



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Bristol Social Services Fostering Service

**The Cottage
Avonvale Road
Redfield
Bristol
BS5 9RH**

Lead Inspector
Paul Clark

Key Announced Inspection
13th November 2006 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	Bristol Social Services Fostering Service
Address	The Cottage Avonvale Road Redfield Bristol BS5 9RH
Telephone number	0117 9548604
Fax number	0117 9412103
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Bristol City Council (Social Services & Health)
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Christine Teller/Karen Gazzard
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 6th March 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Bristol City Council's fostering service team is part of the children's services division and based in a former school building at Avonvale Road in Redfield, Bristol.

The resource is central for providing services to 'Looked After Children' in Bristol. The service provides for over 600 'Looked after Children' in Bristol; 80% are within the foster care service placed with 'in-house' foster carers. Children are also placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

Next to its considerable size the service also covers a wide range of essential key areas and supports a wide variety and styles of fostering such as Mainstream Family Placements, Fostering Plus (a specialist team of foster carers with a wider set of competencies), Three Remand carers (Youth Justice), A team of carers for emergency placements, work with Relinquished Babies.

The team also deals with all aspects of adoption.

The following additional services are also based at Avondale Road.

Birth Parent Counselling

Section 51 Counselling

Foster Panels

Commissioning team

Access to Resources Panel

The Adoption Panel meets at The Council House.

Core services are provided by 3 distinct teams each providing particular aspects of service delivery and supervised by a team manager:

Recruitment Team: Recruitment, training and assessment of foster carers and adopters. Initial support for foster carers recently approved (up to six months). Preparing and supporting carers during their first reviewing process.

Permanency Team: Support for long-term foster carers and their regular review. Assessment and support of prospective adopters.

Support Team: Support and regular review of short-term foster carers and family finding. Out of Hours support (Overall management).

A fourth team provides a Family Link Service for disabled children and operates largely independently from the fostering services with its own 'Statement of Purpose' and Children's Guide. This team provides a range of additional services specific to the needs of disabled children such as Support groups including BSL interpreters, support for deaf carers, boys and girls groups for disabled children.

The Kinship workers/service are based with the long-term/permanency team and has two workers. Their task is to identify and support approximately 40 Kinship Carers in Bristol. This service maintains a strong link to the 'Hadley Centre for Adoption and Fostering' (University of Bristol) to promote best practise by linking research, training and practise.

There is a 'Policy and Protocol' for monitoring Private Fostering and the authority keeps a register of children who are privately fostered.

All teams maintain strong links with the local Clinical Psychology Service team, the Education of Looked After Children Service (ECLAS) and the Avonside Foster Carers' Association. There are 2 designated Looked After Children (LAC) nurses who are employed by the Health Authority in their Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) but who work as part of the LAC service. There is a formal link with the local 'Connexions' service. There is a service level agreement with 'Voice of the Child in Care' who provide an advocacy service for young people placed. There is a LAC Strategy Group who plan and promote support and activities.

The senior management of Bristol Children and Young People's Services fostering also supports regular meetings between AFCA, City Councillors and the Director of Social Services and Health.

A Fostering Panel meets fortnightly to consider foster carers approvals and annual reviews. This is Chaired by a manager of the authority who is independent of the service.

The fostering service is part of the newly- structured Children and Young People Service following implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Bristol on 1 April 2006, linking with Education, Health and other relevant agencies to form a cohesive service for young people.

SUMMARY

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

This was Bristol Social Services Fostering Services' fifth inspection under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. The inspection was conducted by two Inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) over a five-day period and included visits to the agency offices and foster care households. Evidence was gathered from a variety of sources including:

- Attendance at the Fostering Panel
- Case tracking
- Questionnaire survey and discussion with carers
- Questionnaire survey and meeting with children
- Meeting with supervising social workers
- Meeting with locality social workers
- Meeting with ECLAS workers
- Meeting with LAC Nurses
- Meeting with Clinical Psychologist
- Attending a LAC Review
- Discussion with management team
- Examination of records held
- Pre-inspection information

The Inspectors were assisted by the management team in all aspects of the inspection process and given free access to all necessary records and information.

The overall quality rating for this service is good.

The Family Placement teams have a wide range of highly demanding duties and responsibilities. The Inspectors found them to be highly skilled and motivated teams, which are well managed.

The Family Link Service was only inspected over a half-day period and this part of the service will be subject to a deeper scrutiny at the next inspection.

What the service does well:

The staff teams have experienced, skilled workers committed to providing a good service to the young people.

Diversity is valued within the service

The young people benefit from being cared for in safe, healthy and nurturing environments.

The educational achievement of the young people is being addressed by the service to improve outcomes. Several young people who have received the service have moved into higher education.

The service promotes contact and consultation arrangements for the young people.

Two kinship care workers are in place and are developing the service fast and efficiently

The newsletter for foster carers is a good source of information for all stakeholders.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The introduction of a Commissioning team was very positive. It was well staffed, well supported and well managed. As mentioned in the previous report it has reduced the waiting lists for children awaiting placement and has made positive links with the private sector.

The service links with education in the form of ECLAS (Education of looked after children) was seen as positive by the service. The outcomes for children are already showing positive results in terms of overall educational achievement.

The kinship care teams have developed a consistent service that provides good support to carers.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated and improved.

Staff records now comply with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations.

Reviews of Foster Carer approvals now take place at least annually.

The service has filled the vacancies that existed for administrative support staff and this area of the service is now working efficiently.

Services to support children who are deaf have been improved.

What they could do better:

Life story work could be improved by the provision of a designated worker.

The authority should develop a policy on LAC access to computers for educational use and on safe internet use.

The Fostering Panel should include a member with medical expertise who is able to regularly attend panel meetings.

The authority should consider the provision of a personal 'Health Information Record' for young people who are 'looked after'.

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 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 at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The quality rating for this service outcome is good.

The health and well being of the young people using the service is well promoted by the policies, procedures and working practices that are in place.

EVIDENCE:

Children's health records held on their individual files were seen to be complete and up to date. However, it is recommended that the service provide young people with their own individualised, dated, health information records including such information as inoculations, illnesses, allergies etc. These records should remain with them.

There are two LAC nurses whose remit covers supporting the health of all the children in the fostering service and residential care. Fosters carers stated that support from the nurses is readily accessible and that they are a valuable resource.

The LAC nurses work closely together with the CAMHS psychology service and were able to produce evidence that they have assisted some foster carers meet the needs of the young people in their care.

The CAMHS team includes the services of a Clinical Psychologist who practitioners and fosters carers said was accessible and an invaluable source of support.

All young people who were the subject of case tracking were seen to be registered with a GP, dentist and Optician and all routine checks were being carried out at appropriate frequencies.

Advice is given to carers about what constitutes 'healthy eating' and this was seen to be being checked during monthly and annual visits and reviews.

There is a written policy included in the Foster Carer's handbook about the dangers of passive smoking to young people and how to discourage young people from smoking. However, it is suggested that this could be made more explicit, perhaps by making reference to the BAAF most recent guidance on this matter.

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 at least once during a 12 month period.

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

3,6,8,9,15&30

The quality judgement for this service outcome is good.

The service employs sound policies and procedures to protect children from abuse and carers and staff are well trained and supported in this area.

EVIDENCE:

A sample of staffing information was examined, and provided evidence of a robust recruitment procedure. Staff files contained certificates of qualification, references, evidence of interview, and most other appropriate checks. Enhanced police checks are renewed every 3 years.

The homes of the carers seen as part of the inspection were seen to be of a good standard. Each home is annually inspected by the foster service evidence of this was seen on files. All homes visited by inspectors presented as safe environments for children to live. Initial training for foster carers covers matters of health and safety and the health and safety aspects of fostering households are subject to annual inspection and review.

None of the children who responded to the questionnaires raised any concerns about their accommodation. Risk assessments for the sharing of rooms were seen to be in place. The majority of these assessments were carried out by family placement social workers.

The process of matching child need to carer skill/competence is completed by senior administrative staff in the Commissioning team. Matches are achieved with due consideration to the assessed need of the child and the positive attributes of a carer to meet these needs.

The Commissioning team use a software module, specifically designed to improve the matching system and this allows locality social workers to communicate electronically with the commissioning team and family placement teams in relation to matching resources.

The commissioning team has good administrative support and work well as a team. They are effectively led and are focused on providing best value for the organisation and quality care for the young people. They have made effective links with the private sector to provide the service they require.

The service has written information for carers on how to respond in the event that a child goes missing.

Foster carers training consistently addresses issues around children who have been abused, safe caring skills, managing behaviour and recognising signs of abuse. Foster carers interviewed knew the child protection procedures to be followed and confirmed that they were happy with the support and training they received in these areas.

Bristol's fostering service has regular panel meetings in order to meet the needs of such a large service and there is the access to resources panel. The fostering panel was seen to operate in a professional and efficient manner. However, it is required that the Fostering Panel should include a member with medical expertise who is able to regularly attend panel meetings.

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 at least once during a 12 month period.

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

7,13,31

The quality rating for this service outcome is excellent.

Diversity was seen to be valued within the service.

The educational achievement of the young people is of high importance to the service and has successfully improved educational outcomes.

The short break service is working effectively.

EVIDENCE:

The service strives to match the ethnic needs of any child placed with a foster carer. Links with the child's ethnic origins are maintained wherever possible and placements in a multi-racial area are supported if deemed an assessed need. Support groups for black and ethnic minority carers are in place and well attended. The Inspector attended one of their meetings and found them to be an active group who were committed to the fostering task.

There is evidence that the service has improved the educational outcomes for the children in their care with 9 young people who have used the service achieving places in higher education this year. Each young person's case file seen had Personal Educational Plans (PEP) in place.

The ECLAS service (Education of looked after children) has been brought into the service and staff members from ECLAS have trained family support social

workers in assisting foster carers help children reach their educational potential. Foster carers spoken to say how much they valued this input.

Foster carers were provided with computers by the service some years ago to assist young people's education and social development. However, it is recommended that the service develop a policy on safe internet use which informs foster carers how to safeguard vulnerable young people.

The inspectors recognise the positive work the service is doing to promote education within the service.

The family link team was briefly inspected as part of the fostering service inspection this year and will be subject to deeper scrutiny at the next inspection. The family link team approves family and friends as carers where this is possible and appropriate. Children placed for more than 120 days per year are monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Looked After Children system.

The service was seen to be well managed and well run. The service has improved its support for children who are deaf and a specialist worker is now in place. Several groups are in place including girls group, a boys group and monthly group for deaf children.

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 at least once during a 12 month period.

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

10,11

The quality rating for this service outcome is good.

The service promotes contact arrangements for the young people.

The service promotes consultation.

EVIDENCE:

The service makes good arrangements to ensure young people maintain contact with relatives or significant others in their lives. The preparation training for foster carers covers contact issues and the supervising social workers discuss contact arrangements with the carers during supervision. Contact arrangements are detailed in the LAC paperwork. There were no concerns raised by carers or young people about contact arrangements.

The majority of young people who responded to the inspection questionnaires stated that they felt that they were receiving a good service from the foster carers.

Children have the opportunity of expressing their views to locality social workers through the consultation process in preparation for LAC reviews and from monthly monitoring visits by supervising social workers. The children's guide gives clear advice on how to make complaints and contains a range of useful addresses.

It was noted that although in house training on life story work had been made available to carers and social workers there was little evidence that this work was being carried out. Life story work plays a prominent part in supporting young people not living at home and it is recommended that the service consider ways of being more actively involved in this area of practice eg. perhaps by identifying a dedicated worker in this field.

Children's feedback is included in foster carers annual reviews. The commissioning of Voice for the Child in Care (VCC) to provide a generic advocacy service for young people, including Looked After and Children is in place.

Discussions with young people and information in the questionnaires confirmed they are aware how to make a complaint.

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):

14,29

The quality rating for this service outcome is adequate.

Leisure and recreation activities for young people are well organised.

Communication between locality and supervising social workers should be improved.

EVIDENCE:

Connexions Personal Advisors support young people using the service by the provision of a range of leisure and recreational activities. Additionally, there are several support groups for young people in place provided by the fostering service eg the 'Kickass' group which provides young people with a voice for expressing points about the service; the TLC group which is a support group for the children of carers.

There is an excellent monthly newsletter ('Fostering Focus') that provides all stakeholders with an important source of information and advice about the service.

There is a written policy on fostering allowances in the foster carers' handbook. The policy states clearly what expenses the allowances are expected to cover. Details about allowances are published in recruitment information. Further payments are made automatically throughout the year.

Holiday payments and can be negotiated with the locality children's team managers but as they are dependant upon negotiation the carers felt inconsistent decisions were made. Additionally, several carers told the inspector that there were inconsistencies in the provision of additional payments and that this was in part due to poor communication between locality and supervising social workers. This was also raised by supervising social workers in reference to occasions when supervising social workers had not been given notice of LAC reviews. It is suggested that this be addressed and this will be the subject of focus at the next Inspection.

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 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

1, 2, 5 16 17 20 21 26 32

The quality rating for this service outcome is good.

The managers of the service have the appropriate skills and knowledge to manage the work effectively.

Foster carers are supported by experienced and skilled staff.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is part of the newly- structured Children and Young People Service following implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Bristol on 1 April 2006, linking with Education, Health and other relevant agencies to form a cohesive service for young people and the agency is now called 'Bristol City Council, Children and Young People's Services' (Formerly called the 'Bristol Social Services Fostering Service'). It is required that the service formally notify the Central Registration Team of the CSCI of this change of name.

The statement of purpose provides a detailed description of services provided by the service

The managers of the service are suitably qualified and demonstrated a wide range of experience and expertise in managing the service. Managers were clear about their roles and responsibilities. Team Managers plan their leave to ensure that one manager is always available.

The majority of staff employed have worked for the BSS fostering service for a number of years and are committed to its ethos and policies. Scrutiny of the foster carers files and discussion with staff confirmed that they are a skilled workforce. Supervision recording was of a good standard.

Discussions with staff members and minutes of supervision sessions confirmed Team meetings are weekly.

A duty advice line is available for carers with an additional after hours (5-12pm) service. The authorities general 'Out of Hours' service is available from 12-9am .

The service was able to provide evidence that the majority of foster carers annual reviews had been completed and that monthly monitoring visits take place and that at least one unannounced visit to the fostering household takes place.

The Foster Carer's Handbook has been recently reviewed and contains a comprehensive range of guidance and information about the service.

The fostering service supervising social workers supervise and support carers. These workers provide information, advice and support. The majority of foster carers spoken with had high praise for individuals within the team, whom they had built a good level of trust and an effective working relationship. There are systems for practical support as detailed by standard 22.7.

Two social workers in the recruitment, assessment and training team have responsibility for providing training for foster carers whilst also carrying a caseload. A training programme was seen which showed that a good range of training courses are available to foster carers. The effectiveness of training provided is evaluated from carers' feedback after each session and at their annual reviews.

There is still a shortfall in foster carers taking up training. Whilst there are little incentives in place to encourage foster carers to attend training, there is a proposal that carers attend a core of training each year as part of their approval review. This is to be commended and will be the subject of focus at the next inspection. Some foster carers spoken to expressed a wish for more specialised and focused training to meet their needs at a higher level.

Two kinship care workers are in place and provide an efficient service. Kinship carers visiting were positive about the service and the support they received. The registration and support of kinship carers is good and its management robust.

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	2

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

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	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		25	It is required that the Fostering Panel should include a member with medical expertise who is able to regularly attend panel meetings.	01/04/07
2		3	Since the previous Inspection the authority has linked with the Education Department to provide an integrated service and is now called 'Bristol City Council, Children and Young People's Services'. It is required that the service formally notify the Central Registration Team of the CSCI of this change of name.	01/02/07

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		It is recommended that the service develop a policy on

		safe internet use which informs foster carers how to safeguard vulnerable young people.
2		It is recommended that the service consider ways of being more actively involved in 'Life Story' work, perhaps by identifying a dedicated worker in this field.
2		It is recommended that the service provide young people with their own individualised, dated, health information records including such information as inoculations, illnesses, allergies etc. that remain with them.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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