

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Nexus Fostering**

**Temple House  
221 - 225 Station Road  
Harrow  
Middlesex  
HA1 2TH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Bernard Burrell

*Announced Inspection*  
15th January 2007      10:00

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	John David Collins
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

## **Date of last inspection**

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

Nexus Fostering provides fostering placements for local authorities in London, the Home Counties, South East, Anglia and Midlands area of England. The agency operates from its main office in London and affiliate offices in Birmingham and Norwich.

The agency's Statement of Purpose stated that it recruits, assess, training and support foster carers from a range of backgrounds to provide family placements and care for children and young people looked after by local authorities.

Nexus staffing consists of qualified and experienced social workers, administrators, placement officers and training co-ordinator. The agency also has a team of independent social workers, therapists and outreach workers.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was conducted over five days and included visits to the agency's offices in Harrow and Norwich, discussions and meetings with foster carers, staff and management, review of administrative records and case files and also the completed questionnaires sent by the foster carers, children and young people.

The inspector also reviewed the completed pre-inspection documentation sent to the CSCI by Nexus management.

The findings from this inspection showed that Nexus Fostering continues to offer excellent quality and varied support and services to its foster carers and the fostered children and young people. Nexus continues to work cooperatively with its partner agencies and the CSCI. The management has demonstrated a willingness to comply with regulatory requirements and recommendations.

The inspection findings also showed that the agency has applied creative and proactive plans and approaches to its service development and delivery.

## What the service does well:

Nexus Fostering offers reliable, consistent and supportive services and advice to its foster carers, the fostered children, young people and staff.

The agency makes good effort to help ensure that care and monitoring reviews are carried out on time, and that appropriate records and documentation are kept to help verify and monitor the effectiveness of its work.

The fostering service makes good effort to involve the foster carers, children, young people and staff in the work and development plans for the service. It offers a good range of training programmes that are designed to help enhance the skills and professional development of foster carers and staff.

The fostering service's staff and management continue to work well with the foster carers, children and young people, and to offer excellent support and advice where needed.

## What has improved since the last inspection?

The fostering service has updated all paperwork to reflect the 5 Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes.

Specific training has been offered to foster carers and staff about the 5 ECM outcomes. The 5 ECM outcomes are also incorporated into daily practices and are also addressed in newsletters for foster carers, children and young people.

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The fostering service has made good effort to expand the range of training and professional development opportunities available to foster carers and staff.

The service has made good improvements in the organisation and management of its administrative records and the case files of foster carers, staff, children and young people. Uniformity is now maintained across the records and case files.

Nexus Fostering has sought to recruit both staff and carers from a variety of backgrounds, with different experience and knowledge, and strives to work within an equal opportunity framework.

Good effort is been made to ensure that the appointment of staff, foster carers, panel members and independent social workers are more reflective of the diversified communities and backgrounds of the fostered children and young people.

Visiting guidelines are provided to ensure all children and young people visited at least a minimum 6 weekly visits. A leaving care monitoring form has been introduced and regularly reviewed until adulthood or leaving placement.

The Nexus Fostering Leaving Care booklet was completed for the last inspection, but the development of the service and monitoring system has been established during the last 12 months.

Foster carers providing care for large sibling groups have requested assistance with purchase of suitable cars, so that all children have seats and Nexus Fostering has now established a loan scheme for this purpose.

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

In line with general awareness about the impact of passive smoking, Nexus Fostering is setting up a support scheme for foster carers who smoke to encourage and support cessation programmes. This would also be available to young people in placement who smoke.

The fostering service will need to make better effort to help ensure that improvements in attendance and engagement are made with the minority of foster carers who have a consistently poor attendance at training courses, support groups and failure to do regular recordings as required by the placement agreement.

The fostering service must ensure that the children and young people's guide are reviewed and written in language and style that reflect their age group and learning abilities.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

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

Children and young people's health care needs are appropriately supported and promoted by their foster carers. The fostering service ensures there are up to date health care assessments and monitoring for each child and young person.

This judgement has been made using available evidence provided by the agency, visit to this service, foster carers home, completed questionnaires from foster carers, the looked after children and young people and discussions with social work staff.

## EVIDENCE:

The inspector was satisfied that the documented records at the fostering service verified that the health care and medical issues relating to the fostered children and young people were fully recorded and addressed. Nexus Fostering ensures that there is a record of all illnesses, and accidents for children and young people in placement. The record of medication given is recorded and is held on each child's case file and also in a central log.

The fortnightly supervisory visits to foster care homes by the social workers showed evidence of recordings of medical appointments attended medication prescribed, injuries or accidents sustained plus outstanding medical issues.

The LAC review paperwork devised by Nexus Fostering records the date of the last appointments made by the foster children and young people to the doctor, dentist and optician. The form also asks children and young people about healthy eating, and about their health in general.

The responses to the questionnaires received by the inspector indicated that foster carers are helping to ensure that careful monitoring is paid to the diet and nutrition habits of the children and young people. Several children

commented that their foster carers take keen interest in 'what they eat and drink' and the types of 'recreational activities' they get involved in.

The inspector was satisfied that the foster carer's handbook also addresses the health needs of children and young people – with specific guidelines offered to foster carers on how they should work to promote healthy lifestyles for the children and young people in their care. Several foster carers gave written and verbal examples of what they have been doing to help promote healthy lifestyles among the children and young people. Two carers informed the inspector of the actions and strategies they have to utilise to get their foster child to monitor her diabetic condition, including ensuring she complies with her dietary requirements.

The notes from several supervisory reviews seen by the inspector plus the information provided by the agency, showed evidence that carers are encouraged to support activity and exercise for children and young people through extra curricular activities.

The inspector noted that the fostering service staff are now making good effort to ensure that all recordings are done in line with the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM). This includes the health status of children, their foster carer's recording sheets, supervising social worker format and the monthly reports sent to the placing authorities.

The fostering service provided evidence to the inspector that verified that foster carers are provided with training courses and specialist speakers in areas covering first aid, drug & alcohol awareness, sex & sexuality and HIV & Aids.

Specific training is also provided to carers who care for children and young people with severe disabilities to ensure that their full health needs are met – including advice and information from health visitors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, hospital and hospice staff.

The full health details are sought from referring Local Authorities when referrals are made to help ensure that suitable matches are offered and made.

In relation to mental health, Nexus Fostering has established links with many local CAMHS units and has also used the professional expertise of independent therapists. The agency was able to demonstrate how it actively promotes the mental well being of children and young people in placements. It ensures that concerns noted by carers and supervising staff are raised with the local placing authorities and suitable resources identified.

The inspector noted that from the copies of newsletters provided by the agency that health issues are raised in each newsletter relating to foster carers and the children and young people in the fostering household.

The agency also provides services to children with learning difficulties. The evidence provided indicated that the fostering service's workers and carers actively participate in the statementing process, school reviews and personal education plans (PEPS). The fostering service also assist the children and young people in the foster homes to improve their academic capacity in cooperation with their schools, and further develop their learning and understanding by promoting extra curricular activities.

Nexus Fostering is setting up a support scheme for foster carers who smoke to encourage and support cessation of smoking. This would also be available to young people in placement who smoke.

## Staying Safe

### The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

### The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

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

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

Good effort is made to recruit and employ suitable foster carers and staff, plus the fostering panel is well organised and operate effectively.

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

### EVIDENCE:

Nexus Fostering has a team of managers who have extensive experience of both children and families services and fostering – both local authority and independent. The majority of the staff have the appropriate skills, qualification, training and experience. The Responsible Individual and Registered Manager have Certificates in Management, and two other managers are currently completing this course.

The recruitment of foster carers is done through a rigorous assessment process. Prospective foster carers have to demonstrate how they would promote and safeguard a child's welfare. The assessment process involved initial visit, completion of the BAAF Form F assessment forms, the statutory inquiries and the skills to foster preparation training. In addition, all potential risks are assessed; including pets, health and safety and transport.

All foster carers and staff are provided with training about safeguarding children, and ensuring that they stay safe. Advice and guidance for this is also contained in policies and procedures. The "*Safer Caring*" book produced by the Fostering Network is issued to foster carers on approval, and all foster carers sign an undertaking that they will not use corporal punishment.

The inspection findings showed that most social work staff are suitably qualified and receive appropriate support through regular supervision and appraisal. All staff are offered training programmes as identified in their personal development plan. In addition, full references are taken up, including enhanced CRB and the NSPCC checks.

The unqualified social work staff who offer support to foster carers are supervised by qualified social work managers who hold accountability for their work. Plans were being made at the time of this inspection to recruit an additional qualified social worker for the Birmingham office.

Nexus Fostering ensures that full details about each child and young person are sought from local authorities to ensure that careful placement matching are made. The referral form identifies the hierarchy of need for a particular child and the matching process undertaken. In cases where not all a child's needs can be met by the placement, appropriate plans are agreed by the supervising social worker, the local authority and the foster carers at the placement planning meeting. Where possible, children and young people are introduced to a new foster family before a placement is made.

The supervising social workers undertake an annual health and safety check on each foster home plus ensure that appropriate actions are taken to meet any identified shortfalls. For example, additional health and safety checks are also undertaken if additional building work is carried out or change of home. The fostering service also updated the checklist this year to include the new 2006 seat belt requirements and regulations.

In the most recent carer handbook updates, Nexus Fostering has issued foster carers with the Home Office guidance on keeping children safe on the Internet. This has been followed by an additional Nexus Fostering procedure concerning Internet and mobile phone use for children and young people. This is now provided to all new foster carers on approval.

An appropriate system is in place to record and monitor allegations or complaints of abuse and neglect within approved foster care households. All complaints and allegations are fully investigated according to the appropriate procedure and the outcome presented to CSCI and the Independent Panel as required.

Foster carers and staff are advised about the vulnerability of looked after young people to bullying and are provided with guidelines to follow in these instances. All incidents of bullying are recorded. There is a procedure to follow if children and young people are absent without permission. Nexus Fostering offers a 24-hour duty service in each of the London, Anglia and Birmingham areas, with designated managers on call to ensure that all instances are responded to immediately and appropriately.

Where fostered children and young people's names remain on the child protection register, Nexus Fostering supervising social workers attend child protection conferences and seek to be part of any new or established core group.

Nexus Fostering has an established Independent Fostering Panel, with expertise from complementary professions. There is a clear set of procedures, and all panel members have a handbook with the relevant regulations and legislation, copies of the relevant Nexus Fostering policies and procedure and the BAAF book *Effective Panels*.

Nexus Fostering has appointed a medical advisor to provide advice and guidance to both the Panel and the agency. Panel considers all foster carer applications, the first annual reviews, four quarterly annual updated Form F's, all respite foster carer applications, exemptions and variations.

The panel will need to ensure that a summary recording is made to explain the reasons for each recommendation, approval or variation.

Nexus Fostering will also need to ensure that all social work staff working with foster carers, children and young people are appropriately qualified and experienced.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

## The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

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

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

Children and young people are given positive support to reach their educational potential. Personal Education Plans are in place and the fostering service and foster carers provide good support to help the children and young people achieve their learning and education.

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

### EVIDENCE:

Nexus Fostering plan activities that are designed to meet the diversity of ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds. The service also uses a variety of mediums to communicate – including written information, spoken words, DVD's and information technology. Examples of this include using videos in support groups, setting up a child specific email address for children and young people to contact the service plus guidelines to help ensure that children and young people and fostering households have regular personal contact with staff.

All training, preparation, written materials, policies, procedures and guidance from Nexus Fostering emphasises the need to be positive about the skills and abilities of children and young people, to develop and enhance these to improve their self esteem and confidence, which is likely to have been damaged as a result of their life experiences and being part of the looked after system.



Nexus Fostering offers placements to a number of children and young people with physical and learning disabilities. The service also works with professionals and organisations to provide resources and opportunities to ensure that these children have full access to activities and resources that meet their needs.

Nexus Fostering has made noticeable progress in employing more staff that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of many of the children, young people and foster carers. Additional training to help enhance the staff and foster carer's awareness and understanding of diversity is also planned.

Nexus Fostering recognises achievements of staff, carers and children and young people and celebrates this through issuing certificates and listing achievements in the *kidz newsround* newsletter. In addition, foster carer recordings and review notes list the achievements of the children and young people.

The service promotes educational attainment of the children and young people through a variety of means. For example, recording by supervising social workers and foster carers and monthly reports on the children and young people in placement, specifically records the educational achievements, including details of meetings for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and teacher consultation evenings. Guidance is provided to all foster carers about supporting education, through advice in their handbook. All carers are provided with the *Who Does What* handbook from the DfES regarding education provision to all looked after children and young people.

In addition, education for placed children and young people is addressed through the provision of training to staff and carers through *Skills to Foster*. The fostering service also has a specialist advisor in education for looked after children as an independent Panel member.

Nexus Fostering has now appointed a training co-ordinator who has established designated core training for all approved foster carers. The training co-ordinator has started to make the range of training available to staff and carers in all three areas. In addition an NVQ programme has been established and a number of carers are now undertaking this with additional workshops and support offered by the training co-ordinator.

In the LAC review documents developed by Nexus Fostering, children and young people are asked specifically about their education details, information on interests and activities they enjoy and what others they would want to do.

The Leaving Care booklet produced by Nexus Fostering and given to all young people aged 15 and over; has guidance on education, training and activities. These details are monitored every six-month for all young people aged 15 – 18 years and tracked through the monthly reports sent to Local Authorities.

Nexus Fostering does not accept any child or young person for placement who is excluded from school without alternative educational plans or support. The service continues to work closely with schools and education authorities to provide the best possible services for the children and young people.

The foster carers and children gave a range of written and verbal examples of the educational achievements and progress being made. Several children received commendable awards from their schools and extra curricular activities are provided for children and young people who need them.

Nexus Fostering is currently completing an Education booklet that will be issued to all children and young people in placement. Foster carers will be expected to complete this for each child. The booklet will contain information about education for looked after children, details about a child's education needs, meetings and achievements. Children will be able to take this booklet with them if they move placement.

Nexus Fostering plans to further develop the NVQ training plus support foster carers who are interested in undertaking this course.

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

## The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

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

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

Good effort is made to promote positive and beneficial contacts for the children and young people. Excellent improvements continued to be achieved in the consultation process between the fostering service and all stakeholders.

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

## EVIDENCE:

Nexus Fostering supports children and young to manage the change of being placed with foster carers by giving information about the process of fostering, the agency, organisations who support fostered children and young people and information about becoming a member of A National Voice.

In addition, Nexus Fostering allocates a supervising social worker for every fostering household, so that children and young people see this worker on placements, subsequent meetings and have the opportunity to talk to this worker every 6 weeks.

Nexus Fostering supports all fostered children and young people to participate in their LAC reviews by providing child centred documentation, support to complete this and the opportunity to access other advocacy services.

The service supports and helps the children and young people to maintain contact with friends and families where appropriate and safe to do so.

In addition, Nexus Fostering has recruited a number of outreach workers who help to facilitate and supervise visiting contacts where it is not appropriate for foster carers to do so. The service has contact rooms in the Harrow and Norfolk offices that offer safe and familiar venues for the children and young people to meet with their birth relatives.

The foster carer's handbook provides advice about why contact is important, different ways it can be maintained, including the risks and benefits. Foster carers sign an agreement upon approval agreeing to promote safe contact where it is part of any child or young person's care plan.

The LAC review forms created by Nexus Fostering also provides the opportunity for children and young people to state their views about contact – who they want to see and when. The supporting workers visit the foster carers and children and record fortnightly supervision visits which is then fed into the reviews. In cases where Nexus Fostering supervised the contact, a written report is provided for each placing local authority.

The children's reaction to contacts are recorded by the foster carers and included in the monthly report provided to each local authority. Training is provided to staff and carers about contact through Nexus's working in partnership course.

Nexus Fostering offers a range of opportunities for the children and young people to provide their opinions through the LAC review paperwork, annual foster carers review and the designated email provided for children and young people. The children and young people's views are also included in the newsletter. The service has consulted with the children and young people about participation in events and activities – a specific consultation document was sent to all children and young people about the provision of these and future events are then planned accordingly.

Foster carers are encouraged and supported to listen to and record the views of the children and young people in placement. They are also provided with training on communicating with children. Aids and equipment are provided for carers to communicate with children and young people where there are difficulties due to different languages or disabilities.

All children and young people are provided with a copy of the Children's Guide on placement and reminded of this through paperwork including the newsletters and review documents.

Nexus Fostering intends to carry out further develop of its website services to encourage and enable more children and young people to feedback their views and access information and advice. The service also plans to carry out consultation with the sons and daughters of foster carers about their views of family fostering and the services that Nexus offers.



## Achieving Economic Wellbeing

### The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

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

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

The young people are fully supported by their foster carers to develop independent living skills. They also benefit from the support and coordinated planning work between the fostering service staff and the children and young people's social workers. Foster carers receive good remuneration and incentives

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

### EVIDENCE:

All foster carers are provided with a weekly allowance and are offered two weeks paid respite plus a festival and birthday allowance for the children and young people. The carers are paid prompt each fortnight. They also receive with an annual payment summary. An accountant provides training to all carers about finance and fostering including advice about tax, national insurance and benefits.

All foster carers are offered the opportunity to participate in a pension scheme and are supported to complete annual tax returns as required. The foster carer's handbook contains the written policy, advice and guidance regarding finance and allowances. It is updated and distributed as required. All allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Nexus Fostering has developed a leaving care scheme that offers comprehensive support and advice to all young people in placement. Each young person age 15 and over receives a copy of the Nexus Fostering leaving care booklet. The booklet provides full information about the leaving care

process -including information about finance, pathway plans, personal advisers and the transition to semi and independent living.

This is also followed up by a system of monitoring the progress of each young person in acquiring life skills. The monitoring is supervised by the social worker for the placement. This information is also recorded on the foster carers recording and supervising social worker monthly reports to local authorities.

Nexus Fostering encourages each young person to link with A National Voice, a service run by and for care users and leavers. Nexus is also a member of this organisation.

The fostering service also continues to maintain contact where possible with care leavers. It also supports care leavers- where necessary – for them to attend drop in centres, complete training and education courses and raise issues with their leaving care worker where the young person has not managed this successfully.

Foster carers are expected to work with the local authorities and Nexus Fostering to ensure that all children and young people in placement receive a weekly allowance and pocket money. They are also supported to learn budgeting skills and how to spend and plan ahead. Details of this are also included in the placement-planning meeting.

Nexus Fostering has participated in the green paper consultation and will develop new services and supports in response to the consultation process.

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**

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



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

The management and staff in the fostering service have the appropriate experience and knowledge to manage the service effectively.

Excellent efforts continue to be made to support staff and carers and provide them with appropriate learning and development opportunities.

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

## **EVIDENCE:**

Nexus Fostering has a statement of purpose, which is regularly reviewed and updated in line with developments in the practice and procedure of the agency. This contains full details as required under Regulation 3 of the FSR 2002.

The fostering service should ensure that the children and young people's guide to the service is reviewed, written in language and style that reflect the young and older range of the children and young people.

Nexus Fostering has grown significantly during the last 12 months, which has required a number of changes. The organisation and structure of the service has been reviewed and updated. The lines of management and accountability are clear to all staff, and an updated company structure provided for staff and carer handbooks to inform them of this.

There is a clear system of supervision and appraisals, which has continued throughout. All staff are managed appropriately. Given the expansion, a clear system of delegation has been established, both for operational and also management responsibilities. This was clarified at a management team-training day, which was facilitated by a management consultancy.

As the number of foster carers and placement has grown, further staff have been employed to ensure that the service delivery has been maintained at a high level, with all agency priorities met, and regulatory requirements upheld.

The review process for foster carers has been reviewed with consultation and contribution from foster carers, reviewing officer and panel members. Adjustments have been made to reflect the feedback. The ongoing system of reviews is now established and managed so that reviews happen within timescales with full consultation. Reviews are presented to Panel in line with regulatory requirements.

Assessments of prospective foster carers have also been reviewed. This has resulted in the recruited carers meeting the priorities for the agency. In addition, further enquiries are now made of family members and education establishments to cross check the suitability and motivation of prospective foster carers.

In addition and in line with guidance from Fostering Network and BAAF, all households who provide respite care for children and young people in placement, are now assessed as foster carers, with full statutory enquiries taken up. This is also presented to panel for approval.

Nexus Fostering provides all local authorities with information about its services and results of inspections.

The appointment of a training co-ordinator has consolidated the training provided to foster carers, administrative, support and social work staff.

The administrative team has been expanded and continues to offer a comprehensive and excellent service to ensure that records are maintained, and services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner. To support this, the area managers now undertake 3 monthly audits of children and carer files.

Nexus Fostering has ensured that there are a range of other support services – through appointment of experienced and able panel members, a team of outreach workers, liaison with local education and CAMHS services- to ensure that children and young people in placement are able to develop each child's potential.

The fostering service will need to make better effort to help ensure that improvements in attendance and engagement are made with foster carers who have a consistently poor attendance at training courses, support groups and failure to do regular recordings as required by the placement agreement.

Staff and sessional workers have clear contracts and are provided with job descriptions that outline their duties and responsibilities.

The majority of Nexus Fostering staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and come from a range of professional and other backgrounds. At the time of this inspection, the agency was in the process of recruiting an additional qualified social worker to compliment staff in the Birmingham office.

Staffing levels remain high and Nexus Fostering has developed a retention policy and remuneration package to ensure that staff turnover remains extremely low.

All foster carers are visited regularly – and the agency expects this to be on a minimum of a fortnightly basis. This may vary to 3 weekly or monthly where children and young people have been in permanent placement for over a year.

The supervision record for these visits has been updated in line with the 5 ECM outcomes. This is then incorporated into the monthly report sent to the local authority by the supervising worker.

All foster carers are provided with bi-monthly newsletters with details of training, support groups, agency developments and national fostering news. Additionally, carers receive a foster carer handbook, and sign their foster agreement that details the expectations of the agency, and what the agency will provide for the foster carers. All foster carers receive information from the Fostering Network that provides regular magazines as part of the membership. Nexus Fostering has obtained for all approved foster carers.

Nexus Fostering has updated the recording maintained for children and young people so that each file now has a front sheet with details that are updated every 3 months. The relevant manager audits this. The front sheets have been enhanced with information about education, health and link into our leaving care monitoring system.

Nexus has enhanced its database to allow greater updated information about the carers and children to be safely and securely accessed by the agency's on call workers on a weekly basis. The permanency service is now securely established. Part of this has been to promote and partake in the production of life story work for young people and children placed.

Records of carers, children, young people and staff are kept in individual folders for confidentiality and administrative control. There is also a system of securely archiving files.

The agency's management and development plan include ensuring confirmation of updated job descriptions and person specifications, further management training & development day, continued support for managers to undertake qualifications to benefit their job roles and review of the appraisal system for all management and staff.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

**4** Standard Exceeded (Commendable)      **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)  
**2** Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)      **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	4
<b>6</b>	4
<b>8</b>	4
<b>9</b>	4
<b>15</b>	3
<b>30</b>	4

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

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

<b>ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	4
<b>29</b>	4

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

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

### 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	FS1	The fostering service should ensure that the children and young people's guide to the service is reviewed, written in language and style that reflect the younger and older range of the children and young people.
2	FS23	The fostering service will need to make better effort to help ensure that improvements in attendance and engagement are made with the minority of foster carers who have a consistently poor attendance at training courses, support groups and failure to do regular recordings as required by the placement agreement.

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