



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **City of Bradford MDC Fostering Service**

**Adoption and Fostering Unit  
Aire Building  
35 Saltaire Road  
Shipley  
West Yorkshire  
BD18 3HH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Stella Henderson

*Key Unannounced Inspection*  
5th February 2007      8.30

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

<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

<b>Name of service</b>	City of Bradford MDC Fostering Service
<b>Address</b>	Adoption and Fostering Unit Aire Building 35 Saltaire Road Shipley West Yorkshire BD18 3HH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01274 437343
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council Department of Social Services
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Ms Sarah Patrick
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      6th March 2006

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

The Bradford Adoption and Fostering Unit is part of the local authority's Resources Division. The fostering unit approves a range of carers who can provide short or long term foster placements for children and young people who are looked after by the authority. The unit also approves carers who are able to offer specialist placements for young people who are presenting high risk behaviours.

The authority also provides a variety of short break placements for children and young people through the Shared Care, Support Care and Crisis Care Teams that are part of the Family Support Division.

In addition a team of social workers is in the process of being appointed who will undertake the assessment and support of Family and Friends Carers.

The fostering service employs a team of family placement support workers who undertake direct work with the children and their foster carers during the course of a placement and there is a psychologist who is employed on a sessional basis within the unit to offer support and advice to carers and young people in placement.

The main office for the fostering service is based in Shipley, although the Support Care and Crisis Care Teams work from an office base in Bradford adjacent to one of the area social work teams.

# SUMMARY

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

This inspection was carried out over approximately four days. Evidence was obtained from a variety of sources, such as case files, policies, records, and other information provided by the manager. Discussions were held with the Unit managers and staff from the family placement team, and contact was made with foster carers and children in placement. Their views, and those of their foster carers made an important contribution to this inspection, as did the comments in questionnaires returned from children, foster carers and placing social workers.

## What the service does well:

- Questionnaires were sent out to all foster children and young people. Those who returned theirs (91) were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of being fostered. Some of their comments are contained in the body of this report, but the conclusion can be made that they feel safe, well cared for, supported and listened to. Their health, safety and welfare is promoted, and their education made a priority.
- Questionnaires were also sent out to all foster carers, and again, the majority of foster carers who returned their questionnaires (101) also highly rated the service, and appreciated the support that they were given despite the pressures on staff time.
- Questionnaires were sent to placing social workers, and their general view (7 returns at the time of writing) was that although there are pressures within the system, the service nevertheless strives to produce positive outcomes for children and young people.
- There are effective working relationships with health and education, and, for children and young people with disability, the service works in partnership with parents.
- There is strong, consistent and experienced management who recognise where development is required, and who ensure that the service is run safely

## What has improved since the last inspection?

- The Family and Friends team has been established with supervising social workers being linked to carers
- A forum has been established for consultation with family and friends carers
- Further recruitment is ongoing, particularly for specialist placements.
- New posts have been funded within CAMHS for looked after children.
- There has been increased service user representation at Fostering Panels

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

- The manager acknowledges that there are still pressures on staffing, but there are plans to establish a second team to help respond to increasing demands
- Although matching is evident, a Foster Placement Agreement needs to be implemented in line with these Regulations
- Current systems need to indicate the number of exclusions from school for foster children and young people

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

# 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.

### JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

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

Health promotion is seen as an integral part of caring for a child. Foster carers are supported in addressing the health needs of children placed with them. Children are offered information, advice and options appropriate to their needs, wishes, abilities and understanding. The service has successfully built partnerships with other key health agencies.

### EVIDENCE:

Foster carers health is thoroughly assessed through the recruitment process, and carers ability to promote and address the child's health needs are key factors in placement decisions. For example, carer's particular skills and experience of health issues are considered within the matching process, and carers for children under two years old are not approved if they smoke.

Children and young people's health needs are identified and assessed at an early stage, and there is good access to routine and more specialist health care services. Children and young people commented that they are supported in staying healthy; "My carer always talks to me about how to stay healthy and eat a balanced diet" noted one young person, another that "We have lots of fruit – no buns allowed!". Several children and young people commented, in their questionnaires, that they are encouraged to become involved in activities such as swimming, netball, rugby and football.

The service has access to the "looked after children nurses", who provide information to young people and foster carers. One carer stated "There is now a LAC nurse who visits every year. This is a great service and if you have any

problems you can ring them". This service has been commended by the Department of Health.

The service also has access to assistance from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, who advise staff and carers on behavioural management and other issues. This service is very highly rated by carers, and one commented "I have had brilliant support and have been able to off load some concerns I have felt". The fostering service also funds a psychologist on a sessional basis, and one carer commented "Larry Anderson (psychologist) has been a godsend and needs recognising as being some foster carers' Knight in Shining Armour!"

# 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.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

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

All children are placed with carers who have been thoroughly assessed as being able to meet the child's welfare and safety needs. The service matches children to carers appropriately and fostering panel operates as an important safeguarding mechanism.

## EVIDENCE:

As part of the inspection, the Commission asks children and young people if they feel safe and well cared for. Some of their responses are as follows:

"The food is wonderful and you (foster carer) care about me a lot"

"I feel part of the family"

"I feel safe here. We have a lot of happy days and we care for each other "

" Always ...because I have a lovely foster carer who looks after me very well"

"I am well looked after. My carer looks after me and is always there for me".

" I live in a nice clean home and my carer is generous and kind"

"Care is one of the best things that has happened in my life"

“They want me to have a good future”

“They are really protective over me”

Prospective carers are thoroughly assessed and the fostering panel exercises rigorous scrutiny over assessments presented to panel. Matching of planned placements is thorough and medical expertise is available to the panel. Where shared care is concerned, parents are involved in the matching process. All matters of significant concern are taken back to panel.

Although exemptions are made infrequently, where they are made these must be of limited duration and should be brought back to panel for monitoring purposes.

The inspector noted that family and friends carers do not have checks with the NSPCC – this is something the service must address.

Although the Shared Care placement agreement was able to demonstrate that matching considerations are taken into account, the document currently used as a Foster Placement Agreement in other parts of the service does not suffice as this does not demonstrate the matching considerations that were taken into account.

Staff recruited to the service are thoroughly vetted, and the service itself is managed by skilled and experienced individuals. Both staff and carers undertake child protection training.

# 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.**

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

7, 13, 31

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

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

Children and young people, and their families, are provided with services that value diversity and promote equality. The fostering service ensures that most children and young people are encouraged and supported to do well and reach their potential. Staff and carers value education and understand the importance of their role to enable children to achieve. The service monitors its performance in relation to children's and young people's achievements, but should also record and monitor exclusions. There is sound partnership working with children, young people and their families in relation to short-term breaks.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The service has strategies to recruit carers who will reflect children's and young people's ethnicity, and a diverse staff group reflects the community it's serves. There is additional support available to carers of children and young people who may be caring for those from a different ethnic background, and trans-racial placements are monitored. A Unit Equalities group has lead officers to address areas for development for each area of diversity – gender, sexuality, race and disability. The Support Care service provides training for children and young people of dual heritage.

The scheme for short breaks for children and young people with disabilities has been quoted in good practice guides. Shared Care provides fully adapted and equipped properties for those with mobility difficulties. These schemes work in close partnership with parents, who are involved in the matching process

Children, young people and carers reported favourably on support for education. Ewan Godfrey was mentioned as being particularly helpful. One carer commented "When my foster children were struggling with SATS we received brilliant support ", another that "They show a lot of interest in how the children are achieving at school".

The emphasis on education and achievement was apparent from children's and young people's questionnaire responses;

"I get help with my homework to help me achieve"

"My carer asks me every day if I have any homework"

"My carer has told me I must work hard and get good qualifications if I want a good job when I grow up"

"I have a learning mentor at school ..."

"My social worker, carer and family have all talked about what I would like to be when I grow up because I know that I want to do well and when I grow up I want to have a good job and a happy life"

"I'm always given help with my work and get talked to about my schoolwork. I really enjoy school"

Additional payments can be made for young person with a special talent, and the Annual Education Awards service encourages and rewards positive achievements whether for attendance or academic attainment.

A recording system should be established to record the number of exclusions for foster children.

## **Making a Positive Contribution**

### **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

### **The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.**

### **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.

Children and young people are usually asked for their views, and these views make a difference. The service demonstrates that systems for children and young people's participation are being developed into service policy and planning. Children and young people confirm that they are listened to in a way that informs their daily life.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Children's and young people's views are sought, in an age appropriate way, through their reviews, in the matching process and throughout their placement. They also have the opportunity to give feedback at the end of their placements, and children and young people also contribute to carers' reviews. Specialist tools and advice is available to enable children and young people with disability to contribute their views. Children and young people commented that they feel listened to: "My carer and social worker always listen to what I have to say" noted one, and another that "They will always let me have my say...I feel that my opinion counts for a lot...they show respect".

At a corporate level, the views of children and young people make a difference, and examples of this were discussed with the inspector. Young people are also involved in interviewing staff.

Foster carers are given clear guidance in respect of encouraging contact where appropriate. The quality of such contacts are recorded, and contact is supervised where it is felt necessary.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

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

14

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

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

The service enables young people to remain in placement whilst preparing for independence. Carers support young people in developing skills they will need for independent living.

### EVIDENCE:

The specific aim of some placements is to prepare for independence. Young people are able to remain on placement up to 18 years of age and beyond by means of converting the placement to supported lodgings. This means, for example, that fees to carers can continue under Supported Lodgings Payments to enable young people to remain with their carers whilst at University.

The shared care scheme allows the gradual development of independence by planning separations at the individuals pace.

Young people indicated that carers discuss plans for the future with them, and assist them in developing skills for independence, such as budgeting, shopping and accessing services.

# 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 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 32

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

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

There is awareness and recognition amongst managers and staff of what the service does well and where development is required. Managers ensure that working practices, processes and systems support good practice. Managers demonstrate a pro-active approach to working in partnership with a wide range of other key people to ensure continuous improvement of the service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carers reported being very well supported by the fostering service. Carers remarked that "The link workers we have had from the fostering unit are very supportive " and "I'm provided with excellent training courses and regular visits from my link worker", another that the support is "superb". Several mentioned individual workers as "outstanding". One mentioned that she had "always felt that my role as foster carer has been greatly appreciated" and several remarked that they felt part of "the team". Carers also reported that "any problems are addressed straight away", one has "always been impressed by their professionalism and willingness to help and listen to me as a foster carer".

Carers appreciated the fact that there is a good out-of-hours service, and managers form part of this rota. Foster carers, and children and young people in placement are also supported by a Unit Placement support team, whose work is also highly regarded. The majority of social workers' comments were positive about the service.

Some carers mentioned, in their surveys, the lack of link workers, and the inspector found several carers to be without an allocated worker. Social workers and fostering staff felt that staff shortages had an affect on the ability to get initial matching right, as well as being able to process new applications. Although there are, therefore, some shortfalls in respect of, for example, annual reviews being undertaken, the service is responding by establishing a second team to deal with the increasing volumes of work. A team has also been established to support family and friends placements.

The service is managed by an experienced management team, who work to clear 'smart' targets that are reviewed regularly via the Service Improvement Framework. One carer commented that the Unit Manager, Sarah Patrick, "is excellent, and has turned things around". Several areas of practice – such as support care and shared care – have been commended in good practice guides, and there are a range of innovative projects, particularly with regard to trying to prevent admission into care where possible. Crisis Care is particularly effective, with 60% of those using the service returning home within 48 hours, and the use of day care rather than overnight stays for respite care.

Case files and other records were found to be compliant with these regulations, and a new electronic file system was reported by workers to be a good improvement in that it allows for immediate access to information on children's files.

Friends and family carers are managed within the mainstream service, and one carer commented that "I think it's great that friends and family carers are being treated more equally".

# 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>	4
<b>8</b>	2
<b>9</b>	4
<b>15</b>	3
<b>30</b>	4

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

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

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS8	34	Before a placement is made, a Foster Placement Agreement should be in place which contain specific reference to elements of matching that were taken into consideration	31/03/07

### **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.	FS13	Systems should demonstrate the numbers of foster children and young people excluded from school
2	FS17	The fostering service must employ a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced social workers

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