



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fostering Services Rotherham

**Crinoline House
Effingham Square
Rotherham
S65 1AW**

Lead Inspector
Alan Bartrop

Announced Inspection
7th November 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Fostering Services Rotherham
Address	Crinoline House Effingham Square Rotherham S65 1AW
Telephone number	01709 382121
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Gill Black
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 07/03/05

Brief Description of the Service:

The Rotherham Fostering Service is based on the 4th floor of Crinoline House, the main Social Services offices in Rotherham.

The service provides foster care for children and young people who are being looked after by the Local Authority. They can be subject to care orders or may be voluntarily accommodated under the terms of The Children Act 1989.

The fostering team is responsible for meeting the placement needs of the children referred to the service. In order to meet these needs the fostering service recruits, assess and trains foster carers. The service also supports and trains existing carers.

Alongside family based care the department operates a "Families Together" Scheme, which specifically links families to carers for children with disabilities for respite care. The department has also set up a Specialist /Crisis /Remand, a fee paying scheme that aims to provide family based care for young people with specific needs, there are plans to develop this scheme further.

The fostering service and foster carers have access to a range of multi -agency projects to assist foster carers in meeting the individual needs of the children in their care.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection covered 5 days and included meeting Foster Parents, Children in Foster Care, discussions with Managers of the Fostering Service, meeting the Fostering Team, Meeting Councillor Shaun Wright, observing a Fostering Panel meeting, and attending a Foster Carer Support Meeting.

Questionnaires were sent out to children who were in foster Care, Foster Carers, and Placing social Workers.

What the service does well:

The foster carers feel that they get a lot of support from their supervising social workers and that there is always help on hand if they get stuck.

There are good networks where foster carers can get mutual support from each other and there are support groups that are well attended.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection there has been a manager appointed with sole responsibility for ensuring the fostering service runs in a manner that meets the needs of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the foster carers.

The team of social workers have become more focussed on developing the service and responding to the strong leadership provided.

The foster carers said that they were receiving better and more frequent supervision which they appreciated.

What they could do better:

There is a need to increase the visiting to some foster carers to ensure that they get their supervision at the required frequency.

There could be advantages in setting up evening and weekend training as well as support groups for male carers.

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

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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

12

The fostering support workers give both individual support to the foster carers and arrange group meetings, with invited speakers, where topics can be discussed and mutual support networks developed among the foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers confirmed that they received regular visits from their support workers, as well as easy contact arrangements by telephone should a requirement for urgent advice become necessary.

There were 2 instances noted where the support did not meet the requirements.

Records were filed in the case records of the foster carers stating what had been discussed during the supervision visits and whether or not the children placed had been seen.

Foster carers said that they were given as much detail as possible about the young people who were being considered as a placement with them.

Where emergency placements are made the fostering support workers and field social workers get the information to them as soon after the placement has been made as possible.

There are records of training being offered covering health and hygiene issues and the foster carers had received training on first aid.

The young people placed are registered with local health care professionals if they are intended to be in a long term placement and if not then there are provisions made to ensure that they receive treatment as needed.

The foster carers said that they were expected to provide information about the children's health needs for reviews. This can be difficult in instances where the reviews are called at short notice.

The records that are used for retrieving the information that the foster carers provide to reviews are diaries that contain information about all the children placed in the home, this system raises questions about confidentiality and how these records move with the young people from placement to placement. It is recommended that a different system is used so that confidentiality and continuity of records can be improved.

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

3,6,8,9,15,30

There is a recruitment policy that is followed and covers the elements required by the Commission For Social Care Inspection.

The foster carers had adequate accommodation to meet the needs of the children placed with them.

The placement of young people with foster carers is carefully considered and the foster carer is consulted prior to placement to ensure that they agree the service they can offer will meet the needs of the child.

The information on protecting children is included in training sessions and the foster carers are aware of what constitutes abuse and what action they should take if they had any concerns in this area.

The checks made prior to employment of staff and foster carers are extensive.

The fostering panel meets on a regular basis with an agenda and copies of reports presented to the members of the panel in advance.

EVIDENCE:

The management of the fostering service has recently been moved within Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council into a different directorate as part of a borough wide reorganisation.

The policy for the recruitment and selection of the manager of the service meets with these requirements.

During the inspection 4 foster homes were visited and the accommodation in each was of a high standard, well decorated and maintained.

Where foster carers are expected to provide transport there were details in the files that the car was appropriately insured and had a current MOT Certificate where appropriate.

All the foster carers had been informed that an inspector would be visiting them to discuss the service and were prepared to answer all my questions.

A foster carer support group was observed and at this group there was a guest speaker who addressed child protection and reviews of children.

Foster carers said that they had received training on the protection of children and what they should do if they had any suspicions that this may be happening.

Male foster carers said that most of the courses on the protection of children were run during the weekday and that this meant that they could not always get because of their work commitments. They requested that some of these courses be put on either in the evenings or at weekends.

Some male foster carers also requested that groups be set up for men, as they felt that different aspects of a child's welfare could be discussed in a more conducive environment from their perspective.

Reports in some foster carer's files stated that the Foster Panel Meeting was not quorate and that the decisions about placements out of category were to be ratified at the next meeting, but the report from this meeting was not included in the file.

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

7,13,31

The fostering service provides a good level of support to ensure that the foster carers can provide the support that a child placed with them needs.

There is a lot of emphasis placed on providing the children in foster care with a good level of education.

Short term breaks are arranged with the foster carers and facilities are put in place to meet the needs on a short term basis.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers confirmed that their training had included issues of ethnicity of the young people and the different needs of young people from different backgrounds.

Foster carers also said that they felt confident that if they were expected to look after a child with a different ethnic background they would receive guidance at the time of the placement and throughout the period that the child stayed with them.

Where foster carers are asked to look after children with disabilities they said that they had had appropriate training and that the support they could call on was good quality.

There are different specialist workers whose role it is to enable as many young people as possible to attend full time education.

There are different arrangements in place to re-introduce young people into school and the foster carers said that the schools in their areas were very good at helping the young people integrate.

The changes in the child's school and the difficulties that they could encounter are covered in the training sessions and support group discussions.

Foster carers said how helpful it was to be able to discuss, with other foster carers, any difficulties they were having as this enabled them to keep a realistic perspective on the situation.

Short term breaks are arranged with the full involvement of the foster carers and the young people effected.

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

10,11

There were clear arrangements for the foster children regarding the frequency and nature of their contact with their birth parents.

There was good evidence that the young people were consulted about the different aspects of their lives and the care they received.

EVIDENCE:

Case files stated what the contact arrangements between the young people and their birth parents should be and how this would be facilitated.

The foster cares confirmed that contact had been included in their training and that they were kept informed of what the arrangements were with respect to the children that they looked after.

Young people said that they were asked about the meetings with their parents and that they felt their views were generally listened to.

The young people said that their foster parents often asked what they wanted and they were involved in planning activities.

The young people said that their foster parents were patient when asking for their opinions and waiting for their answer.

The young people interviewed were confident that they could make a complaint and knew that there was a complaints procedure that was written with young people in mind.

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

29

There is a safe system for making payments to foster parents, but it is not always easy to identify what the payments are for, as these details are not individually itemised on the payment slips.

EVIDENCE:

The foster carers said that they received the allowances that they were due and that they knew when their claims had to be in by to meet the next payment date.

The pay slips did not itemise the different amounts that went to make up the payment and this made it very difficult for foster carers who had been providing respite to identify what the payments were for.

Generally the foster carers felt that they were paid the amount of allowance and expenses that they were due to.

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

17,21,24

There is a specialist fostering team who work together to provide a good service to the foster carers, in order that they in turn can offer a good service to the fostered children.

There are clear expectations of how the staff and foster carers will work together and the case records are kept to a standard format so that different workers can find the information they require.

EVIDENCE:

The case load of the support workers is larger than ideal but they are committed to offering the support that the foster carers have a right to expect.

There are regular supervision sessions held between the manager of the service and the social workers within the team.

The recruitment policies of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council for foster carers are aimed at getting a wide range of experience within the pool of foster carers.

Foster carers said that they had been asked if they know of anyone who may be interested in becoming a foster carer and undertaking the training.

Foster carers said that the recruitment process that they had gone through was thorough and testing.

There is a clear strategy for working with foster carers and this is known by the members of the fostering team.

The communication between the foster carers, support workers, and the child's social worker is varied. All the foster carers said that communication between them and their support worker was very good, the communication with the child's social worker was not always good, but varied greatly.

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	2

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

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

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
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	3
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	3
26	3
27	3
28	3
32	3

no

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS12	17	The foster carer shall be visited and supervised by the support worker at a suitable frequency.	01/03/05

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	FS15	A support group aimed predominantly at male foster carers be set up.
2	FS15	Evening and weekend courses be set up to help foster carers who work Monday to Friday.
3	FS30	Additional arrangements be made to enable the Foster panel to maintain its quorum.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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