



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service

**Children`s Resource Team
Moor House
Widemarsh Common
Hereford
Herefordshire
HR4 9NA**

Lead Inspector
Dawn Taylor

Announced Inspection
8th – 17th January 2007 9:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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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	Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering Service
Address	Children`s Resource Team Moor House Widemarsh Common Hereford Herefordshire HR4 9NA
Telephone number	01432 262830
Fax number	01432 279096
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Herefordshire Local Authority Fostering
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Rebecca Plato John Dudley
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 6th March 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Herefordshire Council operates a Children's Resource Team comprising adoption and fostering services. The Children's Service Manager (Resources) is responsible for the overall management of this Resource Team. The Fostering Team Manager is responsible for the fostering service and carries responsibilities in relation to the adoption team in the absence of its manager.

The family placement social workers who comprise the two teams may carry both fostering and adoption caseloads with the equivalent of 6 full time workers being allocated to the fostering service.

The service's statement of purpose states that the service provides a range of placement types including emergency contract care, short term and long-term foster care, kinship, shared and respite care, middle years and teenage placement schemes.

The service undertakes recruitment, assessment, support and training of carers. It is involved in the provision of a wide range of services for children looked after by Herefordshire Council.

SUMMARY

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

This summary has been written in the following style to make it easy for children and young people to read.

Three inspectors visited the fostering service between 8th January and 17th January 2007, so that the inspectors could see how well the service was doing.

- The inspectors visited two shared care foster carers and birth parents. This meant the inspectors could meet the children and young people.
- An inspector met with the manager and staff from the fostering team.
- An inspector observed the fostering panel that are responsible for approving and reviewing all foster carers.
- Fifteen young people returned questionnaires telling the inspector what they felt about living with foster carers.
- Twenty-four children's social workers responsible for young people placed with foster carers returned questionnaires telling inspectors how well they felt the young people were being looked after.
- Thirty-three foster carers returned questionnaires telling inspectors about how much support they received from the fostering team to help them look after the young people placed with them.
- The inspectors looked at files and records.

If you want to get a full picture of what is like to live with foster carers under Herefordshire Council you might like to read the full report. You can get this from the address on the front page.

What the service does well:

These are some of the good things that the inspectors found out about the fostering service.

- Foster carers help young people to be healthy. They make sure all children and young people can see a doctor, dentist and optician whenever they need to. The fostering service has developed good health support for children and carers and employs a nurse who works with carers and young people to advise on health issues.
- Foster carers help and support young people with their education and support young people with their schoolwork when needed. Good support is in place for foster carers and young people when not in school through the Education Liaison Support Service.
- The shared carer foster homes visited were welcoming, warm and comfortable.
- Children and young people said in questionnaires that they felt well cared for by their foster carers.
- The fostering service makes sure that foster carers understand the importance of having regular contact with family and friends wherever

- possible.
- The fostering service check and assess foster carers to make sure they are the right sort of people to look after children and young people.
 - The fostering service makes sure the children's social worker gives foster carers the information they need to look after children and young people properly.
 - The fostering service listens to children and young people and has created several groups so young people can express their views and opinions.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- The fostering service has developed a health passport record for children and young people, for foster carers to record all medical appointments and treatment in one document, and which can then be given to young people at the end of being looked after.
- The fostering service offers specialist training to foster carers specific to the needs of the young people they look after.
- The fostering service is developing a new form for when children and young people are referred so that social workers can make sure they are placed with the right foster carers and are kept safe.
- Since the last inspection there are more social workers working for Herefordshire fostering service.

What they could do better:

- The fostering service need to make sure that foster carers who smoke are not allowed to have placed with them babies, very young children and those children with health problems.
- All foster carers should be aware of whom to contact in the case of a medical emergency or routine medical treatment to prevent any delay.
- The fostering service has developed safe caring plans for children and young people so that they know how to keep themselves safe in the foster carer's home. These need to be reviewed when a child or young person is placed with foster carers to make sure it meets all their needs.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csi.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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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

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

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering service provides a good service that ensures children receive health care that meets their needs. Foster carers are provided with appropriate information and are supported through training and networking to understand and proactively care for the specific health needs of the children placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

Prior to being accommodated within the Looked After System, or a short time after, a medical examination is undertaken and a written report is completed. A copy of this report is given to the foster carer prior to the child being placed.

The health needs of children are addressed in the matching process and detailed in the foster placement agreement (LAC documentation). Medical consent is stated in the foster placement agreement – Placement Plan part 1. Where medical consent has not been given by a parent and therefore has become the responsibility of the Local Authority, this should be clearly stated on the LAC Placement Plan part 1 to ensure foster carers are clear about the procedures governing consent.

Where children have specific complex healthcare needs, specialist training sessions are set up for foster carers. One file sampled contained a 'Training and Support Plan' for foster carers prior to a child living with them. This intensive programme of induction was undertaken with the support of the school nurse, physiotherapist and assistant Occupational Therapist and covered health, communication and educational needs. Continued Plan of Introduction Meetings also took place involving the child's kinship carer, future carers, Social Worker, Team Manager and Family Placement Workers for carers.

The Fostering Service has taken a lead in promoting the Healthy Care Standard for Herefordshire and a multi agency healthy care partnership has been established including membership at senior strategic level from an elected member and the Health Authority. This topic was the focus of the last 'Foster Carer Forum' where all the subjects discussed related to the holistic health and well being of a child and covered the introduction and the launch of the Anti Smoking Policy and Guidelines for the Safe Use of the Internet. Keeping good health records and why they are so important was also part of the day. The principles covered in the information session were also covered in the Foster Carer Newsletter sent out at Christmas 2006 and is also being discussed with all foster carers by their Family Placement Social Workers.

The training programme for foster carers in 2006/2007 includes mandatory training on first Aid and drug awareness and Mental Health Awareness Sessions. The Transitions Mental Health Worker is going to run some specific training on drug awareness and its impact on mental health for foster carers with teenagers.

An agency medical advisor leads the coordination and development of health services for looked after children in Herefordshire. A full time health visitor holds responsibility for looked after children through health promotion, advice to carers and staff, direct work with young people and ensuring statutory timescales for health are met. Their role also includes membership of the Fostering panel where they act as medical advisor to that panel.

All children are registered with a G.P., remaining with their own where possible. Foster carers are provided with a mechanism to record appointments for health care professionals including GP, dentistry and other health care consultants. In questionnaires, both foster carers and children felt that the standard of health care provided by Herefordshire Primary Care was either excellent or good.

The fostering service are currently researching a range of existing tools so that they can develop their own 'Health Passport' for foster carers to record any health intervention for children whilst in their care. It is expected that this will be updated during the child's placement and will move with the child at the end of being looked after. This is considered a good practice model.

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

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

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The Fostering service promotes and safeguards the children's physical, mental and emotional welfare. In matching children with carers Herefordshire take into account the care plan and written assessments of the child and their family and the foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers undertake health and safety training as part of their preparation training and a rolling programme of in house training. Written guidelines on these issues are contained in the Carers' Handbook.

Foster carer's files contained evidence that each home is checked a minimum of annually to make sure it meets the needs of the children placed. Health and safety assessments are undertaken of the foster carer's homes and regularly reviewed to ensure the home and immediate environment are free of avoidable hazards. Two shared foster carer's homes were visited as part of this inspection and were found to be warm, comfortable and child friendly.

Relevant documents on car and house insurances are maintained on file and checked annually by the Family Placement Social Workers prior to the carer's annual review.

From the examination of case files and discussions with staff it is clear that Herefordshire fostering services match children appropriately to foster carers. The fostering duty worker or the team manager take internal referrals. A 'Child Referral Checklist' is completed in discussion with the child's social worker. Additional information is then requested to supplement the referral.

The current 'Child Referral Checklist' is in the process of being developed further. The aim is to provide better documentary evidence of the decision-making and risk assessment process in matching and will be introduced to the team in the next couple of months. It will demonstrate why a specific carer will meet the needs of a child and how gaps in that match are to be met during the placement. This information will also identify the strengths of the carers being considered. The person completing the 'Checklist' will be prompted throughout to identify risks and to whom those risks affect, including risks to children already in placement and the carer's own children. The effectiveness of this document will be dependant on how well it is completed and than the regularity of the risk management review. This will be examined at the next inspection.

When required, Herefordshire Council place adverts to recruit a foster family for a specific child or family. This was evidenced in one case file tracked where a family was recruited specifically to meet the needs of a child requiring a permanent placement. The file demonstrated a considered process that focused on meeting the complex needs of the young person and her immediate family.

The National Performance Analysis for 2005-06 has commended the stability of placements of children looked after by Herefordshire Council. Information received from children's social workers, through questionnaires sent out prior to this inspection, have also commented on how well Herefordshire fostering service provides stability and quality of care for children they look after.

The foster placement agreement is comprised of a combination of LAC documents. These are available at the outset of the placement. The majority of respondents to the foster carers' questionnaire reported that they have excellent or good information at the outset of the placement.

The service is able to provide planned placements with introductions. One file case tracked, provided clear written evidence of a planned introduction of a child to permanent foster carers - involving the child's family, school, existing respite services and professionals who were long standing in the life of that child.

The fostering service has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures on child protection. Staff and carers are aware of these procedures and understand how to address allegations, complaints, absconding and bullying.

Mandatory training for all foster carers is to be introduced in January 2007 in line with Herefordshire's Safeguarding Children Board and replaces previous ACPC training for foster carers. The Preparation Course for Prospective Carers covers understanding and managing behaviour, safe caring, child abuse and allegations.

There are management systems to monitor and evaluate information on allegations of neglect and abuse. This information informs carers' reviews and supervision sessions.

The fostering service has developed practices and policies with regards to safer caring. Each household establishes its own safe care guidelines, which is reviewed on the placement of a child. These should be cleared with the child's social worker and explained clearly and appropriately to the child. Safe caring guidelines should be further developed to ensure these reflect the individualised needs of young people placed, including any intimate and invasive care needed. As part of good practice, the child where appropriate, should be included in the drawing up and preparation of their safe caring guidelines.

Young people are invited to participate in recruiting. Training and support has been provided. They have made a substantial contribution to staff appointments up to and including the Head of Service.

Family Placement Social Workers described a clearly established process of staff recruitment. Two new staff have joined the team since the last CSCI inspection. Both were interviewed as part of the selection process and had appropriate checks undertaken prior to being confirmed in post.

Both new employees had experienced a valuable induction process that had been tailored to their individual learning needs. They confirmed that Herefordshire Council operate a Corporate Induction Training Session as well as the induction they have worked through over their probation period as part of the fostering team. Herefordshire Council have just introduced Common Induction Standards.

Recruitment records are kept of checks and references obtained and the outcomes are recorded. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are renewed every three years. Herefordshire Council has recently been subject to an assurance visit from the CRB who have stated that CSCI request to retain the CRB disclosure for one year is against CRB Code of Practice and the penalty for non-compliance is possible withdrawal of the Council's registration.

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

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

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service continues to demonstrate a positive attitude to diversity, particularly in relation to disability and is aware of it's responsibilities to meet the cultural and identity needs of young people fostered. Excellent support is given to children and young people to maximise their potential in education.

Herefordshire have made the strategic decision to contract out the short breaks service and the Commission welcomes this decision.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers receive training on valuing diversity in the Preparation Course for Prospective Carers and in post approval training.

The Service Manager discussed how she was aware of the changing cultural community within Herefordshire with single people and families immigrating from Poland and Portugal. She has begun networking with other departments to monitor this change and the potential to recruit as foster carers.

Family placement social workers were able to describe ways in which they have been able to support foster carers to promote equality and explore issues relating to sexuality, ethnicity, culture and disability with the children and young people they look after.

The files case tracked demonstrated how foster carers are supported through training, equipment and building adaptation to meet the needs of the young people placed with them.

Although specific support is given to foster carers caring for children with disabilities, comments were received from children's social workers that they felt a specialist worker dedicated to finding placements and supporting carers for children with disabilities is needed.

As identified at last year's inspection, Herefordshire Council address the educational needs of looked after children through the Educational Liaison Support Service (ELSS). This service provides a link between school and the foster placement and is able to support children and carers from pre-school to GCSE stage. The service works with schools to develop ways of maximising the potential of looked after children in education. The family placement social workers work closely with the ELSS to address the educational needs of children in placement to identify appropriate educational provision and through their contract with National Children's Homes (NCH) can help provide support to looked after children who are not in school. Family placement workers were able to describe a situation where a foster carer, who had been trained as a classroom assistant was able to be paid to help tutor a young person in her care who had been excluded from school.

Case tracking foster carers and children's files demonstrated the positive work undertaken by some carers in maintaining and promoting contact and communication with schools. In one case the child's school was involved in the induction and training of the young person's new carers. They were also involved in the transition plan for that young person to move into her new home with her new family. Personal Education Plans were available on children's files.

Eleven out of fifteen children and young people who responded to questionnaires sent out prior to this inspection stated that they receive the right help so they can be successful in their education. Twenty-four out of the thirty-three foster carers who responded to questionnaires stated that the fostering service supported them in helping the children they care for to achieve educationally.

The service maintains a database of children's educational achievements. An Annual corporate parent celebration evening recognises the achievements of Looked After Children and significant adults in their lives who are nominated by the children. An educationalist sits on the fostering panel and is able to advise on educational matters.

Education Liaison Support Services (ELSS) send out to all foster carers regular news letters that inform carers and children of holiday activities, education materials, training courses and achievement nominations.

Herefordshire council currently provides short breaks to children with disabilities across the county through its shared care scheme. The Children with Disabilities team manages this at an operational level with a line of accountability established to the fostering service.

At the last inspection the performance of this element of care was not considered consistent with that of the rest of the fostering service and had suffered from a shortage of staff. During this inspection two short break carers were visited and files examined. Evidence was seen that the provision and support of shared care still does not meet the standards of the rest of the fostering service. A number of areas would be required to be addressed if the service was to meet the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. All carers must have a Foster Care Agreement, which meets Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations and a generic safe care policy in place. This safe care policy needs to be reviewed on placement to reflect a child's individual needs and reviewed on a regular basis. Although at the time of this inspection all children receiving a short break service were only receiving a day care service, all children receiving short breaks, who are accommodated overnight, become "looked after" and require a Foster Placement Agreement which meets Schedule 6. Evidence could not be seen that this has happened. All foster carers including short break carers must also have an annual unannounced visit.

Herefordshire Council have strategically reviewed the shared care scheme and are in negotiation with a voluntary/independent provider to contract out this part of the fostering provision. It is anticipated this will take place in the next three months. This area will be re-examined at the next inspection visit.

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

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service promotes a very positive attitude to contact and has developed very good consultative practices. Children and young people are actively listened to and involved in the development of service provision.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service supports and enables carers to help children make sense of family relationships through a wide range of initiatives – e.g. life story work, diary keeping in partnership with the children, promoting positive experiences of contact and facilitating contact in their own home where possible.

Matters around contact are included in the matching and placement agreement processes. Carers receive training in their preparation course and written policies on contact are included in the carer's handbook.

The contact arrangements are set out in the Looking After Children LAC documentation (foster placement agreement). Where contact visits are supervised this is clearly stated in the foster placement agreement and on the foster carer's file. Herefordshire Council use National Children's Homes (NCH) to supervise some contact visits, where this is the case it is clearly stated in the foster placement agreement and on the foster carer's file.

It was evident from files sampled that contact with family members is promoted where appropriate. One file demonstrated how a kinship carer had been involved in planning the transition of a young person to new carers whilst continuing to provide respite.

Case file notes maintained by Family Placement Social Workers demonstrated excellent social work practice providing help and support to foster carers in dealing with and understanding difficult contact issues.

Foster carers record all contact and where appropriate there were reports from NCH on contact visits on file.

Questionnaires are circulated to children in foster care, which contribute to foster carers' annual reviews. They are also consulted prior to and following their own statutory review. Children placed can access a Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker and carers are informed, through the handbook, of how this can be achieved.

The fostering service have used imaginative consultation forums and support groups run for carers and children and young people, which include the 'Voices' project. The Voices Initiative reviews current services, works to change practice and improve outcomes for children in Herefordshire who are Looked After. It continues to grow and increasingly includes younger children and those who have special needs. The range of creative opportunities provided includes activity based sessions to contribute to the Healthy Care Programme and further development of the "Listening Tree" as a permanent channel of communication to decision makers. Three young people in care are delegates to the Shadow Children and Young People's Partnership Board. There are also a number of newsletters that are sent out regularly to children and carers from the foster team and other Herefordshire Council Departments.

Fourteen of the fifteen children who responded to questionnaires sent out prior to this inspection stated that carers always or usually listened to them and took notice of their opinions. Ten indicated that they knew how to make a complaint. Fourteen stated that they always or usually knew who to speak to if they were not happy or had a personal problem.

A support group for kinship carers has been established to enhance support and provide informal guidance for this group who are less willing to attend formal training.

A Birth Children Support Group 'FIZZ' has also been established and enables concerns and safety issues to be shared in a supportive environment.

Foster carer profiles have been developed in response to the children's suggestions, which enable choice and preparation for placements to be shared. These include pictures of the carer, their family and environment. This is a particular good example of progressive social work practice.

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):

This outcome area was not examined during this inspection. Standards were assessed as met at the last inspection.

EVIDENCE:

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, 5, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 32

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

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

Staff within the service are organised, managed effectively and deliver an efficient and effective fostering provision. The service has a clear strategy for

working with foster carers and provides a high level of support to carers. Children's and carer's records are comprehensive, well maintained and regularly audited. There were good examples through the case records that kinship carers are well supported.

EVIDENCE:

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service, which is due to be reviewed at the end of January 2007. The recent reorganisation of the 'Children and Young People's Directorate' has seen the Fostering Service repositioned within the Safeguarding and Assessment Services Division. Intensive recruitment had delivered an improvement in staffing levels amongst Family Placement Social Workers. The service has currently one full time vacancy and one full time member of staff off on long term sick. They have one agency member of staff working 22.5 hours to cover the long-term sickness. After a very busy period earlier in the year, referrals have settled down and staff consider the workload to be manageable.

Staff roles are well defined and lines of accountability are understood. The service has suitably qualified and experienced staff who are appropriately supervised. The Herefordshire fostering service have recognised there is a need for increased management capacity in the fostering service and have allocated resources to implement this.

The manager has a job description setting out duties and responsibilities. There are clear arrangements in place that identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.

There are policies and procedures in place in manuals for Family Placement Social Workers and foster carers.

Children's social workers continue to report a good working relationship with the fostering service. In response to questionnaires sent out prior to this inspection they indicated that they are happy with the levels of consultation and cooperation achieved. Thirteen out of twenty-four questionnaires returned stated that they received good or excellent information from the fostering service about the children looked after.

Records maintained by Family Placement Social Workers demonstrated regular and effective contact and communication between professionals working to meet the needs of individual children.

As identified at the last inspection, foster care assessment and annual reviews are competency based and completed to a good standard.

All foster carers have supervision contacts on file. Each foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social worker and professional support. Files demonstrated that foster carers were receiving a minimum of three supervision sessions a year with a fourth annual review visit. Records maintained, demonstrated additional effective and regular contact that was appropriate to the needs of the foster carers via telephone calls, e-mails and home visits. Information received from completed foster carer's questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality and level of support and supervision provided to them.

All foster carers have a foster care agreement in line with Schedule 5. Separate records are maintained on staff employed, carers, children, complaints and allegations.

Confidential records are stored appropriately and there is a clear policy on access.

Written entries in records by Family Placement Social Workers are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information. Good audit tools were seen on both children's files and the foster carer's files. The fostering service in particular, had a detailed checklist that demonstrated when all key documents and health and safety checks needed renewing.

Kinship care was not focused on, on this occasion, however, there were no concerns raised at the last inspection. Over the last twelve months, the team have worked hard to establish a new kinship carer's support group. Work is continuing to promote this group and increase membership.

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	X
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	X

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	2

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

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

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

yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS31	37,34,11 Sch 5&6	Provision and support of shared care must meet Fostering Services Regulations. (Timescale of 30/4/06 not met).	30/04/07

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.	FS8	A policy should be developed to indicate when risk assessments should be carried out and what they should involve. Explicit risk assessments should be integrated with the matching and safe caring processes and reviewed regularly.
2.	FS9	Safe caring guidelines for each fostering household, should be further developed to ensure these reflect the individualised needs of young people placed and where appropriate the young person should be included in the drawing up and preparation of their safe caring policy.
3	FS12	All current foster carers should have their approval status reviewed to ensure compliance with the newly revised anti – smoking policy, which states foster carers cannot be

		approved to take a child under the age of two.
4.	FS12	Where medical consent has not been given by a parent and therefore has become the responsibility of the Local Authority, this should be clearly stated on the LAC Placement Plan part 1, to ensure foster carers are clear of the procedures governing consent.

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