



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Swindon Borough Council Fostering Service

**Swindon Borough Council
Euclid St
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN1 2JH**

Lead Inspector
Joy Kelly

Announced Inspection
16th January 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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 Swindon Borough Council Fostering Service

Address Swindon Borough Council
Euclid St
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN1 2JH

Telephone number 01793 463000

Fax number

Email address familyplacement@swindon.gov.uk

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Swindon Borough Council

Name of registered manager (if applicable)

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 21st February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Swindon Borough Council's Fostering Service is part of a broader Family Placement Team and is located within the Children and Families Division of Swindon Borough Council. The Fostering Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers and adopters, and for matching placement requests with available placement resources.

The overall responsibility for the management of the Fostering Service lies with the Service Manager however there is a dedicated team manager who takes day-to-day responsibility for the running of the service assisted by two assistant team managers. The team includes 9 (full time equivalent) family placement officers, 2 social service officers and 4 administrative staff. All staff who 'case-hold' have a professional social work qualification and are expected to have a minimum of two years relevant experience. The team traditionally has a low staff turnover and therefore operates from a high skills and experience base; currently the length of service in Family placement ranges from 2 years to 20 years.

At December 2005 the service had 90 registered foster carers approved for 'general purpose' fostering who were providing placements to approximately 140 children. The service also provides a "Home and Away" service specifically set up to provide short-term breaks for children with disabilities; 20 carers provide placements for approximately 35 children. The service also supports "Friends and relatives" carers who provide care to named individual children.

The Fostering service operates a duty system that is staffed by social service officers and overseen by the duty family placement officer (FPO) and duty manager on a daily basis. Duty workers deal with all initial requests from Social Workers for placements. Specifically, they also identify potential emergency placements that are then agreed with either the duty FPO or duty manager.

If the fostering service is unable to identify a placement from within the borough's own resources then the service has the responsibility for seeking placements with other Independent fostering agencies. The service provides an out-of- hours support service to foster carers in addition to the borough's emergency duty service (EDS).

SUMMARY

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

The Fostering Service has received two in depth inspections in the last two years. It was agreed with the Fostering Manager that this inspection would specifically focus on areas that had been identified as needing some improvement in previous years; therefore the Inspection focussed particularly on the "Home and Away " Scheme and how the service deals with emergency placements; core standards have been addressed in relation to these areas.

This Inspection involved two days fieldwork involving two inspectors. Inspectors tracked 3 cases in detail that included visits to four Foster Carers, contact with young people and parents in some cases. A further file was reviewed. Inspectors also interviewed a number of staff in the Family Placement team including the Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager, Duty Officer, and two link workers. One Inspector also met with the EDS team manager. Prior to the Inspection the Family Placement Team sent out questionnaires on behalf of CSCI to all placing social workers (except EDS social workers), all "Home and Away" Carers, 14 carers who take emergency placements, 15 young people who have been placed in an emergency and questionnaires were provided to Child Health Team Social workers to distribute to children and their families as appropriate.

A total of 44 questionnaires were received back including 4 from young people, 11 from foster carers and 29 from placing officers. Three parents made contact to CSCI by telephone. Responses from foster carers and placing officers was slightly greater in respect of the Home and Away Service. A number of questionnaires were followed up by phone in order to clarify the information received.

What the service does well:

Foster carers are well supported by their link workers and the team in general. Carers are able to have open and honest relationships with the family placement team and feel able to refuse placements.

Placements are generally considered to be child centred, safe and provided caring, nurturing environments with appropriate boundaries being set for young people.

Young peoples education needs are very well addressed; health care needs are generally well addressed.

The Family Placement team has a mix of skills, experience and areas of specialism that are used effectively. Training needs and opportunities for staff are identified and acted upon.

Recruitment procedures are generally robust and ensures that staff are suitable to work with children.

Carers are appropriately trained in abuse awareness and allegations are independently investigated.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service has undertaken a major programme of improvement over the last 12 months and the effects of some of the changes may take some time to be fully embedded in practice.

Improvements have been made to the matching process particularly in relation to making emergency placements; a dialogue has been established between the Family Placement service and the emergency duty service that is improving the matching of placements made in an emergency out of hours. Carers reported an improvement in recent months of the information that was provided when placements were made in an emergency.

Specific approval for carers who are able to take emergency placements is gradually being identified and recorded as part of the reviewing and approval process. Safe care agreements have been introduced and agreed with carers.

Improvements have been made to the recording of medication for children receiving the respite service and this is currently being introduced to carers.

A Payment for Skills Scheme has been developed that will pay carers based on their competencies, training and experience; this will be introduced from April 2006.

Systems for auditing files and risk assessments have been introduced and are identifying improvements that are required to the way documentation is maintained.

What they could do better:

The arrangements for making emergency placements with carers where an exemption is required are potentially risky and therefore need to be clarified and a clear agreement reached as to who has the responsibility for agreeing to the exemption at a time that a placement is made.

Recording of information relating to carers conditions of approval needs to be improved to ensure that both SWIFT and the carers file contain the same information.

The frequency of foster carers reviews needs to be improved in order to meet the frequency required by law; workloads of family placement officers may need reviewing to ensure that reports of reviews are completed promptly following review.

The way in which carers receive their payments could be improved.

Criminal Records Bureau disclosures must be obtained for all staff prior to employment even when recruiting from overseas.

Carers should always be provided with any relevant information at the time of a placement or as quickly as possible afterwards; if information cannot be shared then the reasons for this should be clearly explained. Information about children and young people provided to carers should be in an easily understood format.

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 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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS:

12

The health and development of young people is generally promoted and systems for dealing with medication have improved; however some improvements to documentation are required.

EVIDENCE:

The Borough has a health liaison worker for looked after children. A report was prepared in advance of the inspection on the progress in improving the health of children and young people looked after by the department. Health care plans are being introduced and now form part of the statutory review process and are sent to Foster Carers. BAAF Health Assessment forms are now used for all health assessments and for the reporting period 2004-2005 the department completed 90.4% of health assessments for all children and young people looked after for more than a year. It was reported that there are strong links between the department and the PCT and Acute Trust that enables many looked after children to be 'fast-tracked' for many services.

Following the previous inspection guidance has been issued to all Foster Carers on how they should receive medication and there is a specific policy and medication module for Home and Away carers regarding the recording and receiving of medication. This was gradually being introduced and discussed with carers. An example of a module was provided after the inspection; this provided detailed information on medication and a protocol for managing seizures.

Foster carers receive training in how to deal with a young persons complex medical needs directly from parents with support from medical professionals. This enables consistency between the foster carers and the parents and provides the parents with confidence that the foster carer can care for the young person and their individual needs.

The Child Health Team confirmed the above indicating that input from parents to foster carers is only part of the training to reassure both, with a health professional providing the substantive training.

Both of the young people tracked had either a comprehensive health plan or detailed information on the young persons files of their medical needs.

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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS:

3,6,8,9,15

Children and Young People are protected by the systems used to recruit and train staff and foster carers. Systems for matching children to carers have been improved however further work is needed to better manage risks for some placements made in an emergency.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Service Manager has extensive experience in Child Care at both operational and management levels. He has a certificate of qualification in Social Work and a Diploma in Management studies. The Manager with responsibility for the day-to-day management of the service has over 30 years experience of working in social services and has been Team Manager of the Family Placement Team since 1999. He has recently completed NVQ5 in Management. Most staff working in the Family Placement Team have had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check completed in the last three years according to pre-inspection information provided. Three personnel files were checked for recently recruited team members. Files were generally comprehensive and contained all necessary information. One member of staff recently recruited from overseas does not have a CRB check however prior to appointment the personnel department had obtained background information from the relevant agency in that country. A CRB has been applied for but not yet received. The Personnel Department have been acting on guidance provided by the CRB about recruitment of staff from overseas however the

CRB disclosure should have been applied for prior to the member of staff commencing employment.

Feedback from placing officers, young people and parents was that the vast majority of placements were considered to be 'child-centred', safe and provided caring, nurturing environments with appropriate boundaries being set for young people. The most frequent criticism about placements from placing social workers was to do with location; either that placements were too far from the child's family and networks or perhaps close to a busy road. All files sampled had evidence that a health and safety check had been carried out of individual's homes. Risk assessments are also completed on young people prior to placement. One risk assessment was noted to be in need of review. All files had copies of a 'Safer Care Agreement' that sets out in detail expectations of Foster carers to provide safe care; feedback from carers confirmed that they had all received copies of this information and were aware of appropriate ways of managing children's behaviour. An additional document is provided relating specifically to short breaks. Foster Carers homes that were visited were homely, comfortably furnished, clean and tidy; where required appropriate equipment was in place. One parent commented that it took some time for the appropriate equipment to be made available to the foster carers although this situation has now been resolved.

Two of the placements visited only provided single bedroom accommodation for young people. The service's stated aims is that all young people should have the option of their own room and that all new foster carers should have a spare room available for the use of school age children. The service has developed a bedroom sharing policy that sets out the occasions when young people may have to share a bedroom and the steps that should be taken prior to any placement being made into a shared bedroom. This includes a risk assessment being completed. The Inspectors requested to see examples of such risk assessments and were advised that it was likely that no such placements had been made since the policy had been developed.

The service has developed a Matching assessment that has to be completed prior to any placement being made; this identifies how close a match a particular placement may be and any particular risks involved in making a placement. The level of risk identified determines who within the organisation can agree to a placement being made. For example, the duty family placement officer can agree a low risk placement whilst a senior manager must agree a high-risk placement. The service manager has begun undertaking audits of the system used for matching placements and evidence was provided of three audits that have been completed between June and December 2005. These identified that there are some inconsistencies in how risk assessments are completed and that in some cases more evidence was needed of how risks were going to be managed safely.

Foster carers were generally satisfied that the matching process worked well and that they were consulted about possible placements. A number of carers commented that if they expressed concern about a placement or felt it would not work that they were not pressurised into taking a placement. One respondent however commented that if an emergency placement was made there had been occasions when it had been assumed that they could keep the child for longer than the 24 hours initially agreed.

Foster carers generally felt that they were provided with adequate information about young people prior to a placement being made. However, there were three specific examples where carers felt that they were not provided with adequate information or given inaccurate information. In one case inaccurate information was provided about a child's medical condition and in another a carer was not provided with details of why previous placements had broken down despite requesting this information. One carer also commented to the Inspector that some LAC forms were written in a 'code' that was sometimes difficult for foster carers to understand.

The Family Placement team provides the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) with a detailed list of available placements on a daily basis; this may also include details of who is already in placement, and the sort of placements that can be made. It has been agreed that as a minimum EDS will complete three forms when placing a child in an emergency; this includes a risk assessment form, essential information form and medical consent form. One carer, who regularly receives emergency placements, commented on the recent improvement in the quality of information provided at the time that the placement was made.

In one case carers were included on the EDS list on a regular basis even though to make a placement would require an additional exemption being made to the approval as two sibling groups were already in placement and they were already exceeding the usual fostering limit. There were differing views about the status of these placements with some professionals believing the exemption had already been agreed prior to the carers being put on the EDS list. It is understood that the Foster Panel had been made aware of the repeated use of this placement for emergency placements however there was nothing recorded to confirm that this had been formally agreed within the organisation. The most recent review did not mention emergency placements nor did the management information system, SWIFT. 12 such emergency placements had been made in the period 1/1/05-31/12/05 and had lasted from one night to two weeks, only two were for an overnight stay. Although the carers were very experienced and considered well able to cope with the demands of another child placed in an emergency the agreement to such a practice needs to be formally considered and agreed by the organisation prior to placements being made.

Meetings between the family placement team and EDS manager have recently commenced and these are seen to be very positive in ensuring that most

placements made out of hours in an emergency are as well matched as possible.

Carers are provided with training on abuse, neglect and deprivation of children; this is included in induction training. Child Protection is also provided as a refresher course as part of carers ongoing training. Foster carers who were interviewed were clear about child protection procedures and clear about safe practice to both safeguard young people and avoid situations where foster carers may be at risk of allegations being made.

Any allegations of possible abuse made about foster carers are referred to the NSPCC special investigation team in Gloucester. Details of 4 cases that have been referred since the previous inspection were provided to the Inspector including the outcomes of each investigation. Concerns were expressed by one placing officer that recommendations made following one investigation had not been followed up before further placements had been made however arrangements had been made to provide carers with additional training and additional monitoring visits were made by the family placement team following the conclusion of the investigation.

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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS:

7,13,31

Valuing diversity is promoted by the fostering service and the wider department. Arrangements for young peoples education were dealt with in a pro-active way. The short breaks service promotes and supports close links to be made between carers and birth parents.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers interviewed confirmed that they received training on valuing diversity and this was evidenced on their files. Carers providing respite care to a disabled young person had received training in supporting them appropriately. Information provided prior to the inspection provided evidence of the department monitoring equalities issues and evidence of the training provided to staff and foster carers. The Department also has a mixed race and dual-heritage group for young people in foster carer. The Department continues to try and recruit more foster carers from a range of cultures.

Matching assessments include whether the placement is appropriate in respect of ethnicity and examples were seen where it was identified that placements may not have been well matched in respect of ethnicity.

The Department has a "Looked after children Education Service" that consists of a full-time education advisor, two part-time teachers and administration assistant. A written update of the work being undertaken was provided in advance of the inspection. A Personal Education Plan co-ordinator was in the

process of being recruited at the time of the Inspection and it is hoped they will oversee the Personal Education Plan process. In the year 2004-2005 the team targeted its support to pupils taking SATS and GCSE's and provided guidance and support to pupils, assistance to teachers and some group tuition sessions. The team (together with the Health Adviser for Looked after children) send a regular newsletter to all foster carers to update them on aspects of education. The team is currently running a project entitled "Putting Reading First in Swindon" that is designed to raise levels of literacy amongst Swindon's looked after children. The team has also developed specialist contacts within the wider education service that can act as a first port of call when problems arise that related to schooling.

In one case that was looked at in detail there was evidence of a pro-active approach by both the foster carer and other professionals in addressing the educational needs of a young person who had recently been placed.

The Home and Away/Short-breaks scheme provides respite foster placements to disabled children and young people. A particular feature of this service is that relationships between carers and parents become well established as the placements may continue for many years. The service encourages high levels of autonomy so that carers and parents often negotiate their own placements dates and times; this may either be day care or overnight care. The service has clear processes, policies and procedures in place. There are specific staff members assigned to run this service which is directly managed by one of the assistant team managers, and regular meetings are held. Parents who were visited or who completed feedback forms were very pleased with the service that was provided and considered the scheme to be well managed.

Parents interviewed felt that the scheme was well managed and felt that the staff were very committed to their roles. There are clear policies and procedures for the operation of the scheme. Staff who are involved in the home and away scheme do offer out of hours support for the carers, which is above and beyond their job descriptions. Parent and carers have a close working relationship. Details of when respite will take place is worked out between parent carers and staff from the family placement team. Parents and carers said that there is flexibility within these arrangements, which they appreciate. Parents interviewed spoke very highly of the care provided by the respite carers.

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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS: 10, 11

Contact arrangements are promoted and agreed with young people; systems are in place to consult young people about their care although this needs to be improved for young people with disabilities.

EVIDENCE:

In the questionnaires completed by placing social workers 75% responded that they felt the foster carers worked "very well" with young people's families; the remaining 25% considered that they worked "fairly well". Specific carers were complimented on their positive relationships with birth families and one was described as working in a "supportive and non-judgemental" way with parents.

There was evidence on files that contact arrangements for young people were discussed and agreed at the beginning of a placement. A leaflet has been produced to advise parents about contact and a new risk management record has been produced to assess any risk in contact arrangements.

In the last year the family placement team have been working with the Swindon Independent Visitors and Advocacy Service to try to improve the services offered to children and young people. Details of the services provided have been provided to all foster carers and Family Placement officers are encouraged to promote the availability of the service to foster carers. The scheme has identified one of the assistant team managers as a link person.

There is a participation manager who has been in post since September whose role is to actively involve young people in the recruitment process of social workers and foster carers, encourage them to attend their reviews or contribute if they are unable to attend. There is also a focus group for young people who are looked after and there was evidence of how their views were

sought on the wider fostering service. For example, they were recently consulted on what they considered the most important skills for carers to have.

Only a limited number of questionnaires were received from young people, however most commented that they had not been asked their opinions about their foster carers or been told how to make a complaint. However, all confirmed that they had received a copy of the Children's guide that includes details of how to complain, the independent visitors scheme and a wide range of other information. One young person responded that they were "often asked my opinions". There was no evidence on the files viewed of young people with disabilities that they were consulted about their care or had input into their care. However staff have attended training this year on ways of communicating with children who have speech and language difficulties and this training is also being offered to foster carers. New Foster carer recording sheets are expected to provide more evidence of consultation about the care of children with disabilities.

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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS:

29

Financial payments to carers are improving with the introduction of the 'Payment for skills scheme' from April 2006; some changes to the way payments are made would be welcomed by carers.

EVIDENCE:

The Department has undertaken a lot of work in the last year preparing for the implementation of the "Payment for Skills Scheme" for foster carers that is due to be implemented from April 2006. This is to enable the department to develop and reward foster carers for their skills, experience and qualifications that are 'over and above' the level of skill needed for 'ordinary parenting'. The scheme is based on four tiers of fee level and is based on a model first developed by the Fostering Network. At the time of the inspection the process of allocating carers to specific bandings was being undertaken and consulted upon.

A minority of carers commented upon the current system of payments and fees either on questionnaires returned or in telephone conversations with the Inspectors. One carer commented that the "finance system is extremely chaotic, payments nearly always have to be chased up" whilst another commented that the way payments were made often required refunds to be made as they may be paid in advance for placements that only last a few days and that it was particularly difficult to understand the fees paid particularly when it was for a number of different placements. Positive comments were received about the cash payment given when an emergency placement was made.

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 – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) NMS:

17,21,24,4,5,19,20,22,23

Foster carers and staff are well supported; training needs are identified and opportunities provided. Reviews of foster carers are not consistently taking place at the required frequency. Case records for children generally contain required information.

EVIDENCE:

The family placement service management team consists of a team manager and two assistant team managers, each of whom has clear areas of responsibility and staff who they manage and supervise.

The home and away scheme has two dedicated workers both of whom work part-time and are managed by one of the assistant team managers. The staff are very committed to this scheme and offer good support to foster carers. This includes 'out of hours' and off duty support. Staff interviewed said that they would like there to be more workers within the team to allow them to develop the service that they offer, recruit more respite/short term carers and be able to develop themselves as workers. Staff within this team had the relevant qualification and experience for their posts.

All the family placement officers are professionally qualified and there is a mixture of new and very experienced staff within the team. The team has had some vacancies in the past year but agency and locum staff have been employed at these times. All family placement officers have received new job descriptions in the past year.

All foster carers felt that they had good support from their individual link workers with many describing it as excellent; support from other members of the team if link workers were not available was also considered to be good. Foster carers described varying frequencies for visits from their link workers from 4 weeks to 6 weeks, however all considered it adequate for their individual needs based on their level of skill and experience. Written reports of visits by link workers were generally available on carers files but not consistently. Carers interviewed were quite confident about ringing to seek support if they needed it.

Although reviews of foster carers are taking place, the department is not meeting the statutory frequency of annual reviews in all cases. Figures supplied in advance of the inspection were that for 2005 only 63% of reviews had been completed on time, 37% had not. One of the files sampled identified that a review had taken place however the record of this had not been completed until 5 months later. Completed foster carer reviews identified future training needs of carers.

There was evidence that training is offered to carers on a regular basis and that link workers actively promote training to carers however the take up of courses is variable with some carers choosing to undertake a lot of training whilst others choosing not to. Some carers commented that it was difficult to attend some training due to the time that it was held and their child care responsibilities. However, there was some evidence that some training was scheduled at different times of day and the team is also providing reading material to carers and regular updates in a newsletter.

Staff receive supervision at the required intervals and there was evidence of issues being addressed and appropriate action taken. There was evidence that annual appraisals were taking place and that personal development plans were being compiled following these meetings. Individual staff files evidenced that training needs were being identified and incorporated into the departments training plan. Two staff have attended 'Competency based assessment' training in the last year and have cascaded this information to the rest of the team. Four staff have begun post-qualification training this year. Staff who were interviewed considered that the team was very supportive and that individual had specific areas of interest and expertise that they shared with their colleagues.

Case records for young people are held within the social work teams; files examined provided most information required although there were some gaps in the information provided by social workers to the family placement team in their 'Looked after children' documentation. As commented previously some foster carers felt that some of the information included in the LAC documentation could be written using plainer language. The Family Placement team holds children's modules about individuals placed with carers as long as placements are being made and supported; they are then returned to the social work teams. The SWIFT management information system that is used across the department enables information to be shared quickly between teams and enables. Family placement team members have all received extra training this year that has led to improvements in recording, although the inspectors identified areas for improvement.

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	3
30	X

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	2

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? NO

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	FS21	29(2)	The approval of all foster carers must be reviewed at intervals of not more than a year. All overdue reviews must be completed.	30/06/06
2	FS15	20	An enhanced CRB disclosure must be obtained for all members of staff prior to appointment even if they have been recruited overseas and other information is available.	02/03/06
3	FS8	17(3)	The family placement team must ensure that at all times carers are provided with sufficient information to enable them to provide adequate care to the child.	02/03/06
4	FS8	34 C A 1989, Sch 7	The fostering service must clarify who has authority to agree an exemption to the 'usual fostering limit' when a placement is made out of hours in an emergency.	02/05/06
5	FS8	34 C A 1989, Sch7	Where a placement has been made in an emergency the service must ensure that the carers approval is consistent with the placement.	02/05/06

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	FS17	The workload of family placement officers should be reviewed to ensure that they are able to meet statutory timescales in respect of carrying out reviews.
2	FS25	Quality Audits of files and documentation should continue to ensure all information is available, up-to-date and consistent with the electronic record.
3	FS29	The arrangements for paying carers should be reviewed to ensure that payments arrive promptly in all cases and that carers clearly understand what different payments are for.
4	FS8	Auditing of the matching and risk assessment process should continue to ensure that assessments are completed consistently and risks are managed safely.

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