



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Credo Care Limited

**12 High Street
Lydd
Romney Marsh
Kent
TN29 9AJ**

Lead Inspector
Alex Turner

Announced Inspection
9th January 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	Credo Care Limited
Address	12 High Street Lydd Romney Marsh Kent TN29 9AJ
Telephone number	0870 2414285
Fax number	0870 2414286
Email address	enquiries@credocare.co.uk
Provider Web address	www.credocare.co.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Credo Care Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Gregory Nicholls
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 2nd November 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Credo care provides foster care as an alternative to residential and hospital care for disabled children. Placements are made within the context of a detailed assessment and matching process. Placements are monitored ongoingly with reference to individual foster placement agreements in place. Foster carers are supported by a team of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Children and young people are supported to develop and maintain optimum levels of independence and functioning by the agency working in partnership with young people, their families, placing authorities and other professionals involved in their care.

SUMMARY

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

Two inspectors conducted the inspection over four days of one week in January 2006. Four foster homes were visited during the week, records were inspected, and time was spent speaking with staff and management of the service. The fostering manager, foster carers, children's social workers and children who were placed with foster carers of the service, completed preinspection questionnaires.

What the service does well:

The fostering service has been careful to ensure that the needs of children referred to the service are properly assessed and that any foster carer put forward as a potential match can meet these needs. Placement introductions have been planned out well. The fostering service does very well in providing suitable foster carers, and support services tailored to meet the needs of children with disabilities. The fostering service is commended on the work that is taking place to develop service provision for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The last inspection report was subject to contention and was unpublished at the time that this inspection took place.

What they could do better:

The registered persons need to ensure administrative records are maintained as required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. Written guidance and information provided to foster carers needs to be built upon and developed. Consultation with children who are fostered needs to be improved.

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 fostering service carefully considers and ensures the health and development needs of children placed are addressed.

EVIDENCE:

Prior to placements there is an assessment of children's health care needs and arrangements made to ensure that these needs can be met by the foster carers and local health care services. Information about children's health care has been provided to the foster carers. Foster carers have updated records regarding children's health care needs as placements have progressed. Training has been provided to foster carers where this has been necessary in order to address specific needs and to provide specialised health care support. The expectations placed on foster carers regarding children's health have been included in foster care agreements and foster placement agreements. The fostering service has established links with the local looked after children's nurse and various other health care professionals including continence services, physiotherapists, occupational therapist, and speech and language services.

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 and 30

The persons carrying on and managing the fostering service are suitable to do so.

The fostering service takes care to ensure that children are placed with foster carers whose homes are suited to meet their needs.

The matching process used by the fostering service is thorough and serves to ensure suitable matches are made.

The fostering service takes seriously the need to maintain and promote children's welfare and safety and by doing so has contributed to protecting children from abuse and neglect.

The recruitment process is such that it ensures that people working for the fostering service are suitable to do so.

The fostering panel is operated in a manner that serves to ensure foster carers approvals and reviews are scrutinised and carried out in a proper manner.

EVIDENCE:

The persons managing and carrying on the service have undergone the checks and interviews required for registration with satisfactory outcomes. No

information has come to light suggesting that these people are no longer suitable to fulfil their designated roles.

The foster carers homes visited during this inspection were found to be providing care to children in safe, healthy and nurturing environments. From the records inspected and visits to foster homes it has been found that care is taken to ensure that foster carers are approved to look after only the amount of children that can be comfortably accommodated in their home. Where children's needs require environmental adaptations it was found that these adaptations have been made in consultation and following the advice of appropriate health care professionals. Foster carers preparation and training incorporates health and safety issues. A recommendation has been made concerning written guidelines to foster carers on their health and safety responsibilities under standard 22. A recommendation has also been made to ensure that vehicles with adaptations used by foster carers to transport looked after children are maintained and tested at appropriate intervals with regards to the safety of the adaptations made.

Records demonstrated that matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child (subject to their age and understanding) and her/his family (where appropriate) and the potential carers, their families and other children in placement. The written foster placement agreements contain some reference to elements of matching taken into consideration in agreeing the placement. Placement agreements identified areas where foster carers needed additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match and what arrangements had been made to address these. The matching process addressed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs. There was evidence that where practicable, children have the opportunity for a period of introduction to a proposed foster carer so she/he can express an informed view about the placement and become familiar with the foster home, the carers and their families. The foster service has where it has been appropriate and practicable to do so also arranged visits to the homes of children to be placed by potential carers. This has enabled foster carers to learn how the child being matched is currently cared for and to begin to build relationships with them and their current carers. This is recognised as good practice exceeding the standard, for which the foster service is commended.

Contributing to the aim of promoting children's welfare and safety the training programme for foster carers has included child protection, safe caring skills, managing behaviour and ways of enhancing confidence. Some very good examples of safe caring policies were seen though the recommendation has been made to evidence that these are cleared with placing social workers. The foster care agreement stipulates that corporal punishment is not acceptable. Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. There have been no such allegations in the last 12 months.

Records demonstrating the recruitment process used by the fostering service illustrate that there is an awareness of the checks that must be carried out and that these have been conducted in a proper manner. People employed to carry out social work functions are suitably qualified to do so. Staff spoken to demonstrated a good level of knowledge in relation to their role and of specific issues relevant to children placed and foster carers looking after them.

The fostering panel is guided by clear written procedures that include guidance in the event where all panel members are not in agreement. The fostering service ensures the suitability of panel members by carrying out recruitment checks that include checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. It was reported at the time of this inspection that efforts are being made to seek a medical advisor to work more closely with the service. The constitution of the panel at the time of this inspection was in the process of change with the appointment of a new panel chair and panel members. The panel chair is suitably experienced and qualified. The chair was able to confirm that they had undergone an interview and that checks had been carried out. The chair was clear about the quality assurance role of the panel and asserted independence in relation to this function and in the overall role of chairing the fostering panel. Current panel membership includes people who work in a professional capacity with children with disabilities and have expertise in education. At the time of this inspection none of the independent members was a person who had at any time been placed with foster carers or who had a child who had at any time been placed with foster carers.

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, and 31

The fostering service has maintained focus on recognising and valuing diversity and has provided services that meet children’s individual needs.

Children’s education is treated seriously and support has been provided to ensure suitable educational provision is made.

The fostering service’s provision of short-term breaks is described for information purposes. No rating is given under standard 31 as the provision falls outside the regulatory definition of short-term placements.

EVIDENCE:

The foster service provides placements exclusively to children with physical and / or learning disabilities. The assessment and matching process has taken into account children’s gender, religion, ethnic origin, communication needs, culture and disabilities. Training provided to foster carers includes training that covers ways in which to enhance children’s confidence, helping children to deal with discrimination and to help foster carers understand and promote cultural identity. Records, foster carers and feedback from placing authorities all indicate that the fostering service has ensured that specific services and support is arranged including appropriate equipment and adaptation of the carer’s home and/or vehicle. At the time of this inspection work was underway to gain accreditation with the National Autistic Society. The agency is developing procedures and practices in line with this aim and has amongst the

staff a designated autism specialist taking the lead in this area. The agency is commended for the proactive approach.

From speaking with foster carers and staff it was clear that a high priority is placed on securing suitable educational provision for children placed through the agency. Foster placements agreements set out the arrangements that have and / or are being made with regard to this aspect of support provided. It was noted that a preschool placement also benefited from arrangements that secured suitable daytime services to enhance children's development. The fostering service is clear in its expectations of carers to contribute to meeting children's educational needs. Records and discussion with foster carers indicated that these expectations are complied with in partnership with the agencies staff and other professionals involved. The fostering service is developing systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.

The fostering service provides the facility to local authorities to place children with carers on a short-term basis of up to 8 weeks, after returning to the care of their parents. In these instances the normal matching process takes place prior to the first placement being made with the proposed foster carer. The manager explained that if a subsequent short-term placement is made with the same carers the original matching process is referred to and any additional matching factors taken into account. If subsequent placements are made with different carers the matching process starts afresh. This arrangement differs from short-term placements as defined in the fostering service regulations (reg. 37). The facility is commented upon under this standard in order to highlight the provision. It should be noted that these placements are managed by the fostering service in the same way that longer-term placements are with respect to the ensuring the health, education and other welfare needs of children can be and are addressed.

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 fostering service has supported children to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships.

The fostering service values the contribution to providing a quality service that consultation brings.

EVIDENCE:

Contact arrangements are included in the details included in the placement agreement. The expectation placed upon foster carers to encourage, maintain and develop family contacts and friendships is articulated in the foster care contract. Ways in which children have been supported in this area has included phone calls, pictures, visits, transport to contact centres, and the provision of staff and carers to supervise contact where it has been agreed as appropriate to do so. Training provided to carers has included training that covers promoting good contact. Records kept include accounts of the outcomes of contact and the perceived impact on children and this information has been relayed to children's social worker. Arising from discussions with the fostering service staff and management is the recommendation that the fostering service should consider articulating to placing authorities and where appropriate to parents of children the circumstances which contact with looked after children will and will not be supported with regards to promoting and safeguarding children's best interests.

The fostering service has provided training to assist carers to communicate with children. Measures to facilitate communication include picture exchange and signing. In partnership with carers and placing authorities the fostering service has worked to ensure that children are consulted with prior to statutory

care reviews. It was noted that carers, their birth children, their supervising social worker and the social worker of the children placed with them are consulted as part of the carer's annual review. Consultation with children being looked after has not been occurring, as it should (subject to children's age and understanding). The requirement to do so has been made. Foster carers have confirmed in pre-inspection questionnaires that they have been provided with information how to raise any concerns or complaints.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

29

The fostering service has paid carers allowances and expenses in accordance with their written procedures.

EVIDENCE:

No concerns have come to light during the process of this inspection regarding the payment of allowances and expenses to foster carers. There is a written policy on fostering allowances. It has been confirmed that information about allowance levels is provided to carers.

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, and 24 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, 4, 5, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 & 26

The fostering agency provides clear and accurate information about the service it provides. Quality-assurance is ongoing. Staffing arrangements were managed in line with service needs. The fostering service has clear strategies for working with and supporting foster carers. Children benefit from foster covers who are trained and supported to look after them safely. Case files were maintained such that they provided clear and up to date information. Administrative records were professionally prepared and maintained though

not entirely complete in terms of meeting regulatory requirements. The premises were suitable for the purposes of the fostering service.

EVIDENCE:

The Statement of Purpose is clearly written and provides accurate information about the fostering service. The recommendation is made to include in the document details relating to the process to review foster carers approval with the agency. A children's guide has been produced. The guide is presented in a format suited to the younger person and has been produced in a written format and on DVD (audio visual media). The registered manager has confirmed that the guide is to be produced in other formats in order to reflect the diversity of children placed through the fostering service.

Systems to monitor the activities of the fostering service and ensure quality performance are in place. These systems could better process the outcomes to consultation exercises and more clearly illustrate development and trends in the reporting format. From discussion with carers and those working for the fostering service it was ascertained that there are clear roles for managers and staff and well-established lines of communication and of accountability between managers, staff and carers. Arrangements are in place for suitably qualified and experienced person to deputise in the manager's absence.

Day to day operational management has been effective. Fosters carers assessments, approvals and reviews have been conducted in a timely and professional manner. Duties and responsibilities were clearly established in the team. Those working for the fostering service were being properly supervised and supported in their work. The administrative team were organised and efficient. Job descriptions and person specification were in place or being developed. Recommendations have been made to ensure access to legal and benefits advice for foster carers.

Foster carers receive regular practice supervision from suitably trained and qualified staff. The foster care agreements inspected set out key issues in relation to children and young peoples placements though must also include the points set out in the requirements section of this report. The fostering service is required to produce a handbook for carers that include the fostering services policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details. Foster carers have made very positive comments regarding the level of support that they receive which includes out of hours cover and respite.

The fostering service has organised pre approval, induction and ongoing training for foster carers. The manager has reported there have been 26 training courses arranged for foster carers in the last 12 months including the skills to foster programme and supporting training to attain National Vocational Qualifications. Specialist courses have been arranged prior to placements for

foster carers needing to deliver specialised health care tasks. Positive comments about training were included in foster carers pre-inspection questionnaires. Foster carers annual review reports include a summary of training and development needs. The recommendation is made to develop from this an appraisal of each foster carers professional development and training status.

Administrative records were well organised, easily retrieved and in the main comprehensive. Children and young peoples case notes and foster carers files were to a good standard. Record management took into account confidentiality and security. Requirements made regard to specific information that must be retained and written notifications to the Commission and foster carers.

The premises were suitable for the purposes of the fostering service. The office is accessible to staff during normal office hours. Administrative systems, including IT and communication systems were functioning well. There are facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room. Measures are taken to safeguard IT systems and prevent access to the premises by unauthorised persons.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	2
8	4
9	3
15	3
30	2

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	2

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

The last report was not agreed or published.

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.	FS10	29(3)(b)(2)	The fostering service provider shall when undertaking a review of a foster carers approval, subject to the child's age and understanding seek and take into account the views of any child placed with the foster parent.	14/04/06
2.	FS4	42(3)	The registered manager shall ensure that the system to monitor and improve the quality of care provided incorporates consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their responsible authority.	14/04/06
3.	FS22	17(1)	The fostering service provider shall ensure that on approval, carers are given a handbook, which covers policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details and that this is updated regularly.	14/06/06
4.	FS22	28(5)(b) sch 5.5	The fostering service provider shall include in the foster care agreement the arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster parent arising by	14/03/06

			reason of a placement.	
5.	FS22	34(3) sch 6.5	The registered manager shall ensure that placement agreements include the arrangements for visits to the child by the person authorised by or on behalf of the responsible authority, and the frequency of visits and reviews under the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991(a).	14/03/06
6.	FS25	30(3)(a)	The registered manager shall ensure that the record of each placement with the foster parent also includes the sex of each child placed and when applicable the circumstances which the placements end.	14/03/06
7.	FS25	29(7)	The registered manager shall ensure that following a review of a foster carers approval if, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, the fostering service provider is no longer satisfied that the terms of the approval are appropriate, it shall— (a) give written notice to the foster parent that it proposes to revise the terms of approval together with its reasons, and (b) invite the foster parent to submit any written representations within 28 days of the date of the notice.	14/03/06
8.	FS25	29(6)	The registered manager shall ensure that following a review of a foster carers approval if the fostering service provider decides, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, that the foster parent and his household continue to be suitable and that the terms of his approval continue to be appropriate, it shall give written notice to the	14/03/06

			foster parent of its decision.	
9.	FS25	43(1) sch 8	The registered manager shall ensure that notifications are sent to the Commission in line with regulatory requirements.	01/03/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS6	The registered manager should ensure that information is available to staff and to foster carers regarding how to ensure that vehicles with adaptations used by foster carers to transport looked after children are maintained and tested at appropriate intervals with regards to the safety of the adaptations made.
2.	FS9	The registered manager should ensure that the safe caring guidelines for each foster home are cleared with children's social worker.
3.	FS30	The fostering service provider should aim to have one of the independent members of the panel a person who has at any time been placed with foster carers or who has a child who has at any time been placed with foster carers.
4.	FS30	The fostering service provider should ensure the fostering panel has access to medical expertise as required.
5.	FS10	The registered manager should consider articulating to placing authorities and where appropriate to parents of children the circumstances which contact with looked after children will and will not be supported with regards to promoting and safeguarding children's best interests.
6.	FS1	The registered manager should produce the children's guide in formats that reflects the diversity of children placed through the agency.
7.	FS16	The registered manager should ensure that carers have access to advice regarding benefit payments that they or the children they are looking after may be entitled to.
8.	FS16	The registered manager should ensure that carers are clearly informed of the expectations placed upon them in the instance that Disability Living allowance or any other benefits are being paid to the children that are placed with them.

9.	FS16	The registered manager should ensure that carers have access to legal advice.
10.	FS23	The registered manager should ensure that each carer's Annual Review includes an appraisal of training and development needs, which is documented in the review report.
11.	FS25	The fostering service provider should consider adding to the staff register the details of each of the fostering panel members.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Kent and Medway Area Office

11th Floor

International House

Dover Place

Ashford Kent

TN23 1HU

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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