



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **North East Lincolnshire Council Fostering Service**

**Fostering Service  
2nd Floor  
St James House  
Grimsby  
North East Lincs  
DN31 1EF**

*Lead Inspector*  
Sarah Urding

*Announced Inspection*  
13th February 2006      09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

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<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Ms Penny Sheardown
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	0
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection** 10th January 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

North East Lincolnshire Council manages the fostering service.

At the time of the inspection the service aimed to provide a range of high quality foster placements to meet the needs of the looked after children of North East Lincolnshire.

The service provides a variety of foster placements including: mainstream fostering, long-term fostering, contract care, remand, single placement care and short-term breaks. The last is a service for children where parents remain the main carers for the child.

The service operates out of premises situated in the centre of Grimsby.

Although the premises are accessible in terms of location the building does not lend itself readily to foster carer training and formal/informal meetings and groups. Alternative and more appropriate venues are used for this purpose.

The pre-inspection material provided to the inspector indicated that 93 children were placed by the service. This is a decrease in looked after children from last year owing to an increased emphasis being placed on family support.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and took place over a three week period from 13<sup>th</sup> February to the 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Information for the inspection was received from a number of sources. Questionnaires were sent out to all children, foster carers and placing authority social workers. Ninety one placing authority social workers, Twenty foster carers and fourteen children and young people responded to the questionnaires. Five families who foster children were asked if they would meet the inspector. Three foster carers and the children they look after were visited at home as part of the inspection process. One foster carer was interviewed by telephone as they were unable to meet with the inspector. The parents of the children placed in the five foster homes were contacted to ask their opinions of the service. One parent made contact with the inspector. Five members of staff employed by the fostering service were interviewed along with the manager of the service and the manager of the short break disability service. A number of professionals who have contact with the fostering service were also interviewed. These included the manager of the looked after children in education team; the panel chair; the specialist medical advisor to the panel and two consultant clinical psychologists. Support groups for foster carers and children were also attended. A number of records, policies and procedures were also assessed as part of the inspection process.

## **What the service does well:**

The fostering service is good at making sure that children and young people's health care needs are met. This means that children who are looked after by foster carers will receive all the help and advice they need to be healthy and fully develop. The fostering team works well with health professionals to ensure that children and young people receive the information and support they need. Detailed records are kept on the health of looked after children so that their needs and progress can be clearly seen. This ensures that health problems will not be forgotten but addressed. Foster carers and staff said that they felt supported by the health services offered, in particular the advice and support offered by the clinical psychologist. Some of the young people said that foster carers help them to be healthy and that they have healthy food. Children and young people are looked after safely by foster carers because of the good levels of support and guidance from the fostering team. The majority of foster carers said that they could contact anyone from the team if they needed to talk about something. Children and young people said they felt safe in their foster homes. One young person said "I feel safe and come home to a nice clean home and my clothes are always clean". The service is good at ensuring that the foster carers looking after children can meet their needs. Foster carers are assessed thoroughly to ensure that they are safe to look after children. There are many professional people involved in the assessment to make sure that children will be safely looked after and their needs met.

The fostering team also works well with the education team to ensure that children and young people receive all the opportunities they need to succeed. Children and young people are supported to attend school and encouraged to improve. Homework clubs and computers are provided for all children in foster care. If children and young people are excluded from school then the fostering and education teams ensure that school work is continued out of the classroom. This means that children and young people will not fall behind in their education. Children and young people feel supported by foster carers. One young person said "my foster carers help me do my homework". The good levels of support for foster carers and children means that children are less likely to be looked after by many different foster carers. Children and young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives by being asked about their wishes and feelings. There are support groups held for children and young people, which encourage their involvement and seek their views. Children and young people said that they are asked their opinions on what to have for tea; their likes and dislikes; how they feel and how they would like their room decorated.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

Since the last inspection foster carers have received more training that will help them understand how to look after children and young people safely and meet their needs.

The fostering service has also ensured that foster carers are assessed more regularly to make sure that they continue to be safe and able to look after children and young people.

The fostering team has ensured that children will be suitably placed with foster carers by writing a description of the fostering family. This is then matched with a description of the child to see if the placement can meet the child's needs. This means that the placement is more likely to be successful.

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

The fostering service must make sure that the staff who work for them are safe people. They must ask for two written references to be completed before staff start work on every occasion.

The fostering service must ensure that foster carers are given clear guidance about the use of restraint and punishments that are not acceptable. It is important for this to take place so that foster carers understand how to look after children and young people safely. Training should also be provided to foster carers so that they understand the issues facing children and young people when they are bullied.

The service has been asked to develop better systems to enable the manager to be fully informed of child protection investigations involving children in foster care to ensure that appropriate support is available to children and carers.

The children's guide to the fostering service is difficult for some children to understand because it is very long and looks boring. The team has been asked to develop a more interesting guide so that children will enjoy and understand what they are reading.

The service has also been asked to develop an information pack of the services available in the local area for children from different religions and cultures so that children and young people in foster care can continue to be themselves.

The service could improve the way it records decisions on where children and young people are going to live to evidence that the decision is right for that child. Also some children, young people and foster carers said that it is sometimes difficult for children to see their families easily because of where the foster carer lives. Some foster carers were concerned that when children and young people went to stay with respite carers, the children did not get on with them. The fostering service should evidence that these issues are addressed when deciding where to place children and young people.

The fostering service has been asked to seek the views of foster carers' own children in looking at what support they would like from the fostering team.

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

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

12

Children and young people's health care needs are well met by the service's holistic approach.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service is commended for promoting development and health for looked after children. The team works in a multi-disciplinary way in order to secure positive outcomes for children in this area.

Each child and foster carer has access to a health support network. Health assessments are completed for children when placed with foster carers.

Children are given choice regarding when and where to attend the health assessment. There is a designated looked after children's nurse who works closely with the fostering team, foster carers and children. The service is continuous and follows children around the system and beyond.

Imaginative ways to encourage children to attend health appointments have been implemented. A health fun day was held to encourage the more "hard to reach" children and young people to attend necessary health checks.

Statistics evidence a dramatic improvement in outcomes for health for children in foster care over the past five years. All children are registered with a dentist; GP and optician and specialist services are accessed through the health team when children need this input.

The health care team reviews the health care needs of children in line with Looked After Children reviews providing appropriate information for these meetings. Recommendations are made as to appropriate health care and these are followed up by the health care team to ensure they have been carried out. This ensures that a child's health care needs will not be missed and appropriate services secured.

The partnerships developed by the fostering service, health and education mean that children are assessed in their entirety. Joined up working means targets are met and the health of children proactively monitored.

Children and foster carers have access to the services of clinical psychologists who work alongside the health and fostering teams. Training, support and advice is provided to foster carers and staff when they need it around how to cope with a range of behaviours. Strategies are devised from these meetings. This increases the chance of placement stability for young people when complex needs can be addressed in this way.

# 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, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

Children and young people are safely cared for as a result of good levels of management and multi- disciplinary working but shortfalls in the recruitment of staff and guidance to foster carers may place children at risk.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The fostering service is suitably managed by the local authority. There is a sound awareness of the need to manage effectively in order to safeguard the welfare of children.

The fostering service promotes and safeguards children's welfare by undertaking a rigorous assessment. Initially foster carers homes are assessed for their suitability and subsequently on an annual basis. Appropriate health and safety checks are carried out to ensure that the environment is a safe place for children to live. This includes checking whether household transport is safe to use.

Accommodation needs are assessed on an individual basis as part of the profile held on the child and risk assessments are carried out if the child has been abused and the need for single accommodation identified. This ensures that all children in the household are protected.

The fostering service ensures that when making placements, children and young people are matched appropriately with foster carers. There were some examples of good practice in terms of involving prospective carers in profile

meetings prior to placement. Long-term placements were consistently well matched and some of the records evidencing this process were detailed and fully completed. Where there is good evidence of matching, areas where foster carers need additional support to secure the placement are identified. This ensures that the placement is less likely to breakdown. There was also some evidence of appropriate introductions to long-term placements. Placement decisions also involve assessing children's religious and cultural needs. There was some evidence that foster carers have access to services and information when transcommunity placements had been made. Staff spoke of foster carers being proactive in ensuring children of different cultures receive the support and input they need.

The decision making for some placements was not well recorded. In one foster carers file there was no evidence that any matching had taken place for a particular child. The inspector was unable to ascertain, due to lack of recording on the foster carer's file, how the placement had been introduced and the match made, although a referral form held on the child's file did hold some of this detail. The fostering service must address this and demonstrate that placements are made after a consistently detailed matching process has taken place. Some foster carers and children commented that some placements were too far away to make contact with relatives straightforward. Some foster carers also raised concerns that respite arrangements for children and young people had not been suitable. The department should evidence consistently that these aspects are taken in to consideration in the matching process.

Training is given to foster carers around abuse and child protection. This is looked at on the initial skills to foster course and in more depth in foundation training provided for foster carers. Safe caring guidelines are provided and completed on an individual basis when children are initially placed so that the way in which carers and children are to conduct themselves safely is understood. This is good practice.

The information provided to foster carers is detailed and outlines appropriate forms of control and discipline. A policy for restraint had not yet been developed although some detail is held within the department's procedure on control and disciplinary measures. Some foster carers were unsure whether restraint of a child was acceptable and in what circumstances. This policy must be further developed so that the service is confident that foster carers are aware of the policy and that the care and control of children is safe.

The local authority has a system in place for monitoring child protection issues/allegations, which is reviewed on a monthly basis by the manager. This information is not specific to the fostering department, however, and contains all of the statistics for the local authority. It would be good practice if monitoring systems were developed within the fostering team enabling a more detailed analysis of progression of cases, with a view to ensuring appropriate levels of support and guidance to carers and children when needed.

Bullying is addressed and guidance provided to carers in their handbook. The manager stated that link workers address bullying on a regular basis during their visits to foster carers' homes. However there was no evidence on the

files looked at that this occurred. The visit record contains a range of potential topics that link workers may discuss on their visits to carers. It is recommended that bullying be added to this list of topics to ensure a consistent and proactive approach.

Children are safeguarded by the local authority's policy and practice in the areas of recruitment and staff support. People working for the foster service are interviewed as part of the selection process and telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining references. There was one shortfall in the staff files inspected. One member of staff had been recruited and only had one written reference on file. The manager had made phone calls to both referees but the written reference was missing. The manager must ensure that people are not employed prior to both references being in place. This was an internal candidate and the manager felt that this could be the reason for the oversight. All staff have Criminal Record Bureau checks. CRB checks are renewed every three years, which means that overall children will be assessed by safe people. The fostering panel is organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers. Children are safeguarded and their welfare is promoted by a panel that is well trained, informed and supported.

A panel meeting was not attended during the inspection. However, the chair of the panel was interviewed and a number of panel meeting minutes were inspected. From this information it is deemed that the panel is conducted appropriately and its membership draws upon a range of skills and expertise from multidisciplinary backgrounds. Membership of panel complies with regulation and medical expertise is drawn upon from the specialist in the health team providing a consistency in expertise, advice and knowledge. This ensures that the panel process is rigorous and effective at assessing and reviewing foster carers suitability. The role of panel in this respect ensures that the need to safeguard children's welfare is at the forefront of practice. The function of the panel also provides a developmental role to the fostering team in relation to comments on the quality of assessments and in monitoring the ongoing training needs of carers.

The panel chair and the fostering team manager have identified the need to canvas the views of minority groups to assist the Local Authority in broadening their recruitment strategy. It is hoped that the plans to seek the views of ethnic communities will ultimately enhance opportunity for children receiving foster care.

# 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 standard(s):

7, 13, 31

Children and young people are looked after in environments where educational achievement, identity and self worth are promoted.

## EVIDENCE:

Children and young people are provided with opportunities to achieve their potential by the fostering service. Diversity is valued and children and their families have access to a care service that recognises needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. A child's feeling of self worth is encouraged and foster carers are able to develop an understanding of self-esteem issues through their initial and subsequent training. Link worker visits also cover a range of associated issues to ensure that children's overall needs will be consistently met.

The looked after children's health and education teams work in partnership with the fostering service and the ethos is to look at the whole child rather than isolated issues. Good and seamless multidisciplinary working contributes to this process.

In interview staff gave examples of some positive working in ensuring that the cultural and religious needs of children would be met. Staff said that foster carers are proactive in seeking out resources that will meet a child's religious and cultural needs. The local area does not have a large ethnic minority population but community resources have been made available to meet a range of cultural and religious needs. Staff discussed seeking advice from professional sources in gathering information about specific children's needs. Some staff were not clear about the resources available in the Grimsby area

and it is recommended that the fostering service be proactive about developing a local information resource for foster carers to access when the need arises. The fostering service gives high priority to meeting the educational needs of children and young people and works in an integrated way with the looked after children's education team. Children are encouraged and supported by the fostering service to achieve their potential. This is achieved on a day to day basis by the foster carers' work with children and on a broader level through holding events recognising achievements. Foster carers are supported in a range of ways to ensure that children receive a positive learning experience. Foster carers understand the importance of their role in the child's school and attend parents' evenings and open days. Children are able to attend homework clubs set up by the LACE team and there is a good resource available for supported learning during the school day should a child be excluded from school. Children and young people are provided with computers at foster carers' homes, which are installed by the local authority. There are some exciting developments in promoting education for young people. The LACE team is working closely with a number of local schools and devising a protocol for reducing the numbers of exclusions for looked after children. This will ensure that children receive a consistent education. Information systems are in place to demonstrate the educational attainments of children and young people. An educational awards ceremony was recently held to award children and young people for successes in education. Young people receiving foster care have been involved in the production of a DVD discussing the support available to them. Some of the services offered to looked after children and young people are in their infancy and not widely known by foster carers. The manager of the LACE team plans to relaunch the service in the near future to ensure that all foster carers are aware of the support available to children and young people. The short break disability service works in partnership with families to provide respite care for children with disabilities. The children receiving short-term breaks are no longer part of the looked after children system. This is a positive step in ensuring that parents remain the main carers for the child. The service has its own policies and procedures that recognise that the parent is central to the child. Foster carers are aware of the need to consult with carers on all levels. A parent using the service was spoken to and she is very satisfied with the service her child receives. She said that she enjoys a very positive relationship with the foster carer and communication is good. Assessments are carried out to look at specialist equipment needed and provided where possible. Staff discussed the difficulties in providing specialist equipment for children with disabilities to enable them to have overnight stays at foster carers. In discussion, the manager of the fostering service described equipment such as hoists and beds having been provided in order for children's needs to be met when staying away from home. In discussion with staff an example of equipment not being provided was given. This was viewed as a resource issue for one particular child who had to be picked up prior to a certain time, as the carer was unable to change him without the necessary



equipment. It is recommended that the service look into this particular case as a way of identifying whether there is a gap in service provision in this area.

## **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 standard(s):**

10, 11

Children and young people are able to make a positive contribution to their lives owing to fostering department's positive approach to participation.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The service is good at promoting contact for children with their families and consulting with children about their wishes and feelings. Foster carers receive training throughout their careers on the importance of maintaining contact and working with families. There are clear arrangements in place for children to see their families and carers receive training on how to facilitate contact and record the outcomes. This is good practice. As mentioned previously in this report some children and carers commented upon difficulties in maintaining contact where location of placement is an issue. The fostering service must ensure that location is looked at within the matching process. Where there may be some contact difficulties foster carers are supported in this through link worker visits and by the local authority supervising contact. Transport and financial assistance are provided for children to maintain contact with their families.

The staff in the fostering service spoke of positive relationships with children's social workers and there are mechanisms in place for link workers to feed back issues to social workers. There was evidence of sound and supportive links between the two teams in interviews with staff and questionnaire responses. Children are given the opportunity through the reviewing process to air their views on the care they receive. This is also encouraged in participation groups that children and young people can attend and contribute to. Children and young people have been involved in a number of projects including making a rap CD of their experiences in foster care. Young people spoken to at one

support group spoke positively of the way in which they can choose to run their meetings. Some young people have been on courses to train as mentors so that they can assist in facilitating residential activity holidays. Another young person told the inspector that she had taken part in a residential training course to increase self-confidence. She was very positive about this experience. Young people also said that they could ask the leaders of the participation project to act as advocates when needed. The leader of the project gave a good example of how advocacy has been used for one young person attending the group. One young person said of their experiences in foster care that "it has helped me voice out something to my foster carer that I would have never told anyone".

Both children and staff attending the support group raised the concern that some children do not attend the support group because foster carers do not give them access to the resource. The fostering service should look at ways of ensuring that children are given equal opportunities to engage in the participation process.

Through the health and education systems children are encouraged to take control and responsibility for their lives. Foster carers receive training in listening to young people's views on all matters affecting them. Suitable means are provided for any child with communication difficulties to air their views. There was a good example of this occurring in the feedback received from one child with a disability. The foster carer ensured the child's understanding of the questionnaire sent out by CSCI and enabled him to respond through a recorded message to the inspector.

There was evidence that children use the complaints system and most children spoken to understood how to make a complaint and contact their social worker. Complaints are handled appropriately by the service and an advocacy service is provided and available to children.

One child spoken to said that she did not know how to complain or contact her social worker. This must be addressed for this young person so that she is able to voice concerns as they arise.

# 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 standard(s):**

29

Children and young people's placement stability is contributed to by a well managed allowance system for foster carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers were positive that they received appropriate levels of payment on time. They were clear about the level of service that they were expected to provide as the service functions on a number of schemes based around the needs of children and young people. The schemes create differing payment scales depending upon the intensity of work involved. There are clear policies and procedures in place relating to payment to carers. This means that children will receive focused services and consistent care.

# 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 standard(s):**

1, 2, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

Children and young people are looked after within a well managed and focused service, which provides good levels of support and training to foster carers and staff. There are some areas for development, which will further enhance the services provided to children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The service has an appropriate and detailed statement of purpose in place. The children's guide to the fostering service requires some development. Although it reflects the service provided to children accurately, the document is lengthy and is not child centred in format. Other formats are available for children using the short break service and these are more appropriate for intended use. The service must produce the guide in suitable formats to meet the needs of different groups of children so that they can understand the information presented.

The manager of the fostering service is qualified, experienced and effective in her management of the service. Staff are well organised and facilitated by the structure in place to deliver an appropriate service to children and young people.

Where the fostering service uses agencies to provide a foster carer there is a system in place that ensures the quality of care to be provided is specified. In existing contracts inspected the discharge of local authority functions had not been updated to meet Regulation 40(5). This must be addressed and include all aspects in the agreement. Outstanding areas include whether and on what basis other children may be placed with the foster parent. Failure to be clear about expectations may result in the care of a child being compromised.

Staff are well managed and receive consistently good support, supervision and training. Staff are effective in service delivery and are adequate in numbers, well advised and knowledgeable about good practice issues. Staff are informed and provided with all of the policies and procedures of the service and local authority.

Supervision of staff links in well with direct work with foster carers and this approach ensures that issues will be addressed as they arise. Staff are qualified to carry out their duties and there are structures in place to ensure that assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are maintained and implemented effectively. There have been improvements in the reviewing of carers since the last inspection.

Multi disciplinary relationships are well maintained and there is evidence of good working together in order to achieve placement consistency and meet the needs of children. Fostering service social workers understand clearly their role and that of the social worker. Clear processes for the assessment of carers are in place and feedback from panel stated that these have consistently improved over the past year. The assessment of foster carers is rigorous and meets the standard.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Foster carers are provided with detailed information in their handbook about a range of topics, which are regularly updated. This means that foster carers are kept well informed and enabled to look after children well. Some gaps were identified in the information provided in the handbook. Guidance should be given to foster carers about the administration of household remedies to children.

Link workers are clear about their roles with regards to supporting carers. Foster carers are supervised effectively and frequently by their link workers. Link visits are positive in format and offer the opportunity for a range of issues to be discussed on a regular basis with staff.

Foster carers were very positive about the support that they receive from the fostering team. They felt enabled to carry out the caring task due to the very positive relationships and good communication with their link workers. Foster carers said that they just had to pick up the phone and they could speak to anyone if their link worker was not there. Foster carer agreements are in place and in line with regulation. There are clear systems in place for practically supporting carers which carers were well informed about. However, there was some confusion around the availability of the out of hours duty team. This should be revisited.

Carers are aware of the complaints process and have access to a range of support services to enable them to effectively care for the children. Carers were particularly positive about the support offered from a consultant psychologist working with the team.

The fostering service monitors allegations of abuse on a broader authority level and individual support to carers if an allegation is made is provided by link workers, independent advocates and through membership of the fostering network which provides legal advice. As mentioned previously in this report departmental monitoring systems should be further developed to enable focused support for foster carers as the need arises.

The training that foster carers receive ensures that the skills required to provide consistent and high quality care will be developed. All foster carers receive induction training that forms part of the assessment process also. Foster carers receive foundation training once they have been approved. Foster carers were positive about the levels of training that the service offers. Safe care training is given and guidance is provided at the start of placements based on the individual needs of the child. Carers are monitored at reviews and through the supervision process so that skills can be developed and shortfalls identified.

Foster carers own children are given consideration by the service. There was a good example of the service linking in with a foster carer's child when they were experiencing some difficulties. This involved the link worker spending time with the child and ensuring that the family had some space together. This area could be further developed by canvassing the views of foster carers own children with regards to any additional support they may need. Although their views are now taken in to account through the reviewing process. This is a positive start.

Up to date case records are held for each child in foster care detailing the nature and quality of placement and care to be provided. There is a detailed recording policy which establishes the format of child and foster carer files. Foster carers work with children to ensure that they have an understanding of their situation. Foster carers, where appropriate and after receiving advice and training, can undertake life story work and understand the importance of building up a life picture for the child. The service accesses advice and support

to foster carers when working with complex issues, so that working is more informed and beneficial to the child. Carers stated that they were given the necessary equipment to care for the children they look after. Foster carers visited held information on children appropriately ensuring its storage in a secure place. They understood the need to maintain confidentiality. The fostering service keeps all the appropriate records as identified in regulation.

Records held by the service are stored securely and retention policy is in place and practiced. Records held were well kept and presented and systems are congruent with the looked after children system.



# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.	FS15	5, 7, 20	The responsible person must ensure that two written references are in place prior to staff being appointed.	01/03/06
2.	FS16	40	The responsible person must update existing contracts with regards to the discharge of local authority duties to agencies. To Include whether and on what basis other children may be placed with foster carers.	01/05/06

## 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.	FS8	The recording of the matching process should be consistently detailed and demonstrate the decision making process. Location of placement to the child's birth family and appropriate respite arrangements should be considered as part of this process.
2.	FS9	The responsible person should further develop the systems for protecting children from abuse. To include:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The development of departmental monitoring systems for child protection issues.</li> <li>2. The inclusion of bullying as standard within link worker visits to foster carers.</li> <li>3. Clear guidance/training to foster carers about the use of restraint.</li> </ol>
3.	FS7	An information resource identifying a range of cultural and religious services available in the local area should be developed for foster carers.
4.	FS11	The service should develop ways to ensure that children and young people have equal access to participation groups.
5.	FS1	The service should develop the children's guide in appropriate formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.
6.	FS22	Further guidance should be given to foster carers. To include clarity around the availability of out of hours support and the administration of non-prescribed medication to children.
7.	FS23	The views of foster carers own children should be surveyed with regards to additional support they may need.

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