

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Heath Farm Family Services

Heath Farm, Charing Heath
Ashford
Kent
TN27 0AX

Lead Inspector
Helen
Lee

Announced
14th 15th 16th June 2005 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

Reader Information

Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Heath Farm Family Services
Address	Heath Farm, Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent, TN27 0AX
Telephone number	01233 712030
Fax number	
Email address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Heath Farm Family Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Janet Margaret Smart
Type of registration	Fostering Agency
No. of places registered (if applicable)	4
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	Childrens (4)

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 21/01/05

Brief Description of the Service:

Heath Farm is an Independent Fostering Agency as defined by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. At the time of this inspection the agency were supporting 57 placements in 39 approved foster homes. The agency is based in the area of Ashford. There is a team of nine permanent full time staff including the responsible individual, the registered manager, three supervising social workers with one assistant and administrative and finance personnel. The agency also calls on sessional workers on a needs led basis including independent Form F Assessors. Foster carers receive regular support and supervisory visits. The agency also has a school. The agency is part of the Pan London Contract and has secured the Investors in People award.

SUMMARY

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

The Inspection took place over three days in June 2005. The Inspector spoke with five children and young people placed with the agency as well as reading children's surveys which had been completed by a number of children and young people. Foster carers and placing social workers were also surveyed. Time was spent with foster carers, staff, observation of supervision undertaken between a carer and their supervising social worker, examination of files and records, case-tracking and sampling a further number of files and records. The Inspector was pleased to be presented with evidence from the agency of work undertaken since the previous inspection which was in January 2005, along with appropriate work pertinent to the preparation for an inspection. This inspection was brought forward due to the inspector's maternity leave. On each day of the Inspection there was a welcoming atmosphere from both staff and carers who conveyed a child-centred approach to their work and a commitment to continue improvements in the practice of the agency.

What the service does well:

This was the first inspection for this agency using the methodology linked to key standards. It was clear that the agency took caring for children and young people very seriously. The Managers work to prepare and present evidence against all the key standards of work which evidenced meeting the outcomes and celebrate young people's participation is to be commended. Therefore this standard (FS2) is awarded a rating of '4' – commendable on this occasion. The fostering service consults with young people and children by several options such as the children's newsletter. The systems for consultation are good with a variety of evidence that indicates that their views are sought. Therefore this standard (FS11) is also awarded a rating of '4'.

The agency takes its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are placed with foster carers approved by them seriously. The best thing for children spoken with or surveyed about being looked after was "being looked after", "protection" and "everything".

What has improved since the last inspection?

All of the agency's carers have undertaken health and safety including first aid and health promotion. The agency have reviewed and now have robust systems in place to ensure that all carers proposed to placing authorities have consistent approvals with the proposed placement. The agency has implemented a further consultation method known as the stakeholders meeting which young people stated to be effective.

The contact room has been refurbished to make it more child friendly and comfortable for families. The agency have reviewed and improved its procedures and practice with regard to support for carers during and after an allegation. The agency has developed and implemented comprehensive health recording for each individual child. The role of the supervising social worker within the agency's school has been clarified and appropriately reduced by the agency. The agency is developing its services to include more informal ways to consult with birth children to include a day of activities.

What they could do better:

Given that the agency had last been inspected in January 2005 some requirements had been given longer deadlines than the June 2005 date of this inspection, therefore it was expected and acceptable that the agency had not met these timescales. The Inspector was shown evidence by the agency of work in progress on all of the outstanding requirements.

Four standards are rated as a minor shortfall: FS1 (Statement of Purpose) The SoP required further review in order to evidence the objectives that the agency's aims could be measured as a success against; FS 13 (Education) The agency to develop its educational monitoring; FS 23 (Training) The agency should ensure that the training for staff and carers (core courses in line with the national minimum standards, and on-going professional and developmental programme) is attended along with a rolling programme to make sure that foster carers have the appropriate training to meet the needs of proposed placements as well as each and every child / young person placed with them, and FS 24 (Case Records) Foster Placement Agreements for all young people to meet Schedule 6 and to implement LAC Circular 2004/4.

These improvements will build upon the progress that the agency has made since the last 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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Standards

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12

The health needs of young people and children are well met with evidence of good multi disciplinary working taking place on a regular basis. The promotion of health is taken seriously.

EVIDENCE:

Records within the children's files demonstrated where necessary advocacy and guidance being sought from the child's GP or other services. Health issues for young people were identified and addressed as well as monitored.

Most children surveyed provided a wide range of healthy activities and strategies that their carers helped them with such as healthy eating, personal hygiene, and sports. Young people spoken with were satisfied with their health care arrangements.

Carers and supervising Social Workers contribute to health discussions for the young people. The agency has developed links with LAC co-ordinators in the appropriate areas. The agency's medical procedures have been further developed in line with the RPS guidance which has been done as part of a stand alone health policy.

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) 3,6,8,9,15

Recruitment policies have been consistently followed ensuring that foster carers and staff are appropriate and suitable. Arrangements for protecting children are satisfactory. Two areas require further development to protect each child or young person from abuse and harm and that is training and some recording such as the safe care plans, internal child protection procedures and matching forms.

EVIDENCE:

Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes. The agency has systems to ensure relevant checks are renewed every three years. Evidence was seen in individual files that staff working in or for the fostering service are interviewed as part of the selection process.

The homes which were visited were warm, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to reasonable standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Five placing social workers commented positively on “warm supportive secure environments”.

The agency had taken appropriate steps to ensure that a staff member deemed competent to do so undertakes yearly health and safety assessments. Documentation demonstrated that foster carer's preparation and training cover health and safety issues and that carer's are provided with written health and safety guidelines. Where foster carers provide transport for the children looked after, the fostering service carries out checks, for instance of insurance documents and MOT certificates.

There are currently child protection strategies ongoing which the Inspector had been notified of. The Inspector recommended that the agency ensures that there are safe caring guidelines for each home are more specific and effective as well as made in consultation with all members of the household.

Foster carers spoken with were aware corporal punishment is not acceptable and there is a provision of written information including the foster care agreement to that effect with alternative strategies.

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) 7,13,31

The agency encourages carers to promote educational achievement through participation and appropriate expectations. This needs to be matched by the agency developing a system to monitor educational attainment.

EVIDENCE:

All the young people and children surveyed and spoken with were able to verify that they were encouraged to develop and pursue their talents, own interests and hobbies. These included opportunities to play sports, computer and or console games, and clubs such as cadets. There is an area for hobbies and interests on the referral form appropriately.

Young people spoken to described how foster carers take a personal interest in their development and achievements and that they were encouraged to attend and do well at school. One school report viewed evidenced good attendance and reflected on the child's achievements as well as the carers contribution. Carers spoken to were clear of the educational needs of each individual young person placed with the agency. Foster care reviews have a section on 'what school events have been attended' so that panel can also monitor this.

The Manager stated that she would develop an effective system to collate educational attainment which had been partially completed as part of the Regulation 42 reports.

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) 10,11

Contact arrangements are promoted by the agency's carers and staff along with advocacy for the child or young persons wishes for contact. The fostering service has developed a comprehensive range of tools from which to consult with young people and children. The systems for consultation are good with a variety of evidence that indicates that their views are sought.

EVIDENCE:

The induction and preparation process emphasises the importance of foster carers helping children maintain appropriate contacts and introduces the skills required to encourage and facilitate such contacts.

The records of supervision between the agency and individual foster carers clearly record a review of children's progress. The quality of support in this area is further monitored by the use of post placement surveys and foster carers annual reviews seeking feedback on this subject. One Young person stated that their carers had given them 'ideas on where courses can take me and have been there for me educationally'.

Contact arrangements were described in the care files inspected. The agency has an assistant supervising social worker whom facilitates, organises and supervises contact. The majority of the children are placed from outside the local area. Feedback, records, correspondence and written procedures all indicate contact arrangements are managed in line with any arrangements / agreements that have been made. Records inspected demonstrated that the worker is recording the outcomes of contact arrangements and that this is fed back to relevant parties.

The agency has implemented a children's box which has enabled children to raise suggestions and ideas anonymously which the Inspector commends. The agency has also recently started a weekly newsletter which the young people have begun to contribute to. In addition the agency has set up a stakeholder meeting. One young person said "*it takes a long time for people to realise that it will work – we are getting there*" about the stakeholder meeting. It is these initiatives having been started and implemented which merit an exceeded rating on this occasion. One young person requested that the agency develop age appropriate forms for feedback.

Foster carers gave examples of where children have made their views known and how these have been responded to positively for example choice in diet, activities, decoration of accommodation and clothes. One young person had written the agency a letter thanking them for "*all your lovely things you have done and given me*".

Children indicated that they have been given information about what to do to make a complaint or if they are unhappy about something. Young people spoken with felt that their concerns were listened to and acted upon.

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) 14, 29

The agency has implemented systems to monitor and chase pathway planning which will enhance the provision of preparing young people for adulthood. This will be further helped upon completion of appropriate training which the agency has arranged. The agency pays its carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.

EVIDENCE:

The Inspector commends that numerous carers working for the agency who have accommodated and provided if necessary any support for young people into adulthood. One Carer spoken with was able to describe how they were working with a young person to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for the preparation for adulthood.

The Manager acknowledged the need to ensure that all carers have received training regarding preparation of adulthood.

Foster carers receive an allowance and agreed expenses. Foster carers spoken with confirmed payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually. The policy on fostering allowances and expenses is included in the foster carers handbook.

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 cares 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)
1,2,17,21,23,24,25,26**

The agency is well managed and run effectively to provide a safe and stable environment for the children and young people. The agency regularly reviews aspects of its performance through a good programme of self review and consultations, which include the views of children and young people, foster carers, staff and placing social workers. The Manager is supported well by the senior staff in providing clear leadership throughout the service with all staff demonstrating an awareness of their roles and responsibilities. The Manager

has a good understanding of what needs to improve within the service which should be further demonstrated by the Manager having a clear written development plan and vision for the services, linked to the Statement of Purpose, which is effectively communicated to all stakeholders.

EVIDENCE:

The Statement of Purpose requires review in order to evidence the objectives that the agency's aims could be measured as a success against. Heath Farm compiles a file which contains DoH booklets, a newsletter and one of two possible children's guide (depending on age). The agency was recommended to explore developing its children's guide format which it is now exploring using the internet for.

The range of strategies of support available to carers includes: dedicated respite carers, support groups with transport available, workshops and individual sessions with a therapist, new core training programme and NVQ course, surveys undertaken by the agency regarding support issues and improvements. Appropriate support is also available as out of hours and review reports.

The Inspector was unable to track via matching, foster placement agreements and training portfolios that specific training for every sampled foster carer met the needs of each individual child/young person placed (learning difficulties, mental health and physical assault). The Inspector therefore re-recommends that the agency implements a robust system which provides and evidences that training for every Foster Carer meets the needs of each child/young person placed.

Individual records for the carers and young people are very comprehensive, well written and up to date. Administrative records are maintained as required and the premises are suitable for the purposes of the service.

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	3
9	3
15	3
30	X

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	2
31	N/A

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

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

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

yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	23	17	All carers to have been provided with training in dealing with discrimination and specific training as required for transracial and transcommunity placements.	30/09/05
2.	23	17	All carers to have been provided with training in caring for children who have been abused, recognising signs of child abuse, bullying, and managing behaviour. This to include the prevention and safe use of physical intervention.	30/11/05
3.	23	17	All appropriate carers to have been provided with training in preparation for adulthood.	30/09/05
4.	24	34	Foster Placement Agreements for all young people to meet Schedule 6 and to implement LAC Circular 2004/4. Original date: 30.07.05	30/10/05
5.	13		The agency to develop its educational monitoring.	01/02/06
6.				
7.				

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.	1	The SoP required further review in order to evidence the objectives that the agency's aims could be measured as a success against.
2.	1	The children's guide format to be further developed.
3.	4	The Regulation 42 reports to be more analytical and evidence an improvement in practice of the agency.
4.	8	Foster placement agreements to contain specific reference to matching and decision-making as well as LAC Circular 2004/4.
5.	10	Training specific for contact promotion and supervision needs to be identified for the worker.
6.	10	Specific training for contact promotion and supervision should be included for carers.
7.	13	Foster placement agreements to meet the expectations of FS13.08 i.e. whom is responsible for all financial costs including day to day and decisions regarding education
8.	15	The role and job description of the assistant supervising social worker to be reviewed to ensure compliance with FS15.05 and FS22.02.
9.	15	The functioning and personnel on the on-call rota need to adhere to FS15.05.
10.	17	A robust and fully compliant system to be developed and implemented to ensure that all assessments meet the expectations of the NMS and that any change of approval reports are also comprehensive in relation to a robust procedure.
11.	23	The agency to evidence that training for every foster carer meets the need of each and every child/young person placed.
12.	27	The agency to develop and implement an itemised written budget for the fostering service which is linked or part of a development plan.
13.	30	Panel : Approvals need to be clearly defined, recommendations need to cover training as well as strengths, and membership of the panel to meet the NMS.
14.	11	Feedback and consultation forms from the agency to be developed into a range of age appropriate forms / mediums.
15.	14	Policy and practice regarding long term savings as well as

		short term saving up for a specific item or event to be a clear expectation for foster carers in order to achieve economic well-being for each individual child or young person.
16.	24	Policy and practice regarding memory books / records of significant events to be a clear expectation for foster carers.
17.	9	The Inspector recommended that the agency ensures that there are safe caring guidelines for each home are more specific and effective as well as made in consultation with all members of the household.
18.	9	Internal Child Protection Procedures to be reviewed for the fostering agency as stand alone to that of the fostering services school.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

11th Floor, International House

Dover Place

Ashford

Kent TN23 1HU

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI