



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Portsmouth City Council Fostering

**Merefield House
Nutfield Place
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 4JE**

Lead Inspector
Lynda Mosling

Announced Inspection
25th – 31st January 2006 11:00

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

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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 Portsmouth City Council Fostering

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Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Portsmouth City Council

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Vanessa Courtney

Type of registration Local Auth Fostering Service

No. of places registered (if applicable) 0

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 21/02/05

Brief Description of the Service:

The fostering provision of Portsmouth City Council is located within three separate teams, each providing different types of foster care. The largest of these is based at Chaucer House and provides Level 1 and 2 foster carers who offer care to the majority of the young people assessed as requiring foster care. Skye Close Project provides approximately 20 carers at Level 3 – providing care for young people (mainly teenagers) with complex needs. Beechside Family Link service provides short-term care for disabled young people. The total number of young people fostered by the service was 200 in September 2005.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over four days. The inspection was based at Chaucer House but also included Beechside Family Link and the Skye Close Project. Managers, staff, foster carers and young people were spoken to during the inspection. Visits were made to five foster homes and a further two were interviewed over the telephone. Questionnaires were received from 14 young people, 15 carers and 4 placing social workers (only a sample were sent questionnaires).

The service provides good care to fostered young people. The foster carers spoken to were found to be child centred and keen to meet as many of their needs as possible. The main challenges for the service, in common with other local authorities, is with regard to retention and recruitment of carers. The demand outstrips the available resources and has a negative effect on the ability to match carers with young people requiring placement.

The service welcomes feedback and has been responsive to the recommendations of the last inspection.

What the service does well:

The staff within the fostering service presented as knowledgeable and committed to the provision of a good service. They are sensitive to the needs of Looked After Children and appreciate the challenges involved in caring for them. This helps the carers to feel supported and appreciated.

The foster carers visited were providing safe placements and demonstrated a real interest in the welfare of the young people placed. Most felt they had made a positive choice to be carers for Portsmouth City Council.

Staff within the fostering service feel well supported by the management system and spoke of their supervision as 'the best I've experienced'. They presented as a team who were keen to help each other in their task.

The Family Link scheme is appreciated by the parents of the young people and the systems in place to collect information, link children and record health needs are particularly helpful.

The increasing number of Family and Friends approved as foster carers demonstrates an understanding of the need for young people to have a sense of belonging.

Maintaining contact with family is accepted by the service as crucial to the welfare of children and carers are supported in facilitating this contact.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Consultation with young people has been further developed to provide a range of options to 'be heard' by the service. Young people who were spoken to and those who responded to the questionnaires felt they were consulted by carers about the important decisions in their lives.

There is more clarity about social workers/senior practitioners' roles within the team with appropriately delegated tasks.

In order to maximise recruitment a research project has been commissioned to inform the service about targeting their recruitment resources. Exit interviews with carers have also been introduced to help the service understand the reasons why carers choose to stop fostering.

The recommendations from the last inspection have been actioned demonstrating a desire to improve the service.

Attention to diversity issues has increased with the service taking action to find carers from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds in order to provide a wider choice to children.

What they could do better:

The lack of carers compromise the matching possibilities and limit choice for young people. Continued efforts to retain and recruit carers, including Family Link carers, is recommended.

Out of hours support from the fostering team is currently being considered. The introduction of such a scheme would benefit the carers and, consequently, the young people. It may also positively affect the retention and recruitment of carers.

Whilst the opportunities for carer training is good the take up of the sessions is often low. Consideration of different methods of delivering training and/or clearer expectations about attendance at courses would be helpful.

In an effort to increase recruitment the length of time taken to respond to and assess prospective carers should be considered.

Further consultation between the projects and teams providing fostering services would give an opportunity to share good practice and learn from each other's experiences.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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 outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12.

The service promotes the health and development of the young people placed and works in partnership with the local health department.

EVIDENCE:

There is an assessment of needs of the young people placed in foster care that includes physical, social and emotional needs. Foster carers are provided with as much information as is available on young people at the time of placement. They ensure that young people are registered with a GP and receive any necessary treatment. The procedures covering this are set out in the A-Z of Fostering that is provided to all carers once they are approved by the service. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that the young people they care for can access appropriate health care, including medication, although there are some young people who choose not to take this up. The Looked After Children nurse was interviewed during the inspection and explained that she is informed of all young people placed in the looked after system. She then ensures that appropriate health care is offered, including advocating for children to be registered with GPs and dentists. She is available to give advice to foster carers and has been involved in delivery of training to staff and carers. The reports provided show that a total of 90% of Looked After Children have had their annual health assessment or had one arranged. Immunisation figures are also high.

Young people spoken to confirmed that they are able to see their doctor when necessary and are supported to keep appointments with health professionals. The Looked After Children nurse had made herself available at clinics to offer support to the staff who were sometimes anxious about providing services to some young people.

The information held by foster carers includes; parental agreements to giving medication and medical treatment, medical histories (where available) and health assessments.

Training in health care, safe caring and managing sexually problematic behaviour is offered to carers to help them understand the wider health issues for young people placed.

The questionnaire responses from young people included the comment 'I get all the help I need to stay healthy and look after myself'. This view was shared by the majority of the young people who responded.

The service feels they promote young people's health and the evidence seen confirmed this view.

Beechside Family Link service had particularly good information about the health needs of the children placed. This had generally been provided by the parents, who were pleased to receive the service and were therefore co-operative. The placement record sheet devised and used by Family Link is very useful to ensure up to date information about the child's needs, including medication, is available to the carers at the start of the placement. The reverse side of the record sheet is completed by the carer during placement and returned to the parent at the end of the placement in order to share important information. This method may be useful for other parts of the service.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3, 6, 8, 9 and 15.

The suitability of staff has been assessed by the service to ensure young people's safety. The foster carers provided have been thoroughly assessed and approved by the fostering panel. Matching of young people to carers is limited due to the shortage of available carers. The service has a range of procedures to protect the young people from abuse and neglect. Recruitment processes ensure the suitability of staff to work with children/young people.

EVIDENCE:

The recruitment of the managers followed the city council's procedures and includes written references, appropriate qualifications and the relevant CRB and POCA checks. The human resource section has set up a system to up-date the checks as necessary.

The service provides a large range of carers who are approved by the fostering panel. The assessments of carers seen were thorough and provided the relevant information to enable matching to take place. The foster homes visited during the inspection were clean, adequately furnished and provided each young person with their own space. In homes where there were shared bedrooms the young people said they had been consulted and had agreed to share. A risk assessment is undertaken prior to sharing arrangements being made. Health and safety checks of the household were seen on file and the manager confirmed that these now accompany the papers to the fostering

panel as recommended at the last inspection. The local fire service gives advice to carers on fire prevention arrangements to improve the safety of the accommodation. All carers attend preparation training and basic training that includes health and safety issues. The homes visited were very different but all provided homely and comfortable space for the young people.

Whilst all of the staff and carers spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of the principles of matching they spoke of their frustration at not being able to put this knowledge into practice because of the lack of available carers. The duty system ensures that there is someone available to take referrals and look for the most appropriate foster placement. Sometimes the information available about the young person is scant, despite the social workers' best efforts to get more. This adds to the difficulty in matching and some foster carers spoke of the fact that they had taken young people outside of their preferred age range. This standard cannot be met whilst the number of available carers remains so limited. In common with other local authorities this service struggles to retain and recruit enough carers to meet the needs of all the young people referred to it. The service does, however, appear to do the best they can with available resources. In some cases young people have been placed with independent fostering agencies as there have been better matches available. None of the young people or carers who responded to the questionnaires felt they were wrongly matched, although this said more about the commitment of everyone to make the placement work than it being a good match. Further recruitment of carers should continue to enable matching to be a real possibility.

The child protection procedures were seen and the staff spoken to had a clear understanding of the issues involved. Staff and carers receive training in child abuse recognition and know how to share their concerns. There have been new safe caring procedures brought in since the last inspection and training has been provided for carers and staff. This has furthered carers' understanding of the need to keep themselves and their families safe, as well as the fostered child. Discussion with the carers visited demonstrated good practice and appropriate rules i.e. wearing a dressing gown when going to the bathroom etc., to keep boundaries clear. Carers responding to the questionnaires were able to quote the rules about punishment and, with the exception of one, said they agreed with the rules. Young people commented that any punishments were fair and usually took the form of loss of television or coming home earlier. Missing persons procedures are known by the carers and records seen showed that such incidents are reported to the social workers, fostering team and parents (where appropriate).

The recruitment of staff is managed by the central human resource team but the manager is closely involved in the short listing, interviews etc. Two new members of staff were spoken to during the inspection. They confirmed that they had completed application forms, given references and been interviewed for the posts. The manager confirmed the correct procedure is used and that

appropriate checks are taken up prior to an applicant starting a job. As a result of discussions prior to the inspection the human resource section is setting up systems to ensure CRB checks are renewed every three years, as required by the latest guidance. Where unqualified staff, such as social work assistants, are undertaking assessments they are doing so under the supervision of a qualified social worker. There was a range of views expressed about this including one foster carer saying 'the social work assistants provide better support' to 'we should all get qualified social workers'. Some foster carers appeared not to know which staff members were qualified and therefore felt it made no difference at all. Young people were less forthcoming about the support they receive from social workers but all felt having an allocated worker was important, even if they didn't feel they achieved much.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7, 13 and 31.

The service values diversity and has systems in place to recruit from a range of backgrounds. Educational achievement is particularly encouraged by the service with celebration of successes. Short term care in the form of Respite care and Family Link recognises the parent's central role in the young people's lives.

EVIDENCE:

Managers within the service indicated that they tried to recruit carers that reflect the diversity within the local community. The service has recently commissioned research from Portsmouth University into the recruitment of foster carers in the hope of identifying how they could increase their existing pool. It is hoped this will inform further recruitment strategy, including targeting different cultures to provide a wider choice. Positive imagery has been used in the new recruitment literature and an 'ethnic fostering group' has been formed. A number of experienced foster carers indicated that they had offered care to young people from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds. They explained the efforts they had made to keep contacts with the young people's family, including arranging visits to the young people's birthplace. There are a number of Asylum seeking children being cared for by foster carers and the feedback from the carers showed that they were sensitive to the additional needs of this group of young people and had worked hard to provide contacts with local groups who can be used as interpreters and advocates. Whilst in most cases there is not close matching of carers and young people the evidence showed that the service, and the carers, were trying to bridge the gaps in matching by making use of other appropriate resources.

Through discussions with foster carers, young people and staff it was evident that educational progress is a high priority within the service. There is a general expectation that each young person who is fostered will be able to access an appropriate educational provision. All looked after children within the authority are subject to an educational assessment. This assessment forms the basis for the development of a longer term education plan. Such plans are subject to regular review. The education co-ordinator for Looked After Children was interviewed and explained that if a young person is already in full-time education at the point of placement every effort is made to enable them to continue at their existing school. If a young person is placed outside of the school catchment area transport to and from the school will be arranged. For those young people with a history of non-school attendance every effort is made to re-engage them in some form of education or training within twenty days. It was explained that part-time attendance at one of the specialised education units would often be the first step for a young person to return to education. Support from educational psychologists is available to young people. The co-ordinator for Looked After Children explained that more young people are continuing their education post sixteen and two have already progressed on to university. In order to recognise the educational achievements of the young people the authority arrange a number of award ceremonies. These were generally appreciated by the young people and their carers. From examination of the records it was noted that although training for foster carers on educational issues was provided at regular intervals, the take up was disappointing. The training officer explained that apart from the initial 'Skills to Foster' training, attendance at all training courses is voluntary. See section on training for further information and recommendation.

The service provides two types of short-term breaks - respite care delivered by the fostering team at Chaucer House, and Family Link, a service for children with disabilities delivered by Beechside Family Link Service. Both services recognise the importance of working closely with the young people's parents and recognising them as the main carers for the child. The Family Link service was inspected. This included visits to carers and interviews with the manager and staff. The service is well managed by committed staff who have a great deal of knowledge of the individual needs of the young people. It is not an emergency service and the matching of carers with young people is seen as vital to the success of the link. Carers spoken to feel they are very well supported by the staff and gave examples of contact outside of working hours. They said that they were offered both general and specific training to support their role. Carers talked about the rewards of caring for young people with disabilities as being 'great for all of us' and most felt they had a close working relationship with the young person's family. Introductions to the carers are made at the child's pace and this helps trust build up prior to the child staying overnight. The records seen were thorough and up to date and provided good evidence of the outcomes for the young people cared for. Reviews of the link included views of the parents, professionals and carers. The service is

currently working on more productive ways of evidencing the young people's views by producing user friendly comment cards. The major challenge for the Family Link service is the lack of carers and there is consequently a long waiting list for children to be linked. The staff explained that they have been involved in the general attempts to recruit carers within the city but plan to do some specific recruitment as they feel the service may appeal to a different group of people i.e. those with limited time to give through work. It is recommended that a specific recruitment strategy for Family Link be designed in order to maximise the delivery of this valuable service.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10 and 11.

The service promotes contact with families and friends and provides training and support to carers to do this. The service has a range of methods of consulting with young people, carers and families.

EVIDENCE:

All of the foster carers spoken with confirmed that they were made aware, at the point of placement, of any restrictions regarding contact. Many of the foster carers spoken to said they often helped facilitate contact arrangements with family members by providing transport for the young people. One carer had spent most of Christmas Day transporting the young people in her care to their various families. The young people spoken to said they are able to maintain regular contact with their family and most did so by telephone as well as visiting. If required, supervised contact is arranged by the young person's social worker. The views of each young person are taken into consideration when establishing contact arrangements. It was clear, for example, that some young people did not wish to have face to face contact with their family and this was respected. Information provided to carers in the handbook and in training sessions make clear expectations about contact and explain the benefits of this. The young people who responded to the questionnaires all said they had regular contact with their family.

Young people said they felt 'listened to' by their foster carers and gave examples of this, including how they wished to spend their free time. The service provides a range of ways to consult with young people including 'Viewpoint', a computer based consultation package for Looked After Children, access to NYAS service and representatives, C3 group (young person's meeting

with elected members of the Council and social services managers). In addition young people have the opportunity to give their views at Looked After Children reviews, in one to one sessions with their social workers and through the service's complaints procedure. Young people during the inspection did, however, raise concerns about communication with their own social workers. They mentioned frequent changes of social worker, difficulty in accessing social workers and a view that they did not have the time to form trusting relationships with their allocated social workers. From discussions during the inspection there was some indication that this has slightly improved with the creation of the Children looked After team, however it was evident that some young people had 'written off' social workers and that had a negative effect on their views of the service in general.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

29

The fostering service pays carers an agreed allowance and expenses dependent on the level of care they are providing. These are made clear prior to approval.

EVIDENCE:

There are various levels of allowances/fees paid to the carers depending on the care given. There are clear job descriptions for each of the levels and this helps carers to feel that what they receive is fair. Carers spoken to said they had been made aware of the payment system prior to their approval and had received the correct payments for the placements taken. Carers said any queries over payments are dealt with promptly. They were aware of the financial restrictions within the council budget and felt they had been consulted about the allowances paid. The allowances paid are in line with the Fostering Network minimum recommended allowances. Kinship carers approved as foster carers are paid the relevant allowance.

Allowances paid to carers for Family Link was felt to be low, given the amount of responsibility taken on when caring for a profoundly disabled child. At present this appears not to be affecting the retention of carers, but it may require further consideration if it becomes an issue.

The lack of retainers was raised by some carers who felt that having no income when there is no young person placed is difficult to manage. The service is aware of this and is committed to reviewing the allowances on an annual basis.

Management

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

17, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 32.

Although there are sufficient staff providing the service there are insufficient carers to provide a choice of placements. Staff are well supervised and supported. There is a clear strategy to support carers and work in partnership with them but this could be strengthened by the provision of specialist out of hours support. A good training programme for carers is provided, although sometimes the take up is low. Children's case files are comprehensive and accessible. Family and friends as carers are encouraged by the service and seen as beneficial to the young people.

EVIDENCE:

The service has an adequate number of staff to provide a good service. There is a good mix of experience and skills within the fostering team. In discussion during the inspection they demonstrated enthusiasm and good knowledge of the experience of foster carers and fostered children. The procedures available to staff are thorough, although some clearly need up-dating, and the staff feel well supported by management. New staff talked of being 'really welcomed' and of 'waiting for the bubble to burst' because the team had provided such a positive experience. The number of carers however is far lower than necessary to provide a good choice to young people (with the exception of Skye Close Project). Despite reviewing recruitment procedures there are still insufficient carers to meet the needs of the referred young people. The manager and staff explained the efforts they have made to interest the public in fostering, including attendance at shows, supermarkets etc. These efforts have had little effect on numbers. Research has been commissioned to inform targeted recruitment but demand is outstripping supply. Carers had raised the length of time assessments take as an issue for concern and some files showed that applications had sometimes taken a year to get to the fostering panel. Letters on file also suggested allocation of an assessing social worker can take 6-8 weeks. It is recommended that the service re-assess the procedure for processing applications as this delay may be having a negative effect on recruitment. It is acknowledged that there is a recruitment group currently considering the strategy. The shortage of carers is also a problem for the Family Link scheme where there is a large waiting list of young people needing carers. The manager and co-ordinator of the scheme are also looking at ways of recruiting more staff. The only part of the service that is having more success at recruitment is Skye Close Project. In discussion with carers on the project it appears that the enhanced fees paid to the carers is an incentive to come forward. This is due to the fact that carers, or one carer, usually gives up their work to offer this service and considers it an alternative career. The fees paid allows this to be a reality whereas Level 1 and 2 care fees do not.

Staff across the three parts of the service felt supervision was particularly good. One member of staff described it as 'the best I've ever experienced in a long social work career', another said 'I can't fault it – its brilliant'. Supervision is recorded and provided on a one to one basis. Appraisals take place once a year and consider the training needs of the staff member. In each setting team meetings happen on a regular basis. Minutes of the meetings were available. Staff said they felt valued and able to progress their careers. Generally staff presented as confident, happy in their work and clear about their contribution to the service.

Each foster carer has a named supervising social worker allocated to them at the point of approval. The foster care agreement sets out the expectations of

the service and what is on offer to the carers. The carers spoken to were well aware of the role of the supervising social worker and described themselves as 'very satisfied' with the support in half of the responses. The other responses said 'OK most of the time'. One carer said she felt the support could be improved by giving more intense support during the first few placements as 'it can be very stressful'. No-one said they were unsupported.

The Skye Close Project was mentioned as being 'particularly good' at supporting the carers. Carers appreciated that the manager and staff 'come and offer practical support' rather than just talk. Beechside carers also felt very well supported and talked of being contacted 'outside of normal hours' by the staff.

In most cases the carers felt they received support from the fostering service rather than the child's social worker, but understood the reason for this. Both carers and staff felt that out of hours support from fostering social workers would improve the service. There have been discussions about setting this up and some staff who are particularly keen to be part of a team provide this support. However, the unions have become involved in the discussions and there are still issues to be negotiated before a start date can be planned. The out of hours support to foster carers is one of the major advantages offered by specialist projects, schemes and independent fostering agencies. Carers feel that many of the problems connected with fostering occur outside of normal office hours and that they are left 'on their own' at those times. Although they can access the emergency social work services they do not feel that contact with people without specialist knowledge and understanding of the fostering role is particularly helpful. Retention and recruitment of foster carers may benefit by the provision of an out of hours support service and it is recommended that continued attempts be made to introduce this.

The service has a dedicated training officer who co-ordinates training for foster carers. A report of the last year's training, and the plans for the forthcoming year was provided for the inspection. Much of the training offered covers the basic needs of all carers. However, in addition, courses are identified and offered in conjunction with education and health colleagues. The training calendar includes: skills to foster, child protection, preparation for adulthood, preparation for adoption, safe caring, identity and heritage, managing behaviour, sex and relationships, caring for abused children, health and education. The co-ordinator has been frustrated by the poor take up of some of the courses. Foster carers did not offer any explanation for this, in fact most said they felt the training offered was good. Only one cited the timing of courses as an issue feeling that if they went on beyond the school day it presented problems. The supervising social workers spoke of the lack of control they have regarding insisting carers undertake training and would like to make it compulsory. However, this is not an option – although it is made a clear expectation. It is recommended that more user-friendly ways of providing training be further explored to try and meet the maximum number of

carers. Specific training for Family and Friends carers is also recommended, as the particular issues they are facing are often different from 'regular' foster carers. The training opportunities for carers exceed the standards, although the take up by carers needs further exploration.

The young people's files are the responsibility of the child's social workers and are kept at a different office. However, the IT system (Swift) enables the children's information to be accessed by the fostering team. The information is comprehensive and includes the Looked After Children information, including reviews of the placements. The duty social workers sometimes experience problems finding the relevant information on the system and talked of the need to 'trawl' the system when collating placement information. It is recommended that a referral form for young people needing placement be devised to aid the process of matching. This could be passed electronically to the fostering team to speed the process. Further developments of the Swift system are underway and are likely to improve the sharing of information. The use of Family and Friends carers continues to increase. The carers undertake the same assessment process and are presented to panel. In many cases the placement has already happened when the assessment starts, as it is part of the council procedure to consider friends and family as potential carers before offering a foster home. This acknowledges the value placed on kinship care. One carer providing kinship care was spoken to during the inspection. She felt the assessment had been 'OK' and said she receives the support she needs to care for her relative. Allowances are paid, and equipment provided in the same way as other carers. Training is offered but is often felt not to be appropriate by the carers. In discussion with the fostering team during the inspection it was obvious that there is great understanding of the issues that arise for relatives and friends who foster. This has led to some pragmatic decisions being made to support these placements. There is a dedicated social worker covering this area and another who has studied kinship care as part of the DipSW course.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	3

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

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

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

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	Further efforts to be made to provide sufficient carers to make appropriate matches of carers and young people
2.	FS17	Re-assess the procedure for processing applications from prospective carers with the aim of cutting the time taken
3.	FS21	Continued efforts to be made to introduce out-of-hours support to carers from the fostering team
4.	FS23	Consider other means of providing carer training, including for Family and Friends carers, in order to reach the maximum number of carers

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