



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Hampshire County Council Fostering Service**

**Trafalgar House  
The Castle  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 8UQ**

*Lead Inspector*  
Bridgette Lowe

*Announced Inspection*  
12th December 2005      10:00a

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>	Hampshire County Council Fostering Service
<b>Address</b>	Trafalgar House The Castle Winchester Hampshire SO23 8UQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	jennie.polyblank@hants.gov.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Hampshire County Council
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Jennie Polyblank
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	0
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      28th February 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

Hampshire County Council foster care service provides a range of family based care for children of all ages in Hampshire who are unable to stay with their own families. Placements are provided for children who need to be cared for in emergency situations, for short or long periods or for a planned series of short breaks. The service is made up of six Family Placement Teams based in the North, South East and South West districts of the county and a Central Fostering Recruitment Team who recruit and carry out the assessments of prospective foster carers.

The service is managed by a County Strategic and a County Operational Manager based in Winchester and Romsey respectively. The County Strategic Manager's role is overseeing Family Placements and the Operational Manager oversees the fostering service. Specialist posts within the service include a Marketing Co-ordinator, a Training Development officer and a Panel Advisor. There are six multi-disciplinary Fostering panels in operation across the county.

The District teams work with the social workers of children who need to be placed to see if anyone from within the child's extended family or kinship networks could, with support, look after the child. This would be the first choice solution for any child not able to live at home. Family Placement Teams carry out the assessments of family and kinship carers as well as prospective family-link carers and provide supervision and support to all approved carers. Hampshire also uses a number of independent fostering agencies where they are not able to provide a suitable placement within their own resources.

# **SUMMARY**

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

The inspection took place over 3 days with 8 foster carers and foster children being visited by inspectors. Inspectors spoke to managers, staff, viewed records policies at the Winchester office and Littlefold office. Foster homes were visited as part of the inspection. Hampshire County Council were responsible for sending out questionnaires to all foster carers approved in the last twelve months, and all young people who were over the age of eight years old and in Hampshire County Council foster placements. A letter was sent to all carers inviting them to air their views about the fostering service. The commission received a very low response to questionnaires, twelve were received from young people and only two foster carers responded. At the time of inspection there were 311 general foster carers, 145 family and friends foster carers and 33 respite carers. The foster services panel will be assessed on the next inspection.

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

The service offers a good level of support to all its carers. Regular supervision sessions are undertaken by family placement social workers and young people are appropriately placed in safe and secure environments in which carers promote young people's mental and emotional wellbeing. The service promotes the health development and educational achievements of young people. The service values diversity, promotes equality for the children, young people and their families. Case records were viewed and were comprehensive. The foster service provides respite care for children with disabilities and is positive in recognising that parents remain the main carers for these young people. The kinship care service supports young people and families and enable them to remain out of the Looked after Children system. The service promotes contact between young people and their families. The service has sufficiently qualified and experienced staff to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met.

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

Since the last inspection the service has recruited a significant number of foster carers, at the time of inspection there was a recruitment drive to recruit and approve another 150 carers to enable better placement choice. The staff recruitment process now ensures that documentary evidence of qualifications are on file and that references are verified with direct contact. Carers said that they were provided with all the relevant information before a young person is placed. Supervisions of carers were being undertaken routinely. Carers reported that payments were being made in a timely manner. Young people spoke of being visited by their social workers, although they were not being routinely consulted by the services family placement social workers. The matching process has improved with new forms being in place to ensure appropriate placements are sought.

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

The foster service needs to ensure that annual reviews of foster carers approval take place in accordance with the regulation. The service was aware that this was not being met and managers spoke of prioritising this. The service should ensure that young people are being consulted routinely by family placement workers and record any contact and consultation with children and young people. The service managers informed the inspectors that safe caring booklets would be provided to all carers, in addition to the guidance and training already provided.

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 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 is proactive in promoting health and development of young people.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The service promotes the health and development of young people through numerous ways, including supervision of carers and training events. The training calendar is provided to all carers and the inspector viewed the courses on offer. These included health of Children Looked after, safe care, sexuality sexual health education drugs and alcohol. The foster carers all have a comprehensive handbook that also details health promotion information. Carers spoke to the inspectors of gaining all relevant health information prior to a young person being placed. There was good evidence of links between the fostering services staff and health specialists to ensure that the needs of young people were met. The staff enlist specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to meet the needs of young people, as well as other services required.

## 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**

3,6,8,9,15

The Service is well managed with good safeguards in place to appropriately provide suitable foster carers and offer a service that matches the needs of young people with the skills of the carers. Staff and carers were aware of child protection procedures and promoting the safety and welfare of young people.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The operational service manager has been managing the family placements service since 2002. She is suitably qualified and experienced to manage the service holding a CQSW qualification, Diploma and BA (Hons) in social work and studies. She has worked in the field of children and families social work since 1976. The manager updates her knowledge and training regularly. All staff working for the service have enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks renewed every 3 years.

Eight foster care families were visited on inspection. All young people placed within these homes were positive about their carers; one young person spoke of it being a "good family home". The homes were safe and provided a nurturing environment in which all children and young people informed the inspectors they were happy to live in. Appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken on every foster carers home and reviewed regularly. All carers demonstrated a good awareness of the need to promote and safeguard the young peoples well-being.

Records and carers and young peoples files were viewed. The inspectors were assisted with looking at case notes on the services computer database. There are new forms in place to ensure appropriate matching takes place, family placement social workers said that these were not being routinely used, although the inspectors evidenced that matching considerations were being appropriately assessed. Staff spoke to inspectors about the matching process. Managers informed inspectors that there is a need to increase the number of carers by another 150 to ensure that there is greater placement choice.

The carers and staff were all aware of the need to protect and safeguard children and young people from all forms of abuse. This was discussed in meetings with staff and carers. Safe caring booklets are provided to foster carers on a skill level 3, although there are plans to disseminate booklets to all carers. Guidelines were available to all carers and training is provided in relation to safe caring. Carers informed inspectors that family placement workers discussed safe caring within supervision.

Four staff recruitment files and four foster carers files were sampled. All the appropriate recruitment checks and safeguards were in place. All staff and carers have enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks renewed every three years. Telephone verification of references are now carried out on staff. Documentary evidence of qualifications were seen on personnel files. There are very thorough selection and recruitment processes for both carers and staff.

# 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**

7,13,31

The service ensures that children and young people are provided with good foster care services that value diversity and promote equality. Young peoples education is supported and promoted. Arrangements for respite care are well supported and family members remain the main carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The inspectors spoke to staff about valuing diversity and how the service meets the needs of young people from all backgrounds. One family placement social worker was able to give a good account of how the service had ensured that a young unaccompanied asylum seekers needs were take into account and the work that was undertaken to meet her needs. A foster home was visited and a young person was spoken to, who was an asylum seeker. The foster carers had gone to lengths to ensure that his cultural, religious and linguistic needs were met, to the extent of the carers learning his language. The inspectors were able to see documentation that ensured young peoples cultural and religious needs were taken into account as part of the matching process. Work is currently being undertaken to consult with children and young people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to see whether their cultural and religious needs are being met. Work is also being undertaken with foster carers from Black and Minority Ethnic groups to see what support or specialist advice they could offer to children or carers where placements with a same heritage carer was either not possible or not the preferred choice of placement. Recruitment has been targeted to particular communities or for individual

children to ensure cultural and religious needs are met. All core training provided to carers promotes diversity and there is a specific training course entitled 'Equality for everyone'.

Foster carers spoke to inspectors about promoting young peoples educational achievements. Personal Education Plans were in place for some young people and carers spoke of attending parents' evenings and keeping parents informed of young peoples education. One carer was able to express the positive work undertaken by the service to support a young person and the carers after the young person had been excluded from school.

The inspector met with the family link co-ordinator who arranges respite care for children with disabilities. The fostering service assesses the carers thoroughly and works closely with all professionals involved in the young peoples health and welfare. The parents remain as the main carers and are able to communicate closely with both staff and carers to ensure that young people are appropriately placed. There was evidence of adaptations and health equipment being provided for carers to meet the needs of the young people. One carer was being funded and supported to attend makaton sign language classes in order to be able to communicate with young people more effectively.

# 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**

10,11

The Service ensures that all young people are encouraged to maintain positive contacts with family members.

Young people are consulted although the service needs to ensure young peoples views and opinions are ascertained on a regular basis.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Contact arrangements for young people were clearly identified on files. The inspector was able to gain good evidence of young people being listened to in relation to contact. One young person and carers spoke to the inspector about work undertaken to increase contact with the children's family after the young person requested more contact. This was actioned immediately and the outcome was the young person was happier and more settled in the carers home. Financial support is given to carers who transport and facilitate contact with families.

Young people were being consulted whilst in foster care although many young people spoke of not meeting with the fostering family placement social workers. Some carers spoke of the young peoples social workers responding and consulting the children regularly, but there was also some frustration from carers about children's social workers and them not responding at a time when a child may have been at risk. The inspectors spoke to staff about consulting with young people and felt there is a need for family placement workers to formalise this process and record any contact to ensure that young peoples' opinions and views are ascertained on a regular basis as to whether they are happy in their foster homes and any matters concerning their lives. Consultation documents are supplied to young people prior to reviews and young people informed the inspectors that there opinions were sought in relation to foster carers and where they were living. The family link co-

ordinator spoke of carers, staff and families consulting with young people with disabilities and advocating on their behalf if they have communication difficulties.

# **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**

This standard was not assessed on inspection, although there was no evidence of any concerns in these areas.

## **EVIDENCE:**



# 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**

17,21,24,32

The Service has a competent qualified staff team who can meet the needs of both foster carers and young people.

Carers are well supported with regular supervisions taking place although some reviews were not taking place in accordance with the regulations.

Case records are comprehensive, well maintained and stored securely and on a computer database.

Family and friends and kinship carers are well supported and the service recognises the value of supporting young people to enable them to remain cared for by relatives.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The inspectors met with family placement workers managers and support staff and read personnel files, this evidenced qualifications and staff experience. Foster carers spoke of the thorough assessment process and assessment documentation was read. The family placement workers are qualified social workers are competent to assess the carers and meet the needs of young people. The service also has recruited staff and family placement workers and teams were supported by social services assistants and foster care support workers. The county has a central recruitment team who carry out the majority of assessments of potential carers.

Foster carers spoke of feeling well supported by the service and were encouraged to undertake training and attend support groups. The out of hours support is being developed by the service with a pilot scheme specifically aimed at supporting foster carers and responding at times of crisis. The foster carers spoke of having good communication links with the services support workers, family placement workers and some children's social workers. The annual reviews as highlighted by the service managers, were not always taking place in accordance with the regulation. This was area being prioritised by managers.

The inspectors read carers and young people's files held on computer databases. Most were comprehensive and with up to date recorded entries, two young peoples files lacked evidence of medical and health needs. Carers' files were also held in offices and kept securely.

The work undertaken by the service to promote family and friends as carers is commendable. The thorough assessment process is undertaken and the same systems are in place to approve train and support carers to care for children and young people. An inspector met with the team of kinship care support workers and discussed the support and supervision given to the carers' families and young people. Kinship carers are well supported to care for young people and help them to stay out of the looked after children system, but entitles them to support and finance. There are 161 children/young people placed with Family and friends foster carers. Both kinship carers and family and friends as carers are an area that is continually being developed and promoted as a positive outcome for children and young people.

# 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>	X

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

<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>	X

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

Yes

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS21	29	Annual reviews of foster carers approval take place in accordance with the Regulations. (Previous timescale 30/9/05)	01/06/06

### **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	FS11	The service ensures that family placement workers consult children and young people on all matters affecting them, and record any contact.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Hampshire Office

4th Floor Overline House

Blechynden Terrace

Southampton

SO15 1GW

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)

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