



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### KCC Fostering

**Kent County Council  
Social Services Department  
Sessions House  
County Hall  
Maidstone Kent  
ME16 1XX**

*Lead Inspector*  
Alex Turner

*Announced Inspection*  
6th February 2006      09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

| <b>Reader Information</b> |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Document Purpose          | Inspection Report   |
| Author                    | CSCI  |
| Audience                  | General Public  |
| Further copies from       | 0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)  |
| Copyright                 | This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI |
| Internet address          | <a href="http://www.csci.org.uk">www.csci.org.uk</a>  |

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Name of service</b>  | KCC Fostering  |
| <b>Address</b>  | Kent County Council<br>Social Services Department<br>Sessions House<br>County Hall<br>Maidstone Kent<br>ME16 1XX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                                       | 0845 3302967   |
| <b>Fax number</b>   |  |
| <b>Email address</b>  |  |
| <b>Provider Web address</b>                                   |  |
| <b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b> | Janet Hughes   |
| <b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>             |  |
| <b>Type of registration</b>                                   | Local Auth Fostering Service   |
| <b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>   |  |

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      3rd March 2005

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

Kent County Council fostering service is comprised of four area teams and a number of specialist services operating across the county of Kent. The service offers placements across the range for example short term, long term, emergency, and bridging placements. The specialist fostering schemes include Therapeutic Reparenting, Treatment Foster Care, and Support Foster Care for Children with Disabilities, Remand Foster Care and Parent and Child Placements. At the time of this inspection there was over 960 children and young people placed with foster carers approved by the service. There was close to 670 approved foster carers, between them offering a combined total of approximately 1,120 potential placements.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was conducted over five days by three inspectors and included evening visits to eight foster carers homes. Children and carers were seen and spoken to. Over 100 carers and children returned pre-inspection questionnaires. Over 600 questionnaires were returned by social workers in relation to individual placements that had been made. The majority of questionnaires were positive in their appraisal of the service. Where negative comments were made these were not to an extent that constituted significant trends that had not been recognised and or were being addressed. One of the fostering panels was observed in operation. The chair of this panel was interviewed. Conversations took place with social work staff, social work assistants, a policy and performance manager, a practice supervisor, the team leaders of the areas inspected and the manager of the overall fostering service. A sample of records was reviewed that were selected from a wide range of records requested and made available for inspection. The ratings given at the end of this report relate to the specific findings of this inspection. It should be noted that due to the way the services are organised across the county these ratings might not provide the best reflection of actual service provision across all aspects of its operations. This is due to local variation that has been impossible to take fully into account using the methodology and resources available at the time of this inspection.

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

The service had done well and is commended for the provision and continued development of the specialist fostering schemes. The schemes represent tangible examples of ways in which contemporary research in fostering has been translated and incorporated into actual service delivery.

The training and development initiatives introduced last year are now embedded in practice. They do much to promote and raise the professional profile and development of foster carers.

The service has done well to establish positive working partnerships with education and health services.

The service is managed well. This is in respect to the local management of the teams visited during this inspection and the overall management of the fostering service as a whole. The teams benefit from a high degree of collective skills, experience and competence possessed by those working within them.

Monitoring information indicates the matching process has been effective in practice.

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

The matching process is now more transparent and the measures taken to enhance the process are acknowledged in this report.

The statement of purpose has been reviewed and action has been taken to more effectively ensure the children's guide is properly distributed.

The review of foster carers performance has been improved and processes introduced that serve to gain the views of children placed with carers.

Recruitment procedures have been enhanced and now incorporate checks that were not routinely taking place at the time of the last inspection.

Procedures relating to the legitimate placement of children with people who had not been approved at the time placements were made have been put in place.

Foster care agreements have been rewritten and these are now in line with regulatory requirements.

Progress has been made to ensure that information required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 is now maintained. There is however further work to be completed with regards to this matter.

Foster carers are now being supported to develop safe care guidelines in relation to their particular circumstances and those of children placed with them.

A review of the out of hours support provided to carers has been reviewed. New procedures were due to be introduced soon after this inspection was completed.

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

The procedures to receive medication into foster carer's homes where short-term breaks are being provided must be improved.

The work to keep and maintain specific records required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 must be completed.

Action should be taken to clarify how the safety of adaptations to vehicles being used to transport children placed with foster carers, is checked and maintained.

Work should take place to identify and address shortfalls in the frequency of care reviews for children with disabilities. Areas where there are problems or delays in the provision of equipment and aids that are needed by foster carers

to properly provide for the children placed with them should also be identified and addressed.

Efforts should continue to have on each of the panels someone who has either been fostered themselves or a person who has had a child of theirs fostered. Area team leaders should develop a means by which to report back to people using the services the outcomes of consultation, an appraisal of the quality of services provided and a summary of aspirations and targets for the future.

Action should be taken to consult with the Mid Kent fostering team regarding problems with and possible solutions to matters in connection with the accommodation and facilities at their disposal.

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**

## **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 at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

12

Children's health and development is taken into account and promoted.

## EVIDENCE:

The managers and staff of the teams inspected demonstrated a high level of awareness of local health care resources in their areas. Children were being supported to access services appropriate to their needs. This included general health care services such as doctors, dentists and optometrists in addition to more specialist providers such as mental health services and psychologist input. Links have been established with area Looked After Children's Nursing Service contributing to ensure that children's health care needs are being assessed and provided for. The relationship between placing teams and the fostering teams and foster carers is such that information about children's health care needs and consents for medical treatment is generally well managed. Promoting health of looked after children is included in the training programme delivered to carers. The fostering service makes clear to carers the expectations placed upon them in terms of promoting children's health in the written guidance that is provided to them, in supervision and in the foster care agreement. Through regular supervision and any additional contact the service keeps up to date with any developments and changes in children's health care status. Those children that returned pre-inspection questionnaires and made a comment regarding how they are helped to stay healthy all provided positive remarks in this area. Children described being provided with a healthy diet, being encouraged and supported to exercise, to have good personal hygiene, to go to the doctors and how to keep safe and look after themselves.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

3,6,8,9,15 & 30

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

The fostering service takes care to ensure that children are placed with foster carers whose skills and circumstances match the needs to be met.

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

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

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

## **EVIDENCE:**

Those managing the fostering service demonstrated appropriate awareness of issues relating to safeguarding children. It was clear that the needs and welfare of children were paramount.

Ongoing contact with foster carers has contributed to ensuring standards relating to accommodation and environmental safety in foster homes are

maintained. The annual review process includes checks and overview of matters relating to this area of foster carers practice. Included in this process are checks to ensure that vehicles used by foster carers have a current MOT certificate. It was not clear how the safety and maintenance of vehicles that had been adapted was ensured. A recommendation has been made to ensure that vehicles with adaptations to transport looked after children are maintained and tested at appropriate intervals to ensure safety of the adaptations made. Eight foster homes were visited during this inspection. In each case the accommodation provided was warm, adequately furnished, decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene.

Since the last inspection the fostering service has developed tools to enhance the matching process. A matching matrix compliments the service referral form. Both are used as an initial means to assess the indicative level of care required by children referred to the service and thus may be used to guide and inform the process in identifying carers who may present as a suitable match. This is complemented by the development of individual foster carer profiles, which provide a snapshot summary of their family and circumstances in relation to the fostering task. Social workers described a collaborative process of matching that takes into account factors that include geographical location, other children in the home, the skills and experience of foster carers and the needs of children for whom a placement is sought. Monitoring figures indicate that the matching process has been effective. The monitoring information however does not make clear distinctions between various reasons why placements have ended; the recommendation is made to consider doing so as this may provide a clearer and more accurate picture of placement stability.

Contributing to the aim of promoting children's welfare and safety the training programme for foster carers includes child protection, safe caring skills and positive behaviour management. Since the last inspection carers have been supported to develop safe care guidelines particular to their own circumstances and those of the children that are placed with them. The foster care agreement stipulates that corporal punishment is not acceptable. Systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. Allegations against foster carers have been treated seriously and investigated according to procedures. A joint protocol has been developed with the local police authority and the neighbouring unitary authority in relation to children missing from foster care.

A selection of records demonstrating the recruitment process used by the fostering service was inspected. The records illustrated that there is an awareness of the checks that must be carried out and that these are routinely being completed. People employed to carry out social work functions are suitably qualified and experienced to do so. Staff demonstrated a good level of knowledge in relation to their role and of specific issues relevant to children placed and the foster carers looking after them.

The four fostering teams each have a fostering panel. Each panel operates within the parameters of the same written procedures and policies regarding the panel's functions. There is access to medical expertise. By observation of the panel and discussion with one of the panel chairs it was confirmed that the panel provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process. Feedback and guidance is given to assessing social workers regarding the quality of assessments. The panel receives information regarding foster carer's reviews. Observation of the panel confirmed that the panel undertakes a rigorous analysis of the information under consideration. The panels monitor the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children. Written records of proceedings was to a good standard. The payment to panel members has been enhanced and this may have a positive impact on the recruitment of members with experience of the foster care system. The service is aiming to recruit persons with experience of being fostered or a person who has experience of their own child being fostered.

# Enjoying and Achieving

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

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

**The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

7, 13 & 31

The fostering service recognises and works positively with diversity such that children's specific circumstances are taken into account and they are supported to partake in activities and interests that are important to them.

The fostering service contributes much to the promotion of positive educational outcomes for looked after children.

Short-term breaks provided by the fostering service are well organised and planned though more care needs to be taken with regard to the management of medication in these circumstances.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality are factors taken into account by the fostering service in its matching process. Training in Valuing Diversity is a core module in the programme delivered to foster carers. The service promotes anti discriminatory practice and diversity in its written policies and procedures. Children with a disability receive services and support from designated teams and foster carers who specialise in this area of care. It was noted however that the reviews of children with disabilities in at least one area were not happening as frequently as they should and that in another area equipment needed to support children with disabilities has not been provided in a timely manner. Though these issues are not entirely within the sole control of the individual fostering teams, action should be taken to identify where there are shortfalls in service provision and efforts made to address these in partnership with the relevant disability support services.

Children who returned pre inspection questionnaires gave many examples of areas where they had been supported to either continue with existing interests and pastimes or to develop new ones. Examples included a multitude of sporting activities ranging from horse riding to bowling, participation in youth groups and clubs such as the Girl's Brigade and Brownies, and opportunities to attend such things as church groups, mosques and language clubs.

A number of initiatives have been taken by the local authority to promote the educational outcomes of looked after children and young people. These measures have had positive impact on services for children in foster care. Included in the initiatives is the provision of computers for looked after children, the operation of library and literacy projects, and the implementation and monitoring of personal education plans for looked after children. Each of the fostering teams benefit from designated education support workers for carers. Information regarding children's educational attainment and the numbers of children not in school is monitored and used to help inform and develop service provision. For those children who have been excluded the service works with education advisors to place children back into appropriate schools with additional support to maintain their placements. Where necessary arrangements have been made to provide home tutoring. The specialist fostering schemes incorporate in their service delivery partnership working with educational psychologists and schools. Included in the training programme for foster carers are sessions in promoting education of looked after children. These coordinated initiatives illustrate a strong commitment and a willingness to invest in promoting better educational outcomes for looked after children for which the service is commended.

Carers providing short-term breaks are approved, trained and supervised in the same manner as carers providing longer-term placements. Such placements had generally been well planned and coordinated in the teams visited during this inspection. It was noted that the procedures for receiving medication into the homes of carers providing short-term breaks from the parents or guardians of children being cared for were less than satisfactory. The requirement is made to ensure that the arrangements are reviewed such that children's welfare and safety is properly safeguarded.

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

**The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

10 & 11

The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for children and young people.

The fostering service actively promotes consultation and seeks to enable children to have their voice heard.

## EVIDENCE:

Records indicated that contact arrangements had been included in placement agreements, discussed in statutory reviews and verified in ongoing correspondence. Foster carers were aware of the duty to support children and young people in maintaining and developing family contacts and friendships. Foster carers have reported various ways in which they have supported children and young people in this area including help with transport and escorting children and young people to contact venues and supporting them to have contact via emails, the telephone and letter writing. Outcomes and observations made following contact visits have been recorded and relayed back to the fostering service and the placing social worker.

The majority of children and young people providing feedback stated that they are sometimes or often asked for their opinions by their foster carers. Many were able to give examples of how their opinions had been listened to and acted upon. Consultation through children's groups has provided young people with a platform to air their views about fostering to the people running the service. The process of reviewing foster carers suitability to foster now includes seeking the opinions of the children. Subject to age and understanding children are encouraged to participate in the review of their care plans and placement plans. Marginally over two thirds of children completing pre-inspection



questionnaires indicated that they knew how to complain about the services they received if they needed to. Arrangements have been made for children to access an independent complaints service. Consultation days with children have been organised and attended by managers of the fostering service. Work is underway to consider how young people may be more involved in the training programmes delivered to foster carers. The suggestion was made that there may be some gains in summarising the outcomes of consultation and feeding this back to children, families and carers on an occasional but regular basis.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

29

Allowances and expenses are paid in accordance with the agreed rates and generally though not always in a timely manner.

### EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has revised allowances paid to carers and devised a framework of payment for skills thus promoting and rewarding professional development. The revised system is due to be implemented in September 2006. A disparity in the level of payments made to foster carers looking after children with disabilities between the area teams was identified. The manager for the overall fostering service stated that this anomaly had been identified and the intention was to make payments equitable across the different areas. Generally payments to carers were being paid promptly and at the agreed levels. It was found though that payment for occasional placements was sometimes not being processed efficiently due to human error / omission. This was recognised as a weakness by the fostering manager who has stated that systems are being revised to minimise the risk of future occurrence. Mileage expenses incurred are being reviewed with a view to increasing the amount paid.

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

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

1, 2, 4, 5, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 & 26.

Accurate and up to date information is widely available about the aims, objectives and operation of the fostering service. Useful information packs for children about the fostering service have been produced and distributed.

The service is well managed overall and on an area basis. The operation of the service is closely monitored and controlled in an appropriate manner.

There is good staffing provision and the carers are offered appropriate levels of support, supervision and training.

Comprehensive case records for children were maintained by placing teams. Information was being managed and shared in an appropriate manner. Other information systems have been developed in line with the standards and regulations though continue to fall short of requirements in specific areas.

The standard of accommodation from which the service operates varies across the county.

## **EVIDENCE:**

A requirement was made following the last inspection to ensure that all children are provided with a copy of the children's guide. The majority of children completing pre-inspection questionnaires confirmed that this had been provided. The arrangements for distributing the guide have been confirmed to include providing copies to all foster carers, by checking with children they have received the guide in care reviews, by making the guide available to placing social workers and by including the guide in information packs provided to looked after children. The work gone into producing child friendly information packs with input from partner agencies represents a good example of the commitment to ensure children are provided with up to date, relevant information about the services in place for them. The statement of purpose has been reviewed; it provides an accurate and concise description of the fostering service provision. The document is distributed widely within the local authority and can be downloaded from the local authorities web site.

The manager of the fostering service is suitably qualified and experienced. The combined qualifications and experience of all those involved in the carrying on and management of the service quite clearly exceed the requirements of this standard. The fact the fostering service manager oversees a number of teams which are managed on a local level is not taken into account in the Minimum Standards though is acknowledged here to reflect the scope of the task in hand. The overall findings of this inspection indicate the manager has exercised effective leadership of the staff and operation of the service.

The operation of each team and of the overall service is closely monitored. Strategies have been devised to maintain and build on strengths. Areas of actual or potential weakness have been identified and action has been taken to address these. Some good illustrations of where practice has improved and strengths have been consolidated include training and development for foster carers and staff, the continued development of the specialist fostering schemes and the review and re-provision of the area out of hours service. It is recommended that the area team managers develop a means to report to

stakeholders of the respective services the quality of provision and to summarise any improvements made and aspirations for the future.

The overall findings of this inspection indicate the day-to-day operation of the fostering service is managed effectively. Managerial responsibilities, delegated duties and the lines of accountability have been defined. There is a suitably qualified and designated person to deputise in the fostering service manager's absence and for team leaders in each of the areas served. The organisation of local authorities fostering service reflects the scale of the operation across the county and the continued development of specialist fostering schemes and Treatment Foster Care Programme. In order to recognise the scope, breadth and diversity of the fostering service managers task, and the overall findings of this inspection, a rating of four has been awarded.

The ongoing development of the service continues in line with providing modern, good quality fostering provision. The teams are staffed in line with attaining and maintaining this position. The recruitment of foster carers is well organised. Strategies are in place to achieve the recruitment targets set by the service. The process of assessment and approval of foster carers continues to take into account and incorporate good practice guidelines with regard to ensuring that the suitability of people approved as foster carers is ensured as far as is practicably possible. A requirement to ensure the placement of children with people who are not approved foster carers (under regulation 38 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002) has been acted upon with the review of policy and procedural guidelines in this area.

There are clear strategies informing day-to-day work with foster carers. There are several tiers of support encompassing practical assistance and advice, professional social work supervision and support and access to management and senior personnel. Predominantly foster carers have reported satisfaction with the level of support they had received. There were isolated incidences of discontent, which were being or had been addressed. It was noted for example that the provision of out of hours support has been reviewed; changes made were due to be implemented soon after this inspection. Forums have been established that enable foster carers to be consulted with as a professional group and contribute to the development of the service.

Agreements entered into by the service with foster carers have been reviewed and very much improved upon. Written information and guidance concerning the fostering task is provided to carers by the service including how to make complaints and representations. Foster carers have stated the fostering service is clear about the expectations placed upon them. Foster carers received supervision at intervals typically of between 4-6 weeks; more regular contact took place with phone calls and visits by social work assistants. Records demonstrate that complaints or allegations were dealt with seriously and in generally in accordance with procedural guidelines. One instance was found

where the outcome of a complaint investigation had not been shared with the foster carers concerned.

The training of foster carers has been well thought out, planned and delivered. Clear programmes that promote foster carers professional development have been implemented. Training progresses through key stages and potentially leads to the attainment of National Vocational and higher-level qualifications. Foster carers completion of key stages of training has been linked with the development of payment for skills. It was very encouraging to note that supervision with foster carers and their annual reviews was being used to discuss training needs and to explore what impact training had actually made on practice. Personal development plans have been introduced. Foster carers and staff have commented that the arrangements for training had been good and that benefit had been gained from training attended.

The fostering service had on file key records relating to children. Information included placement agreements, care plans, and essential information and copies of correspondence relating to children's individual circumstances. Foster carers indicated that they are provided with relevant information by the fostering service to help them make an informed decision regarding a proposed match and to provide safe and appropriate ongoing care. In the records inspected were some very good examples of communication that indicated foster carers, the fostering service and the placing social work teams benefited from regular and effective communication exchange. Carers visited demonstrated an awareness of the need to record significant events and to pass on information to the fostering service. A sample of carers records were inspected and it was apparent that these are regularly reviewed during their supervision.

The records kept by the fostering service were broadly in line with the standards and regulations. Records were maintained in an organised manner and information retrieval was effectively demonstrated. This area of the fostering services operation has improved since the time of the last inspection. There is however the need to ensure that registers of children and carers include all of the details required by the Fostering Service Regulations. Though the improvements in this area are acknowledged the requirement to address this shortfall is repeated.

The fostering service has a number of different premises from which it operates. During this inspection there was apparent differences in the suitability of the offices used by the two teams inspected. One of the teams enjoyed a high standard of accommodation in modern facilities entirely suited for purpose. The other teams accommodation was not entirely conducive to providing a comfortable environment from which to work. Examples where improvements could be made include air quality, noise levels, natural lighting and physical space available.

# 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>            | 3            |

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

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

| <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>                           | 2            |

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

YES

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

| No. | Standard | Regulation | Requirement   | Timescale for action |
|-----|----------|------------|---|----------------------|
| 1.  | FS31     | 11         | The local authority shall ensure that the procedures for receiving medication into the homes of carers providing short-term breaks are reviewed such that children's welfare and safety is properly safeguarded.  | 16/04/06             |
| 2.  | FS25     | 22,30 & 31 | The Fostering Service Provider shall ensure that the records required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are kept and maintained by the fostering service in accordance with and include the detail specified in the regulations. (The timescale specified in the last report has not been met). | 16/07/06             |
|     |          |            |   |                      |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

| No. | Refer to Standard | Good Practice Recommendations |
|-----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|     |                   |                               |



|    |         |   |
|----|---------|---|
| 1. | FS6     | The fostering service should ensure that information is available to staff and to foster carers regarding how to ensure that vehicles with adaptations used by foster carers to transport looked after children are maintained and tested at appropriate intervals with regards to the safety of the adaptations made.                                      |
| 2. | FS8     | The fostering service should consider more clearly distinguishing in monitoring figures reasons why placements have ended.  |
| 3. | FS30    | The fostering service should ensure that one of the independent members on each of the panels is a person who has at any time been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with foster carers.   |
| 4. | FS7     | The fostering service should take action to identify and address in partnership with the relevant disability support services areas where there are shortfalls in the frequency of care reviews for children with disabilities and in the provision of equipment needed by carers looking after such children.  |
| 5. | FS4FS11 | The area team managers should develop a means to report back to children, the parents of children placed by the service, foster carers and to placing social workers of the outcomes of consultation, the quality of service provision and to summarise any improvements made and aspirations and targets for the future on a occasional but regular basis. |
| 6. | FS26    | The local authority should seek and take into account the views of the Mid Kent fostering team with regards to premises and standard of accommodation from which they operate.  |

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Kent and Medway Area Office

11th Floor

International House

Dover Place

Ashford Kent

TN23 1HU

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

Web: [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI