



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

City of Salford Family Placement Service

**Avon House
Avon Close
Little Hulton
Manchester
M28 0LA**

Lead Inspector
Sarah Oldham

Announced Inspection
8th January 2007 9.30

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	City of Salford Family Placement Service
Address	Avon House Avon Close Little Hulton Manchester M28 0LA
Telephone number	0161 603 4300
Fax number	0161 790 4892
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	City of Salford Community & Social Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Carolyn Williams
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 22nd February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Salford Family Placement Team provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Salford. It provides short term, long term and permanent placements for children 'looked after' by the City of Salford. It also provides short-term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need or at risk of being 'looked after'. This inspection concentrated on the fostering element of the service.

The fostering service has responsibility for recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers coupled with appropriate matching of placements for children accessing the service. The service will ensure resources are available to foster carers, such as additional support to the child / young person, to ensure where possible the placement made is maintained.

It is a centralised based team, located in an office in Little Hulton in Salford. This building also accommodates the Child Protection Unit and the service for the management of the residential children's homes.

SUMMARY

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

This was the annual announced site visit to the service and formed part the inspection process. The site visit started on Monday 8 January and a total of four days was spent at the service. During this time the inspector spent time examining case files and policies and procedures used by the service. In addition to this the inspector met as well with the Head of Service, Team Managers, Family Placement Workers, Placing Social Workers, Reviewing Officers and Health Professionals. The inspection process also included the attendance of a foster carers' support group and observation of the Fostering Panel.

The inspector also visited some carers at their homes and also met the children and young people placed with them. This was to gain the views and opinions of the foster carers about the process of becoming a foster carer and the support that they received from the service including training and supervision. Children and young people were also spoken to by the inspector to listen to their views and opinions about their foster placement and the support that they received from their carers, the fostering service and their placing social workers.

Questionnaires were also sent to foster carers and children/young people and their responses are included in various sections of this report.

What the service does well:

The fostering service undertook comprehensive assessments on potential foster carers to ensure that the carers that were approved had the appropriate abilities to provide care and support to the children and young people. The family placement workers supported the carers well and made sure that they had all the right information and training to look after the children and young people.

The fostering service ensured that the children and young people get help and support with their health care needs. It had two dedicated health needs co-ordinators with responsibilities for the health care needs of Looked After Children.

The foster carers were given training and information when they were first approved about helping children and young people to stay healthy. Carers were also able to have additional training about supporting children and young people with their specific health care needs. Carers spoken to said that the training they received was "generally good and useful".

The fostering service had an ongoing training and development programme for foster carers that linked into additional payments for carers when they had completed the training programme. Foster carers who had completed this

training felt that it had been good and provided them with information to support them within their role.

The fostering service gained the views of the children and young people who were fostered to make sure that they were happy and well cared for. Children and young people who spoke to the inspector said that they felt consulted. One young person said "I am really happy here and want to stay here until I grow up. My carer asks me if I am happy and my social worker does as well".

Foster carers felt that they were well supported by the fostering service. One carer said "my family placement worker is excellent and is always available if I need any support or advice".

Staff working for the family placement team commented that the team was an excellent team to work for and everyone was really supportive. Staff said that they received "good quality supervision on a regular basis".

There was good liaison between the placing social workers and the family placement team. Both the family placement workers and the placing social workers felt that this was really important in making sure children and young people feel safe and are happy within the placement.

The fostering service ensured that children and young people were supported with their education and linked in with the Care and Education support team to promote education. Carers also felt that the service supported them to provide support to the children and young people with education.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A recruitment officer had been appointed to the service and was due to commence in the near future. This will enable the service to look at specific recruitment strategies to ensure that special attention to recruit a diverse range of carers from different cultural backgrounds this would support the matching of children from Black, Asian or mixed backgrounds as well as to offer a service that is evidently more tailored to individual needs.

At the previous inspection, a concern regarding young people accessing foster carers personal computers was identified. This matter had been addressed via appropriate training and computer safety guidance.

Carers spoken to said that the training was now available both during the day and in evenings. This enabled them to access training at times that were more convenient and therefore they were able to achieve the required training for enhanced payments.

What they could do better:

At the previous inspection, the service had recruited family placement staff to work with family and friends carers. Originally three staff had been recruited, however there were currently two vacancies. The recruitment to these posts would ensure that family and friends as carers continued to be assessed and supported within the team.

The building remains a concern for the service. Staff were working in cramped conditions and the service had been subject to a break in as well as a number of broken windows etc. Due to the limited size of the building, the service was not able to accommodate the number of carers for training events and external training venues can lead to additional expenditure.

At the time of the inspection the Fostering Panel did not have an elected member as part of the Panel. This needs to be addressed to comply with the Fostering Regulations 2002.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Salford foster care service ensured that the health care needs of the children/young people were supported. Training and support was provide to foster carers to them to promote the health and development of young people in their care.

EVIDENCE:

The Salford foster care service ensured that the health care needs of the children/young people were supported. The service employed two Health Needs Co-ordinators who were responsible specifically for the health care needs of Looked After Children. In addition to this, there was a 'Child and Adolescent Mental Health team and a STARLAC team that provided therapeutic support to children/young people and their foster carers through training, consultation, support and direct work.

The fostering service made it clear to foster carers the expectations placed upon them to meet young peoples' health needs. This was discussed with prospective foster carers at the initial information meeting, during the skills to foster training and detailed in the Foster Carers' Handbook and information pack.

Information about the health care needs of individual children and young people was recorded on the Care Plan and Looked After Children documentation. Copies of these documents were seen on the children and young peoples' files examined as part of the inspection process.

Carers spoken to said that they had received copies of these documents when the child/young person was placed with them or shortly after the placement commenced.

The service provided training to foster carers that included Health promotion, healthy eating and first aid training.

All children and young people were registered with a General Practitioner (GP), Dentist and other health care professionals.

Family Placement Workers also provided support via supervisory visits that were undertaken both on an announced and unannounced basis where the health care needs of the children/young people were discussed.

Carers spoken to who had experience of involvement with the STARLAC service said that the support provided was very helpful.

The children and young people who spoke with the inspector said that they felt that their health care needs were promoted. One young person said "when I feel sick my foster carer looks after me and helps me to get better".

Responses received from the children and young people demonstrated that they felt that they were supported with their health care needs.

As part of the yearly reviews the health care needs of children and young people were discussed and their wishes and views recorded on their annual review.

Following discussion with carers, children/young people and staff of the service the service was able to demonstrate that the health care needs of the children and young people were being reviewed and continually assessed.

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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9,15 and 30

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Appropriate systems were in place to check the suitability of potential foster carers, to ensure safe and appropriate matching. Training for foster carers promoted the safety and well being of the child/young person.

EVIDENCE:

The Head of Service had been the manager since 1999 having previously worked as a team leader for the service. The Head of Service held a social work qualification and a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 5 in Strategic Management.

The service had three Family Placement Team Managers who supported the Head of Service. Staff roles were clearly defined with appropriate arrangements in place for the management of the service. Members of the team had a clear understanding of the function and running of the service and placing social workers were also able to demonstrate that they had appropriate information and knowledge of the service provided by the fostering service.

Before and during the inspection the manager provided details about the service and the developments undertaken and those that were planned. This included the proposed development of a Therapeutic Foster care Service to provide support and care for children and young people who required specialist support and intervention.

The service had the appropriate systems in place to assess the suitability of foster carers. This included initial recruitment and information provided to potential carers through to the formal assessment process of potential carers.

Family placement workers were able to demonstrate both through discussion and assessment reports examined the importance of completion of comprehensive Form F assessments. Appropriate checks were undertaken as part of the assessment process including references and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced disclosures. References from ex partners and adult children of potential foster carers were also obtained to gather an overall picture of the suitability of carers. Health and safety checks of the carers home was also undertaken and this was reviewed on an annual basis as part of the foster carers annual review.

The carers met during the inspection and those who contacted the inspectors by phone, presented as skilled, competent carers who were caring appropriately for the young people placed. The homes of foster carers visited by the inspectors appeared to provide adequate and safe environments for children and young people.

All of the foster carer files inspected had a Safe Care policy in place that included the safe use of computers for children and young people. Carers were aware of their role and responsibilities in promoting the safety and well being of the children and young people placed with them. The service provided training and written information with regards the protection of children. Carers spoken to demonstrated an understanding and an awareness of these issues.

The service promoted the importance of matching children and young people with the most appropriate carers to meet the child/young persons needs including cultural, religious and ethnic needs. There was a thorough process for matching long term foster placements looking at all the needs of the child/young person. A matching meeting was held that involved all the relevant professionals and gave thorough consideration to the information about the child/young person's needs and the support that was required to be given to promote the stability of the placement.

The service continued to try to promote the recruitment of carers from Black and Ethnic minority backgrounds to enable a greater resource within the authority.

The service recruitment and selection procedures for appointing new staff follow good practice guidance in safeguarding children. Four staff files were randomly selected and found to contain appropriate application forms, references and previous experience to ensure that the staff had the skills and qualifications to undertake their role. All staff had enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosures that were renewed every three years.

As part of the inspection process a Panel meeting was observed. The Panel had recently recruited a new Panel Chair who had the appropriate knowledge and skills to undertake this role. The members of the Panel were observed to contribute effectively to make sure that only appropriate carers were approved. At the time of the Panel meeting the previous elected member from the Council who formed part of the Panel had resigned and the local authority were in the process of recruiting another elected member to fill this role.

The Panel Chair discussed with the Inspector the plans to hold a training and 'away day' for panel members to further enhance the role of the Panel.

Panel minutes examined contained clear information and the reasons why decisions had been made.

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.

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

7, 13 & 31.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children and young people were supported to attend education. Partnership and consultation through the services was seen to play an important role in providing services for young people.

EVIDENCE:

The service provided training to foster carers on valuing diversity and anti-discriminatory practice as part of the preparation groups and the ongoing training available for foster carers. Valuing diversity and anti-discriminatory practice was also addressed as part of the Form F assessment.

Carers spoken to said that they had had opportunity to attend training on valuing diversity and anti-discriminatory practice as part of their ongoing development.

The service also provides short-term breaks for a number of children and young people with complex needs. Specialist equipment e.g. portable ramps, bathing aids and hoists are all provided by the service. It is recognised that the

use of short-term breaks does not affect the birth parents responsibility for the child and this is maintained to include health and educational needs.

Family/friend network carers were assessed and supported by a small team of family placement workers. Previously three posts had been created to undertake this role. At the time of the inspection two of the three posts were currently vacant although the manager of the service said that there were plans to recruit to these posts and this would enable family and friend carers to be supported the same as recruited carers.

The Care and Education support Team provided support to foster carers through the provision of individual tuition and support to children that are experiencing difficulty with their education and there was also additional tuition available for a group of up to twelve young people. Education Co-ordinators for Looked After Children were available to provide support and advice to carer to assist children with their educational needs.

Carers who responded to the questionnaires said that they felt that the service provided a good level of support with the educational needs of the children/young people placed. Examples of the support given included assistance with finding appropriate schools and support in educational meetings including supporting attendance at parent's evenings.

Copies of Personal education Plans (PEP's) and school reports were seen on the files examined during the inspection.

Children and young people who responded to the questionnaires felt in general that they were supported with their educational needs. One young person spoken to said " I like school and if I don't understand something I can always ask my teacher or my carer for some additional support". Carers spoken to were able to demonstrate a good understanding of their role and responsibility in supporting the educational needs of the children/young people placed with them.

Foster carers were also involved in assisting to prepare young people to move onto adulthood and viewed this as part of their role. They were assisted with this by the Next Step Project and the After Care service who became involved with the young person at the age of 15. The development of Pathway Plan enabled the young person to be supported with their plans for their future ensuring consultation with the young person.

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.

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

10 & 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service ensures that children and young people receive adequate contact with families and that this is supported by the foster carers. The young people accessing the service are consulted and participate in the development of services and information for young people in foster care.

EVIDENCE:

The service promoted contact between children/young people and their family members. Carers were also included in assisting and promoting contact. Carers spoken to said that contact arrangements were discussed at the time that the young person was placed and any changes to contact were communicated to them by either the placing social worker or the family placement worker.

Discussion with carers regarding supporting contact identified that generally contact arrangements went well although there were sometimes issues with transportation to contact. Where there were areas of difficulty the service tried to address this with providing additional support.

Children and young people spoken to said that they were happy with the arrangements made for contact.

Files examined contained evidence of contact arrangements and information about contact restrictions was clearly recorded and detailed on the young person's file. This was to ensure that there was a consistent approach to contact whilst assisting to maintain the child/young person's safety and well being.

The service continued to promote consultation with children and young people including consultation about their placement and involvement in reviews, both their own and foster carer reviews.

In addition to this, children and young people receive regular newsletters from the Listening to Children Officer as well as having the opportunity to attend the VOICE group. This group enables children and young people to actively take part in contributing to various issues that affect them.

Children and young people who were spoken to or who responded to the questionnaire felt that they were able to voice their views wishes and feelings.

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.

The 'Next Steps project and the After Care service provided continuity of care for the young people placed with the fostering service in moving onto independent living.

EVIDENCE:

The After Care service and the Next Step project supported young people from the age of 15. A Pathway Plan was developed in consultation with these young people to identify the support that they required when moving on from care. Foster carers received training on supporting young people to gain the necessary skills required to live independently.

Financial support was given to foster carers who continue to care for young people after the age of 18 and in full time education in the form of a Continuing Care allowance. Young people aged 18 without a further educational placement were supported to access finances from the social security path.

The fostering service pays a standard payment to foster carers that increases once the carers have undergone further training to develop their skills in accordance with the skills training programme. Carers spoken to said that in general they received their allowances on time but there was some confusion over the authorisation of immediate clothing allowance. Although there were details regarding this in the foster carers handbook the manager was reviewing the wording to ensure that the information was clear.

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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 26 & 32. Quality in this outcome area is **good**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service is effectively managed; with clear lines of accountability with a team of family placement staff who are trained and who receive the level of supervision and developmental support they require to ensure positive outcomes for the children and young people placed.

EVIDENCE:

The service had a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and how these aims and objectives would be met. This document had been reviewed and updated.

The service was being managed by a manager with a number of years experience of family placement, with a group of experienced staff who demonstrated clarity of the work and of their role as family placement workers. The family placement workers reported that they received relevant training and support that they require to carry out their tasks. This included regular and effective supervision and annual appraisals.

All family placement workers were qualified social workers. They reported that they were able to keep up to date with current practice, legislation etc by identifying appropriate training.

At the time of the inspection the service currently had two vacancies for family placement workers who were responsible for the assessment and support of the family and friend carers. An agreement had been made for the advertisement for these posts and the manager hoped that these would shortly be filled.

The service was also developing the Therapeutic Foster Care Service and was in the process of appointing staff to work within this service.

Both the foster carer files and the children's files were organised well. Information was easily accessible and files were kept up to date.

Carers felt generally well supported within their role. Carers were clear about the process that the service used during the assessment process and the individual roles of the workers for the agency.

The service is currently based within offices in the Hulton area of Salford. The offices do not provide adequate space for the service. There are however, plans to seek other premises, although at the time of the inspection these had not been identified.

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	4

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

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

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	4
29	3

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS26	23	The service must review the safety and adequacy of the current office premises to ensure that the offices are fit for its purpose. (previous timescale of 30/05/06 not met)	30/06/07

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	FS30	The service must ensure that the Panel composition includes a currently serving Elected Member of the local authority.

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