particularly positive. The fostering service was at times under extreme pressure from placing social work teams to provide placements in emergencies. This at times created problems placing children appropriately with foster carers and often young people were placed in households where numbers were already well in excess of the 'usual fostering limit'. There appeared to be some problems within the City Council in relation to placement strategies for difficult to place adolescents and the pressure felt by the foster service was at times unacceptable.

There was evidence that introductory visits by children to carers had rarely taken place in a number of the cases tracked given that the young people were placed in an emergency.

There were also issues in relation to matching young children to carers. There were examples of placing social work teams not giving due consideration to contingency plans for children on the child protection register resulting again in urgent/emergency placements being made. However, it was concluded that carers were meeting the needs of the majority of children in their care.

Some carers were provided with satisfactory information prior to placement.

There were safe caring policies in place for the majority of children seen during the inspection. Child protection training was mandatory for carers and the responses by the department to allegations of abuse were robust. It did appear however that timescales for some investigations were lengthy. The manager reported that there were delays in the investigation of carers by the designated independent agency (NSPCC). Carers under investigation were provided with an independent support person and enquiries were carried out by an independent agency.

There were clear recruitment and selection procedures in place for appointing staff. Personnel records examined contained all of the necessary checks.

There was one example of a friends and family carer not able to receive support from her support network given the delay in CRB checks. This responsibility lay with the placing social work team.

A fostering panel meeting was observed during the inspection and was functioning effectively and efficiently. The workload for the fostering panel had become unacceptably high and the fostering service was resolving this by introducing a 'three panel' system in 2006, each panel would be designed to look at specific types of foster carers.

The panel membership did not include an elected member of the local authority although some progress was being made towards remedying this.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

7, 13 & 31

The educational needs of young people were being effectively promoted by the fostering service and the link scheme was providing an efficient and highly valued service.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Children's cultural needs were being met within their placements. Where carers identified with a particular faith, discussions had been held with those with parental responsibility to ascertain whether they had a view about where their children were placed.

An independent visitor had been appointed to one young person, which provided him with the option to explore his cultural background if he wished.

Children using the link service were provided with care appropriate to their needs and enabled them towards reaching their potential.

Foster carers supported children's educational arrangements very well. The ETLAC service was clearly working preventatively to prevent educational breakdowns for looked after children.

The evidence available during the inspection suggested that the service provided by the link scheme was excellent. There was evidence of very good pre-placement matching and communication between all parties to ensure the needs of the child were fully met. Parents remained the main carers for their children, and welcomed the support offered by the service.



# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10 & 11

Comprehensive contact arrangements were in place for young people and consultation specifically in regards to fostering households had developed well.

### **EVIDENCE:**

There were comprehensive and daily contact arrangements in place for some children, which were promoted by the fostering team, carers and placing officers. Contact arrangements were recorded and known to the parties involved, although the absence of a Foster Placement Agreement in most cases was a matter requiring urgent attention.

Some carers stated that they would like feedback following a child's contact, to be more aware of how to respond following a visit. There was an example given of a very young child travelling for considerable periods whilst other children were collected along the way before and after supervised visits, these issues had reportedly been addressed by the department and communication between the fostering service and the transport department had improved.

Voluntary drivers now had access to training in safe caring and 'safety in the car'.

One carer had started a communication book which was filled in by the child's parents and kept an open dialogue with parents and the child about how contact visits had gone, this was an example of good practice.

Some carers reported that transport arrived at times either very late, or very early.



Financial support was offered to parents to enable them to attend contact.

Regular bi monthly newsletters to looked after children were being sent.

Consultation groups for looked after children and young people were due to start again and the inspection team felt that it was vital this initiative start as soon as possible to ensure a strategic approach to consultation.

There was a new system in place during the annual review of foster carers that enabled looked after children and foster carer's own children to comment on their household. This system was a very positive development.

A group/initiative entitled 'Total Respect' involving looked after children and young people was involved in the recruitment and training of staff and foster carers.

The activity programme for children and young people over the summer 2005 was reported to have been highly successful both in terms of ensuring young people enjoyed their summer holidays and also the service experienced fewer placement breakdowns than in previous summers.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

29

Foster carers were paid a very good rate of fostering allowance.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There were no issues raised with the inspectors in relation to the payments made to carers.

The fostering service had ensured that all carers, including friends and family and link carers, were paid at the recommended fostering network rate.

# Management

## The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are**

5, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24 & 26

Foster carers were provided with very good training opportunities and support. Team morale had been significantly impacted during the preceding twelve months although had improved.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carer support groups had been introduced since the last inspection and provided valued support to those wishing to participate. Designated 'support foster carers' were responsible for running the support groups and feeding back to City Council senior management during bi-monthly liaison meetings.

The carers seen during the inspection commented that the support they received by the fostering service was very good. Some comments were made in the foster carers questionnaires that the number of support visits had been affected by sickness and staff shortage. The majority of carers found the service accessible outside support visits.

Two placing social workers spoken to during the inspection were unhappy with the standard of communication between them and the fostering service particularly when emergency placements were requested.

Other placing officers spoken to and social workers who completed questionnaires had very good experiences of contacting workers in the team and the professional relationships between placing social workers and fostering social workers seemed productive.

There were notable tensions between the demand for placements and the capacity of the fostering service to meet those demands. It was clear that the fostering service were a responsive and accessible service although the workload managed by a relatively small team appeared unreasonable. The City Council must consider increasing the size of the social work team.

There was a notable lack of written information provided by placing social workers to the fostering service. The information contained within some placing social work files in relation to day-to-day care needs of children was poor. The fostering service had introduced a new system for the completion of placement agreements during placement meetings either before the placement is made or soon after.

One set of carers seen produced excellent records.

The fostering service had moved premises since the last inspection. A majority of workers spoken to were very unhappy about the manner in which the move was handled by the department. The consultation between staff and senior management prior to agreeing the location of new premises was poor and handled insensitively. This issue contributed to low staff morale during the preceding twelve months. The new premises were located in the city centre making it less accessible for staff and the access to parking was also at times very limited, both issues taking time out of workers day both personally and professionally.

As previously mentioned the manner of the departure of the previous fostering manager had been upsetting and highly disruptive for a number of team members. Issues around the manner of her departure continued to have an impact on the team. Despite these issues the team had not allowed this to affect the quality of the service provided.

The training programme for foster carers was excellent both in terms of its content and its accessibility. The funding for the training and recruitment post was until April 2006. The City Council must ensure that this post is retained to ensure continued high quality training for carers.

Team members spoken to during the inspection reported receiving very good support from the current team manager and the service manager.

# 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>	2

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

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

<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>	4

<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>	3
<b>16</b>	X
<b>17</b>	2
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>20</b>	X
<b>21</b>	3
<b>22</b>	3
<b>23</b>	4
<b>24</b>	1
<b>25</b>	X
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X
<b>32</b>	X

Yes

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.	FS8	33	The fostering service must ensure that the Emergency Duty Bed is not made available in households where it is likely to cause disruption to other young people's placements.	01/04/06
2.	FS9	12	The City Council must ensure that investigations of foster carers are concluded in a more timely manner.	01/04/06
3.	FS12	15	The City Council must ensure that children looked after in foster care have better access to mental health services.	01/04/06
4.	FS17	19	The City Council must ensure that the fostering service is sufficiently staffed. This requirement is outstanding from the last inspection.	01/04/06
5.	FS17	Sch7(3) CA1989	The fostering service must ensure that the number of children placed with individual foster carers does not exceed the 'usual fostering limit' of three children as stated in Schedule 7 (3) Children Act 1989. This requirement is outstanding from the last inspection.	01/04/06
6.	FS23	17	The fostering service must	01/04/06

			ensure that the post of training and recruitment officer is maintained beyond the 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2006	
7.	FS24	34	The City Council must ensure that foster placement agreements are in place for all young people placed with foster carers. This requirement is outstanding from the last inspection.	01/02/06
8.	FS26	23	The fostering service premises must be conducive to working practices.	01/04/06
9.	FS30	24	The fostering service must ensure that the membership of the fostering panel includes one elected member of the local authority.	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.	FS11	The City Council should conduct a strategic consultation exercise involving children looked after in foster care.



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