



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Warrington Borough Council Fostering Service

**St Werburgh's
Boswell Avenue
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6BB**

Lead Inspector
Jeff Banham

Announced Inspection
6th March 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Warrington Borough Council Fostering Service
Address	St Werburgh's Boswell Avenue Warrington WA4 6BB
Telephone number	01925 444400
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Warrington Borough Council Social Services Dept
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Lisa Jamieson
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 9th March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Warrington Borough Council provides a fostering service to local children and families in accordance with the relevant regulations, standards and guidance. At the time of the inspection a range of placements was provided for 110 girls and 128 boys who were unable to live at home with their families.

The key aim of the service is to identify placements and carers in all areas of Warrington, and to recruit people from all backgrounds in order to reflect the cultural and demographic makeup of the Borough.

The main types of foster care placement are long term and permanent, short term and emergency, respite (weekends/holidays) and short break placements for children with disabilities.

The Fostering and Adoption Team is based in the Children's Social Care Office at St. Werburghs, a former school. It consists of two managers- each took responsibility for an area of service - social workers specialising in adoption, supervising social workers, community support workers, a recruitment and development officer and administrative staff.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over four days. Pre-inspection questionnaires were received from foster carers, children and placing social workers. The manager and staff from the family placement team were interviewed. Staff from education and health, and placing social workers, were also spoken with. Policies and procedures were examined; foster carer and children's files were seen, and five foster carers were visited in their own homes.

What the service does well:

The service provides effective support for foster carers. All those carers contacted during the inspection commented on the quality of the help they received from the supervising social workers. These were seen as providing a consistent reference point as children's social workers were changed more frequently.

Outcomes for children were good. Children and young people said they were happy in placement and that they were well cared for. Placing social workers said that carers met children's needs "very well", and the support from the team was good.

The Directorate has a robust system for reviewing policies and procedures. Systems and resources for supporting health and education provision were sound.

The Fostering Team operated within a comprehensive strategy for recruiting carers, and recognised the importance of providing support to keep existing carers as well as recruit new ones.

The Fostering Team consisted of trained and qualified staff who were committed to being part of a service that was child-centred.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The fostering service has implemented the changes identified at the last inspection. The Statement of Purpose has been updated and provides comprehensive information about the service. An independent reviewing manager now undertakes foster carer's first annual reviews and this provides a degree of independence to the process. A greater emphasis has been placed on children's participation in reviews to ensure that their views are heard.

Policies and procedures have been subject to systematic review, and new arrangements for the fostering and adoption panels have been introduced. Training on the Looked After Children documentation has been provided, and the Directorate continues to ensure that foster carers obtain all relevant documentation on children in good time.

The fostering service is now part of the Borough-wide Children's Service Directorate and it is anticipated that this will continue to promote closer working relationships with colleagues in Education.

New premises are now used, and all staff in the fostering and adoption team have access to a computer.

What they could do better:

The inspection identified two key areas that would benefit from a review. The first is the role of the supervising social worker. This is a key post in the support of carers and the monitoring of their practice to ensure standards of care are maintained and developed.

The most recent written guidance for the role of supervising social workers had been produced in 2001. Practice had naturally developed since then, and the explicit components of the role need to be revised, restated and understood by staff. A number of practice and practical issues identified during the inspection could be improved if the role of the supervising social worker clarified and emphasised the components of supervision of foster carer's practice.

The second key area was practice in relation to the promotion and support of kinship care. Whilst this had developed since the last inspection, more could be done to ensure that the full range of the fostering regulations and good fostering practice applied to all kinship carers.

Systems could also be developed to ensure earlier and more effective communication between placing social workers and the fostering team.

Both these areas were discussed positively and in full with the managers of the service during the inspection.

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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

met.

The fostering service supported carers to provide effective health care for children. A specialist nurse for Looked After Children assisted in the co-ordination of activities to meet identified health needs for Looked After children, and the care plans were reviewed to ensure appropriate health care was provided.

EVIDENCE:

Each child had a written assessment and care plan. These contained information about health care needs and treatments. Plans were subject to regular review by one of the Directorate's Independent Reviewing Officers. The records of these reviews were kept on foster carers and children's files and described the activities that were needed and had been undertaken to support children.

Foster carers confirmed that were given the key role in promoting the health care of children living with them. They were expected to see that children were well fed, that they visited the dentist regularly and were up to date with all health checks and immunisations. One child's case showed that the foster carers had taken a young person for a dental check up as it had been identified that his parents had not previously done so. Another record for a child with disabilities contained details of the range of needs and specialist treatments that were involved. These included cleft palate, hearing and sight problems, and the need for splints for his hips. The medication required was detailed fully.

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose said that the Directorate would strive "*.....to enable Looked After Children to make good, well informed decisions with regard to their health.*" Care plans were clear about the need to either provide health care directly to younger or more vulnerable children, or provide advice, guidance and information for older children to make their own decisions wherever possible.

Foster carers confirmed that advice was available from a variety of sources, including health visitors for younger children, and school health advisors for older children.

Consents were obtained, primarily on the LAC documents, for treatments.

The Community Nurse for Looked After Children said that health care assessments for under fives were undertaken twice a year; for older children they were once a year unless circumstances required more. She also said that the rate of annual health assessments for Looked After Children had moved from 50% to 90% of all children.

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

met.

The Directorate's policies, practices and procedures enabled staff and carers to provide safe care and appropriate placements for children.

EVIDENCE:

Staff were recruited in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Borough Council. A selection of personnel files was seen and these showed that all references and checks had been obtained, that references had been validated by the Principal Officer, and that evidence of identity and qualifications had been obtained. One supervising social worker had not produced a current registration certificate with the General Social Care Council. The records described the actions taken by the manager to ensure the certificate was obtained.

The Foster Carers' Handbook contained information about the importance of the health and safety responsibilities of foster carers. Recruitment and approval of foster carers involved health and safety checks of homes, and these were reviewed at least annually as part of the foster carer review procedure. One file of an established kinship carer did not contain any documentation to show that a health and safety check had taken place, or that the health and safety issue had been formally reviewed.

See requirement 1

All the homes seen during the inspection were warm, well furnished and comfortable. Children's rooms were appropriately decorated, furnished and usually equipped with a range of electrical equipment beyond the experience of the inspector. Children were happy to show their rooms to the inspector.

The matching process set out to ensure children were placed with carers who could meet their needs. It was recognised by all staff that carer recruitment issues meant that there was not always sufficient numbers of carers to match children and carers ideally. All emergency or over-numbers placements were sanctioned and monitored by the Principal Officer or other senior manager. Most files had a written foster placement agreement. There appeared to be some confusion about the procedure for obtaining, completing and storing these written agreements. Some foster carer files did not contain one, but one was kept with the carer. Some were not completely filled in; some were not signed by all parties. In one case of a kinship carer a foster placement agreement did not appear to have been made, and in another case, where respite care was provided, the file contained the foster placement agreement between the Directorate and the main foster carer. One placement made under Regulation 38(2) did not have a written foster placement agreement

See requirement 2

All foster carers' files could contain a current agreement, signed by all parties, to enable supervising social workers to monitor the fact that agreements were in place.

Issues of safe caring were taken into account as part of the assessment and approval of foster carers, and information about these issues was contained in the assessment reports. Carers' recruitment, training and reviews covered the areas of protection and abuse, and specialist training in child protection was provided. Carers said they were aware of their responsibilities in this area, and confirmed that the subject of punishment and sanctions had been made clear and that they were in agreement with the requirements of the policy. Information on allegations, abuse and neglect was held on file. Strategy meetings chaired by the Independent Reviewing Unit were held in response to identified cases.

All of the staff of the fostering and adoption team were qualified social workers, and had received training in aspects of the work relevant to their work. Staff were complimentary about the quality and amount of training provided for them by the Directorate. The qualifications and experience of all the staff in the team were listed in the fostering service Statement of Purpose.

The Inspector spoke with the chair of the fostering panel, and read the panel papers. The Fostering Panel had been recently reformed in order to focus on issues of fostering only, and its membership had been newly constituted. The chair read panel papers beforehand, and issues to do with presentation, care planning and foster care assessment processes identified to be discussed at the panel.

Panel members were asked to complete a written "members feedback" report on every item presented to the panel.

The Recruitment and Development officer prepared a written Panel Report.

This summarised the work undertaken by the panel in the preceding year.

Panel members felt that the panel was well organised, that it worked well and for the benefit of children, and that the membership was sufficiently skilled and experienced to undertake its role effectively. Social work membership was represented at manager level.

The chair confirmed that presentation, practice and care planning issues identified at the panel were taken up immediately and with individual staff. The panel chair could produce a written "quality assurance" report on relevant child care issues, say annually, for consideration by the Directorate management team.

See recommendation 1

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

met.

The fostering service provided support for carers to enable them to take primary responsibility for the education of children in their care. Improvements continued to be made to ensure educational, ethnic and cultural needs were identified, and that staff worked together to promote the educational achievement of children in foster care.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service "Statement of Purpose" said that one of the key activities of the service was to *"Respect and promote the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of all Looked After Children."*

The foster care handbook set out the intentions of the service in respect of racial and cultural issues in placement, and foster care training covered issues of equal opportunities and diversity. Issues relating to the needs of individual children were identified in the assessment and care planning process, and reviewed under the Looked After Children procedures.

One case demonstrated that planning had taken into account the needs of one child who, although black himself, said he did not wish to be placed with black carers. The reasons for this were described in the case records, and the actions of staff and carers to manage the issue were evident. Other more practical issues to do with skin and hair care were undertaken by carers and recorded in documentation.

The education of Looked After Children was considered in a number of statements and policies produced by the Directorate. The foster carer handbook emphasised the importance of educational achievement for looked after children and set out the responsibilities of carers in working with schools and designated teachers, of supporting each child's education and of attending all meetings relevant to the education of the child. Care plans and reviews showed how these expectations were put into practical effect for each child. The Principal Education Officer for Looked After Children said she had clear responsibilities in relation to working with schools, carers and social workers in order to promote the education of children. She said that children could be given additional support both in and out of school, and that no children were currently excluded. Foster carers were provided with training and support in working with schools, although it was recognised that some carers found this area easier than others. Some carers found it easier to work with primary rather than secondary schools.

The Principal Officer felt that multi-disciplinary working had improved, but more could possibly be done earlier to achieve a more co-ordinated identification of educational needs and the support children required at the time of their initial involvement with the Looked After system.

See recommendation 2

Children had statements of educational need where required, and these were regularly reviewed. Most children had personal education plans (PEPs) and were supported by carers in promoting the plans.

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

met.

Children were effectively supported in maintaining contacts with significant family members. Foster carers were clear about their responsibilities to support contact arrangements.

Issues to do with recording of contacts, and the provision of appropriate documentation for foster carers would provide more structure to the process. Children's views were obtained and they were encouraged to participate in discussions about all aspects of their care and planning for their future.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers were informed about the significance of the contact between a child and significant people during the assessment process and subsequently during training and supervision. Foster carers said they were aware of the need for a child to keep in contact with family members.

Contact could be direct, through face to face to contact, or indirect through telephone and letter. Children seen during the inspection discussed their contact arrangements, and were able to describe the role of the carers and others, such as social workers and community support workers, in facilitating and supervising contact arrangements. One young person said she did not wish to see her parents, and her wish was respected. Another young person saw the inspector immediately after seeing his mother. He said he was always enabled to see her, and the only time contact did not happen was when his mother changed the arrangements.

Contact arrangements were recorded on care plans and reviewed regularly. Issues to do with contact were discussed at meetings between carers and supervising social workers and the topic was covered in the annual review. Problematic areas were discussed and alternative arrangements or additional support provided as required.

There were a number of cases where a child was the subject of a restriction of contact. Some carers said they were aware of the restriction but did not always have copies of the care order or order made under Section 34 of the Children Act 1989 providing the legal authority for any restriction that they might have to enforce.

See requirement 3

Foster carers were expected to record information about a variety of issues to do with the children in their care, including the observations about contact. In one case the recording by the foster carer of a potentially problematic contact was not done effectively. *(This issue is dealt with under Standard 24)*

The manager of the fostering service said changes had been made to the ways in which children were consulted about their care and all significant issues affecting them. The aim had been to encourage more children to be involved in the consultation process. Children were invited to their review meetings, and were seen by social workers before the meetings. Those who were unwilling or unable to attend were able to provide written contributions about their wishes and feelings.

Children and young people were able to use the independent visitor scheme. This scheme was an initiative provided and managed by the National Youth Advocacy Service on behalf of Warrington and Halton Children's Services. NYAS was also available for children who wanted someone else to talk to. The Directorate's procedures required children to be given a NYAS information pack, including a telephone number, when they were first sent to live in local authority accommodation.

NYAS also contributed to all "children's events" in Warrington each year, and carers and others were informed of the dates well in advance in order to promote good attendance.

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

met. Standard 14 was not assessed at this inspection.

The rates of payment were clear and arrangements for the efficient payment of foster carers ensured they received their due allowances.

EVIDENCE:

The allowances paid to foster carers were published in the Foster Carer Payments Guide. The Guide was subject to revision each year. The Guide had been designed after consultation with carers and provided information about the rates payable for various tasks undertaken by carers and explained the principles and processes behind the payment system.

Guidance was provided on taxation, National Insurance, pocket money for children and general insurance matters.

Foster carers said they had been given information about the system, understood the arrangements, and were paid in full and on time. They said supervising social workers would always assist if problems or complications arose. Under- or over-payments were explained and dealt with promptly.

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

met.

In terms of outcomes the management of the team was good. Foster carers felt well supported by the team, and children were well placed with carers who could meet their needs. Placing social workers said that carers looked after children *"very well."*

The role of the supervising social could be reviewed and strengthened in terms of its key responsibilities, particularly around the monitoring of carers' practice. The practices and systems supporting kinship carers could be reviewed in order to improve support and outcomes for children.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service produced a Statement of Purpose. This comprehensive document provided carers and others with a range of information about the Directorate, the fostering service and its staff. It was updated annually. The current document was dated October 2005.

The Fostering and Adoption Team was managed by two team managers, each having particular responsibility for different areas of work. The team also had a Group Leader who would act as deputy when required. Team members said they believed the arrangement worked well, and that the management of the team was effective. This had proved to be the case when one of the team managers was off sick, and temporary arrangements had been made in the manager's absence.

Both managers were qualified and experienced social workers and both were working towards NVQ level 4 qualification in management.

The Fostering and Adoption Team covered all areas of fostering, adoption, carer's supervision, assessment and approval. The manager felt this range of responsibility was appropriate for individual roles and for the requirements of the Directorate. The manager felt that the roles and responsibilities of individual team members were subject to constant review, and that as the service continued to develop so individual tasks may be altered in order to meet the demands of the service.

At the time of the inspection the team had two vacancies for supervising social workers. The manager said the process of recruiting to these vacancies was underway, and a successful recruitment would enable the work of the team to be reviewed. The specialist posts of Recruitment and Development Officer, and Panel Administrator provided effective support to the running of the service.

Staff were employed under the terms and conditions of Warrington Borough Council. They were supervised in accordance with the requirements of the Borough policy. Staff said they were well supported by the managers. Training was available as required. Social workers said the training provided for them was good and promoted effective practice.

In 2001 the then Social Services Department had produced a professional instruction notice setting out the responsibilities of the supervising social worker. The inspection identified a number of examples of inconsistent practice by supervising social workers. These included carers not being provided with appropriate LAC information, of information not being organised or stored correctly, of supervisory visits and unannounced visits not being undertaken with the required frequency, and of foster carer practice, such as case recording, not being effectively monitored. It is recommended that the Directorate review the role of the supervising social worker in order for staff and carers to be clear about the various responsibilities in relation to support, supervision (the monitoring of foster care practice) and the involvement of the supervising social worker in the care planning process for children placed with them.

A further important element of the role of supervising social worker is the "coaching" of carers. When carers have not been able to attend training, or a particular training need has been identified for which a formal course is not readily available, then the supervising social worker needs to be able to identify the need and provide advice and guidance. In one case a foster carer seemed unclear about how, when and where to record potentially significant information about the contact that the two siblings for whom she was caring had had over the weekend with the relative to whom it was planned they would eventually live.

In another case a young person with asthma had been placed with foster carers who smoked. Whilst the outcome of the placement was good, and the young person very settled and happy in her placement, the explicit arrangements for managing the smoking issue had not been recorded as had been expected.

There were a number of examples of carers recording in diaries instead of on the contact sheets that had been provided. The inspector was also told that a carer had kept information about children who had been placed with her but who had long since left.

Supervising social workers should be checking the child's documentation to ensure the carer has all that is available, to ensure they understand it and it is relevant, and the records made by carers are adequate for the needs of the case and are stored securely.

Supervising social workers should also ensure that each carer's file contains all the required information. It was sometimes difficult to obtain a clear list of all the children who had been placed with a carer since approval. Names of children appeared on different pieces of paper, in different formats, and were sometimes incomplete.

An explanation about the role of the supervising social worker could be contained in the foster carer handbook.

See recommendation 3

Each foster carer file listed the visits that had taken place to the foster carer's home. These events were described by various terms such as "*home visit*", "*placement visit*", "*supervisory visit*" or "*planning visit*". It would be clearer if the terminology for these visits was consistently applied throughout the team, and the purpose of each visit made explicit to supervising social workers and carers.

In addition there was evidence that some carers had not received regular supervisory visits in accordance with the schedule set out in the foster care agreement. This was a frequency decided as appropriate by the Directorate, and intended to ensure children were seen in accordance with the statutory requirements when there may be difficulties in allocating a social worker for the child.

It may be more effective if an individual supervision agreement was drawn up for each carer. This could set out the nature and frequency of the support to be required in line with the needs of each placement and carer, and set out the frequency and purpose of each visit.

There were examples of supervisory visits not being recorded on the appropriate document, and of unannounced visits, which should be part of the monitoring process, not being individually recorded. There was an example of three unannounced visits being undertaken in a relatively short space of time, but no rationale to explain why that should be so in that case.

See recommendation 4

Foster carers were positive and complimentary about the support they received from the team. Supervising social workers were seen as offering positive and valued support, could be contacted easily, responded quickly, and provided a presence and consistency when there may be numerous changes in children's social workers. One kinship carer, who clearly did not see herself as a "foster carer" was particularly complimentary and said she had written to "the Director" to say what good support she had received.

There was evidence that unannounced visits of the frequency set out in the National Minimum Standards, of at least one a year, being undertaken.

See requirement 4

There was example of one carer who had not been asked to enter into a foster care agreement, and for who there was no written foster care agreement on file.

See requirement 5

Foster carers were offered regular training as part of their initial approval and assessment process, after approval and continuing through their work as carers. Training was discussed at supervision and annual review, and records of training undertaken since the last review recorded. It was difficult to obtain complete records of all the training undertaken by carers since their approval. Carer's files did not list all the training that a carer had received.

See recommendation 5

Each child had a case file. These records were held by and were the responsibility of the child's social worker. Foster carer files contained copies of the LAC documents relating to each child placed. Different files held different records; sometimes the records were not the same as those held by the carer. The manager should ensure that either all the files held all the available LAC documents, or review the process to ensure that only a copy of the current foster placement agreement, filled in and signed by all parties, was held on the carer's file.

See recommendation 6

The fostering and adoption team had moved premises since the last inspection. Although the team still occupied two separate rooms it was felt that the accommodation had improved and workers were given space, storage and equipment to undertake the work required of them.

The Directorate had developed its policy towards kinship care. There was evidence that carers with children who were subject to care orders, and who had been approved as foster carers, were not subject to the same processes for supervision and the application of the fostering regulations as other carers. The manager said that all new kinship carers were dealt with in the same way as other carers, but that some long-standing carers may not have been. These carers did not have an allocated supervising social worker, but used the team as *"a point of contact."*

The majority of the breaches of regulations identified in this report had arisen in the supervision of kinship carers. One worker said she felt that the policy towards kinship carers was confused and in need of revision.

One practice development could be to produce a protocol for the immediate involvement of the fostering team whenever children were placed with friends or relatives. Joint viability assessments could be undertaken between fostering team workers and children's social workers. This could improve working relationships between the teams and provide more effective support to kinship carers at the early, and potentially most problematic stage of their involvement with the Directorate. This development could also be linked with the increased use of "family group conferences", particularly at the early stages of contact.

See recommendation 7

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	2
8	2
9	3
15	3
30	3

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	2
11	X

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

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

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	FS6	33	The manager must ensure that all foster carers' assessments and reviews involve checks of health and safety matters.	30/04/06
2	FS8	34(3) Schedule 6	The manager must ensure that all placements are based on a written agreement with the foster carer covering the matters set out in this Schedule.	30/04/06
3	FS10	17(3)	The manager must ensure that foster carers are given copies of written information relating to the legal status and contact arrangements of children placed with them.	30/04/06
4	FS22	33	The manager must ensure that carers receive at least one unannounced visit each year.	30/04/06
5	FS22	28(5)(b)	The manager must ensure that every carer enters into a foster care agreement in line with Schedule 5 of these regulations.	30/04/06

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	FS30	The panel chair could produce a written "quality assurance" report on general childcare issues raised at the panel.
2	FS13	The manager could review the systems for identifying, providing and coordinating the necessary support for children's education when they are first involved with the looked after system.
3	FS16	The manager could review the roles and responsibilities of the supervising social worker to make them clear to workers and to carers, and to ensure they are consistently applied.
4	FS22	The manager could review the nature and purpose of the contacts between carers and workers in the form of an individual supervision agreement and ensure the purpose of visits is clear and consistently applied.
5	FS23	The manager could ensure that each foster carer record contains a list of all the training they have undertaken.
6	FS24	The manager could review the practice of holding LAC documents on carers' files.
7	FS32	The manager could review the policy and practices relevant to the approval and support of kinship carers.

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