



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Derbyshire County Council - Fostering Service**

**Derbyshire County Council  
Social Services Department  
County Offices  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 3AG**

*Lead Inspector*

Jenny Thornton and Nancy Bradley

*Announced Inspection*  
16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> January 2006 9:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

**Name of service** Derbyshire County Council - Fostering Service

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Social Services Department  
County Offices  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 3AG

**Telephone number** 01629 580000

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**Provider Web address**

**Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)** Derbyshire County Council

**Name of registered manager (if applicable)**

**Type of registration** Local Auth Fostering Service

**Category(ies) of registration, with number of places**

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection** 15th November 2004

## Brief Description of the Service:

The Fostering Service is part of Derbyshire County Council Social Services. It recently re-structured its service to provide:

- A central recruitment team which is responsible for the recruitment of new foster carers; the social workers are co-located with the support teams across the county.
- Five local fostering teams based in Ilkeston, Chesterfield, Clay Cross, Swadlincote and Buxton, which support and supervise foster carers.
- The contract care team, which supports foster carers with additional skills, to care for teenagers with specific needs, who would otherwise be placed in residential or specialist care.
- A disability fostering team which supports foster carers providing short term breaks and longer term placements for disabled children. The social workers are co-located with the support teams across the county.

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains and supports foster carers. A total of 342 children and young people were placed with the service at the time of the inspection. The service supports 381 approved foster carers.

# SUMMARY

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

The announced inspection was carried out over four days by two inspectors, and focused on the central recruitment team and the support team based at the Chesterfield area office. Seven members of staff and senior managers of the service were interviewed. Various records were examined and questionnaires were received from foster carer's, young people and their social workers. As part of the inspection five foster carers and children/young people were visited and their records were checked, which helps determine how well the service is meeting their needs. The inspectors also attended a carers' support meeting and one of the Fostering Panels.

The Fostering Service has made good progress towards meeting the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection report dated November 2004.

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

The Authority provides a range of services to meet the needs of children and their families, and is committed to a programme of continual improvement of the service.

The fostering service promotes young people's safety and welfare. The children and young people are assisted to maintain their rights through support of independent Advocates and the Children's Rights Officer.

Children and young people are encouraged to maintain contact with their family and friends as detailed in their placement plan. Children and young people receive timely placement reviews and are encouraged to express their views about their care and placement. The fostering service supports young people's educational needs and achievements.

Foster carers have a named family support worker, who provides a good level of support to foster carers. The fostering service has some experienced and committed staff that work well together and in partnership with other agencies. All staff receive a good level of training, support and supervision to carry out their work.

Clear procedures are followed relating to the assessment of new foster carers, which ensures that appropriate people are recruited. The standard of assessments of new foster carers was detailed, providing a clear and informative picture of potential carers. The service has a clear pre approval-

training programme to ensure that new foster carer's have the appropriate skills to care for young people.

The Authority has three well-established Fostering Panels, which cover a wide range of business and provide an appropriate level of independence. The Authority has clear systems in place to monitor the work of the fostering service.

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

Considerable changes have been made to improve the efficiency of the fostering service and to bring about consistency of practice across all areas. Staff's roles are more clearly defined and staff are able to focus on specific areas of work. Staff considered that the changes to the service have generally been beneficial.

The statement of purpose has been reviewed to include the new structure and aims of the service.

The restructuring of the service resulted in a significant number of staff changes, and the fostering service has successfully appointed to virtually all the vacant posts. The newly formed teams are getting established and staff consider that the morale has improved. The disability-fostering workers are now co-located within the local area support teams, which has strengthened the skill mix of staff.

A number of experienced foster carer's are more involved in the pre-approval training for new foster carer's and provide support through the mentoring scheme. A range of initiatives were being put in place to ensure that foster carers receive regular training to further their knowledge and skills. All area teams now hold regular foster carer support group meetings, except for Amber Valley and Erewash. Priority was being given to establishing a support group within these areas.

A comprehensive I.T system has been put in place across the county; all records are now recorded electronically as part of the integration of children's services. All staff had received some training on the new recording system.

The children's complaints procedure has been updated with involvement of young people.

A policy has been drafted to promote the permanency of young people's placements.

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

The Authority needs to put in place a clear policy and procedures relating to the saving and recording of information on the new I.T system, to enable all staff to easily access the records.

All foster carers should receive I.T training in order to make full use of computers provided by the Authority and to aid communication.

Arrangements require strengthening to ensure that all foster carers keep essential records of children in their care to a consistent standard.

The Authority should appoint an overall manager at operational level to oversee and lead the fostering service.

The service needs to establish a full compliment of staff working in the recruitment team in order to recruit a range of carers within all areas of the county and to offer placement choice and further meet the needs of the children and their families.

The service needs to increase the level of staff within the support teams to take account of the increased numbers of new foster carers being approved.

The records need to clearly show pre-placement matching considerations between a foster carer and a child.

Potential foster carers and staff need to record the full dates of their employment history, in order to show any gaps in employment.

The service needs to further strengthen the post approval-training programme to ensure that all foster carers attend regular training to update their knowledge and skills.

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

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



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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## Being Healthy

### The intended 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

Importance is given to meeting young people's health needs, and improvements have been made to ensure that foster carers receive essential information relating to a child's health to enable them to meet their needs.

### EVIDENCE:

Foster carer's had a clear understanding of their role in promoting young peoples' health needs. Young people said that their health needs were being met and records supported this. Procedures have been strengthened to ensure that foster carers receive essential information relating to the young peoples' health needs. Although several carers reported delays in obtaining all essential information relating to young people's immunisations details and health needs; this mainly related to emergency placements. Six young people's records checked contained details of their immunisations. All foster carer's had recently been given a laminated signed copy of the emergency consent for treatment relating to the young person in their care. It is intended that this information will transfer with the young person when they move.

Several foster carers reported delays in accessing mental health services for children/young people, where required. Senior managers reported that additional resources were being provided.

Foster carers said that they had received basic training on health issues as part of the pre-approval training. The designated nurse for Looked After Children was working closely with staff, foster carers and young people to promote individual's health needs. Discussions with foster carers and records showed that foster carers had recently attended basic first aid training.

## 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

Arrangements are in place to promote young peoples safety and welfare, and staff working in the fostering service have extensive knowledge and skills, which safeguards young people’s interests.

### EVIDENCE:

Staff working in the fostering teams have considerable knowledge and skills in the field of social care and fostering to support foster carers and young people. The fostering service follows clear procedures when recruiting new staff, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Recruitment records examined relating to five members of staff showed that all necessary information and checks had been obtained except for the following:

- The reference request form did not ask for verification of the reason why the person had left their employment in a position of working with children or adults; and this information was not provided.
- Three out of five staff had recorded their employment in years only, which does not ensure that any gaps in employment history are explored.
- Staff interviews were not all recorded on a standard form and signed and dated by the persons completing the interview. One staff’s file did not contain a record of their interview.

- One record did not contain evidence of the person's relevant qualifications, although the file contained evidence that the person was registered with the General Social Care Council. The HR Department has since agreed to obtain a copy of the person's Social Work qualification certificate.

Staff's criminal record bureau disclosure certificate showed that a check had been undertaken against the Protection of Vulnerable Children List.

Foster carers homes visited provided a safe and welcoming environment. Young people said that they were felt part of the family and were encouraged to personalise their bedroom. A written health and safety risk assessment of each foster carers home had been completed, however it was not apparent that this had been re-assessed prior to the carer's annual re-approval. The foster carer's annual-approval report presented at fostering panel tended to record the date when the initial health and safety risk assessment had been completed.

The fostering service has clear procedures in place to promote young peoples' safety and welfare. Discussions with young people and returned questionnaires indicated that young people felt safe in their foster home. All carers visited confirmed that they had attended training in Child Protection and safe care, were aware of safe caring principles. Foster carers had recently been assisted to complete a safe care policy for their home, which were dated and signed by the foster carers and their family placement worker. Foster carers safe care policy covered general safe caring guidelines and tended not to relate to the particular child/children currently in placement. The safe care policy included a section for children (where appropriate) to sign to say that it had been explained to them, although it was not apparent that children in placement had been made aware of the policy. A copy of the safe care policy is now attached to the foster carers annual-approval report presented at the Fostering Panel.

It was clear from discussions with foster carers and staff that considerable work goes into ensuring that young people are appropriately placed with fosters carers capable of meeting their needs, within the resources available. Referrals for placement are circulated to the appropriate area team, where staff confirmed that team discussion of matching considerations would take place prior to contacting a carer. Staff had an in depth knowledge of the competencies and strengths of foster carers, and used this knowledge to inform the process of appropriately matching young people to a placement, which would meet their needs. In the case of carers and young people tracked during this inspection the files contained no evidence of matching considerations between a carer and a child since the current process tends to be a verbal one. A standard form was available to provide pre-placement information about matching considerations although this was not used. Foster carers said that they had a say as to who is placed with them, as to whether

they felt they have the skills to meet the young persons needs. Where possible young people and foster carers meet to get to know each other, prior to making a decision about whether they consider the placement is in their best interest. All newly approved foster carers were being encouraged to complete an information book about their family and home, for young people's consideration.

The service has 3 Fostering Panels, which cover the three divisions. The Panels had the required composition of panel members, except for two of the Panels did not have independent members with expertise in child health. Senior managers were in discussions with the local Health Trusts with a view to recruiting additional members with expertise in child health.

The Panel Chairs reported that further improvements have been made to how the Fostering Panels operate, and to bring about consistency in the way the Panels work. The inspector attended one of the Fostering Panels, which maintained an appropriate level of independence. The inspector was informed that the panel members had attended two training sessions in the last year, and had reviewed the way in which the Panels work.

The Panel Chairs commented that the assessment reports of potential new foster carers now presented at Fostering Panel had improved in terms of the quality and consistency of information provided, which assists the panel members in the decision process. In the case of foster carers tracked during this inspection, it was not apparent that their training and development needs were robustly linked and evaluated through the annual review process. The managers intend to strengthen this on development of the post approval-training programme.

Discussions with the Panel Chairs and panel minutes confirmed that annual reviews of all carers, requests for deferment of annual reviews, all exemptions to carer's approval, child protection issues and significant incidents, de-registration of carers and financial requests are routinely presented at Panel. This is to be commended as good practice.

# 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

Priority was being given to recruiting additional foster carers from a variety of backgrounds to meet the demand for placements and young people's diverse needs.

Importance is given to young peoples' educational needs to help them achieve their potential.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Carers reported that the pre-approval training covered the need to promote diversity and respect other cultures and religions. Staff and carers reported that the matching process takes into account a child's cultural, religious, language, and disability needs, and that the service promotes diversity and equality. The service acknowledges that there is a shortage of appropriate placements, in particular for teenagers, children with a disability and large sibling groups. The service is focusing on recruiting additional foster carer's to meet the specific needs of the young people currently requiring placement. Foster carers showed a commitment to enhancing children's confidence and self worth.

The policies and procedures covered short-term breaks. Discussions with staff and carers and returned questionnaires maintained that the needs of children/young persons receiving short-term breaks were being met. Although

the service recognizes the need to recruit additional foster carers across all areas of the county to provide short-term breaks.

Young people said that they are encouraged to follow their personal interests and hobbies. Several foster carers commented that although some additional funding was available to help pay for certain hobbies and activities, the basic fostering allowances and funding available did not cover the full costs incurred to supporting young people's social interests, hobbies and family outings.

The service worked closely with other agencies, such as education and health. Young people had a personal educational and their educational needs and achievements were clearly documented. Young people said that foster carer's gave them help and support with their schoolwork and education. Foster carer's had developed good relationship with local schools and attended parent evenings and events. All of the children and young people visited were attending fulltime education (one child was under 5 and she attended a local nursery) and were being encouraged to achieve their potential educational attainments and take part in after school activities. The managers confirmed that a computer was provided in all foster carers homes, where a child was of school age. Priority was being given to providing a computer in all foster carers homes and training to all foster carers, to enable them to make full use of the IT system and email. The Authority was looking to improve access to the Carezone site, which provides comprehensive information for looked after children, and opportunities to communicate via safe and supervised chat rooms.

## **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

Priority is given to supporting contact arrangements with a child's family and friends to ensure that links are maintained where appropriate.

The fostering service works closely with children and foster carers enabling them to have a say on matters affecting their daily lives, and to ensure that their views and wishes are listened to and acted upon.

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### **EVIDENCE:**

Foster carer's showed a commitment to supporting young people's contact with family and friends. Young people said that they have regular contact with family and friends where there are no restrictions, and their records clearly set out contact arrangements.

The service communicates and consults with children and young people through social activities, fun events and consultation exercises. A children's reference group was established in one area, which includes young people who have been, or who are currently in care. The service circulates a regular newsletter to all foster carers homes, which contained a good level of information and was well set out.

The inspectors found positive examples of children's views being heard and acted upon in placement. Examples of this included young people having a say as to who they wished to have contact with, and whether they wished to attend their reviews. One young person had requested a bedside light on a recent placement review and this had been provided.



Several consultation exercises had been carried out with foster carers to obtain their views about the service, and the inspectors were informed of various changes that had been made in response to comments received.

# 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):

4, 29

Importance is given to helping young people develop the skills they require for independent or semi independent living, although care plans in place did not clearly show the planning undertaken in preparation for moving on and adulthood.

Further improvements have been made to the fee structure and allowances paid to foster carers bringing payments more in line with national recommended allowances.

## EVIDENCE:

Policies and procedures were in place relating to young people moving onto semi or independent living. One young person case tracked and visited was almost 18 years of age and was preparing to move onto supported living. It was clear from discussions with the young person and his foster carers that he had been assisted to develop daily living skills such as washing and ironing his clothes, preparing a meal and managing his own finances. The young person had an after care worker and a pathway plan in place preparing him for adulthood, although his pathway plan had only recently been updated and all relevant persons had yet to receive a copy of this. The supporting social worker and foster carers considered that the young person's move to supported living had not well planned and communicated to all relevant persons.

Following consultation with foster carers, the Authority had further increased the allowances and remunerations paid to carers in the last year, to cover the cost of caring for a child. The Authority continues to recognise foster carers

length of service and commitment by way of an annual bonus payment. The senior managers reported that taking into account the recent increase in the allowances and the additional payments the overall allowances paid to foster carers were virtually in line with national recommended allowances. Staff and carers welcomed the increases in allowances and remunerations, although a number of foster carers expressed the need for further increases to cover the full cost of caring for each child and in recognition for the work and skills involved in a caring for a foster child.

# 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):**

1,4, 5, 15,16,17,19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

The service has undergone considerable re structuring, which has brought about a clearer focus on staff's roles and responsibilities and the key services' provided.

## **EVIDENCE:**

A children's guide was provided, which contained a good level of illustrations and was well set out. It was reported that all children and young people in foster homes have received a copy of the children's guide. Staff acknowledged that the guide appealed to a certain age range of children, and the Children's Rights Officer planned to produce an alternative guide for teenagers with involvement of the young people.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the services provided and was reviewed in December 2005 to include the new structure and aims of the service. The Cabinet Members had approved the statement of purpose and staff had received a copy of this. The statement of purpose was comprehensive and met the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations, but did not include all information set out in Standard 1.4 of National Minimum Standards. This information was provided separately.

Further improvements have been made to strengthen the efficiency and consistency of services provided across all areas. Senior managers had set out a clear annual plan, which set out the key aims and areas for development over the coming year.

The Head of Service was currently undertaking work relating to the integration of children's services, and the Assistant Head of Children Services was assisting with the responsibility of the fostering service. The management structure within the Authority does not provide an overall manager at operational level. However there were plans to appoint a person at operational level to oversee and lead the fostering service. Senior staff interviewed expressed the need for someone at this level.

Procedures relating to the management of complaints and the reporting of notifiable and significant events were in place. A standard form was provided to record notifiable events to all relevant persons, although this was not routinely used in all areas. Senior managers had re-affirmed to all teams the need to report notifiable incidents without delay to all relevant persons. Systems were in place for recording and monitoring allegations of abuse or neglect of a child in foster care and complaints received about the service. Procedures were in place to collate and evaluate information relating to formal complaints and significant events and incidents received across all areas of the service. As part of the monitoring arrangements the area managers notified the fostering quality assurance manager of all formal complaints received and allegations of abuse or neglect of a child. Information relating to informal complaints and insignificant incidents was recorded on the relevant foster carers or child's file within the area teams.

The majority of social workers within the fostering teams are experienced and knowledgeable about fostering, which enables them to provide a good level of

support to foster carers. Staff and foster carers commented that the change of social workers in some of the children's teams impacts on the fostering teams, resulting in staff undertaking some duties outside their focus of work. Staff acknowledged that their roles required that they work flexibly in the best interests of children and foster carers.

This inspection focused on the central recruitment team and the support team based at the Chesterfield area office. The managers of these teams had considerable experience and skills and managed the teams effectively in an open and positive way. Staff worked well together and valued the level of support and supervision they received from their line manager and colleagues. Staff interviewed said that they received monthly planned supervision, which they found beneficial. There were clear lines of accountability within the area teams, and staff had taken on responsibility for specific areas of work and interests, which worked well. Systems were in place to prioritise and monitor the work within the teams. The I.T system and access to computers has further improved in the last year, which has benefited staff.

Regular staff meetings are held, which enable staff to share information and to discuss key issues. Staff considered that their training and development needs were well supported. Staff had access to a good range of training and had attended various training in the last year.. Staff interviewed had a Personal Development Plan although an appraisal system was not in place.

The Authority acknowledges that it does not have sufficient carers to enable choice of placement and fully meet the demands on the service. The Authority has a clear recruitment strategy and an ongoing recruitment campaign, and has established a central recruitment team, which has resulted in an overall net increase of 16 foster carers since March 2005. The recruitment team had some vacancies across areas of the county, resulting in some areas having recruiting less foster carers than others. Senior managers recognized the need to increase the level of staff within the support teams to take account of the increased numbers of new foster carers being approved. At the time of the inspection 43 children were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, which is comparable to the number of children placed last year. Despite the pressures on Local Authority placements, only a small number of carers had more than three foster children in placement.

The development of a central recruitment team responsible for the recruitment of new foster carers, has strengthened the initial enquiry and assessment process. Staff at all levels reported that the assessment of potential foster carers had improved in terms of the quality and consistency of information provided, which assists the panel members in the decision making process. Completed assessments of prospective foster carers were comprehensive and of a high standard. Staff planned to further develop assessments based on evidence and competencies. Records showed that necessary checks had been carried out to ensure that foster carer's are suitable to work with children.

Although the form used to provide evidence of foster carer's criminal record bureau disclosure did not state the level of disclosure carried out, the disclosure reference number, and whether a satisfactory check had been obtained against the Protection of Vulnerable Children's/Adults lists. The senior managers agreed to address this issue with the Human Resource department.

Foster carers visited said that they received a good level of support from their local fostering team. Staff showed a commitment to supporting foster carers and maintaining children's placements. Returned questionnaires from the majority of foster carers stated that they felt well supported by the fostering service. However a small number of carers did not share this view and did not feel valued for the work they undertake. Senior managers acknowledged that the staff changes within certain teams affected the level of support provided to some carers, and that priority was being given to ensuring that all carers receive a good level of support. A small number of foster carers commented that they did not find the out of hour's service responsive on occasions they had used this.

Twenty-eight experienced foster carers had completed the mentor scheme training to provide support to less experienced carers. A number of carers reported that they had formed good relationships with their mentor and had found their support to be beneficial. However not all areas had sufficient trained mentors with the appropriate skills to match to newly approved foster carers. The fostering service was reviewing the best way to enlist and train further experienced carers to become mentors to provide support to less experienced carers.

Staff confirmed that support groups for foster carers were now established in all areas except of for Erewash and Amber Valley, and priority was being given to setting up a support group within these areas. Support group meetings included areas of interest and training.

Discussions with foster carers and records showed that visits to carer's homes were usually planned, although some social workers had recently carried out an un-announced visit. Records of supervision visits clearly set out issues discussed, and the foster carer and support worker had signed the majority of the records.

Foster carers reported variations in the level of support young people received from their social worker. Several foster carers and young people expressed concerns about the changes in some children's social workers and lack of direct contact.

The pre-approval training programme for foster carers has been strengthened, and experienced foster carers were more involved in this. Additional training events were being held locally to enable potential new carers to attend the

training. The majority of foster carers reported that post approval training opportunities had increased, although certain carers reported difficulties in accessing training locally at times when they were able to attend this, and that regular training was not provided in certain areas. The part time training officer provided the lead on training for foster carers, was currently undertaking training on the new IT system. The area teams had been given responsibility for co-ordinating local training around the needs of foster carers. The Chesterfield area team had set up a good range of training for carers over the coming months, including some joint training with another team. The area managers reported that the pressures of work within the team restricted time available to set up training locally. The service was looking to appoint an unqualified worker within each team, whose role would include setting up local training. Records showed that not all foster carers had attended ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and skills. The service had made good progress in ensuring that foster carers attend essential training; virtually all carers had recently attended first aid training. Foster carers were encouraged to undertake a national vocational training qualification (N.V.Q.) in childcare, and 72 carers had achieved this.

Staff and carers reported that various social events are held, to which children, young people and carers are invited to attend. Carers and young people commented that they enjoyed attending the events.

A comprehensive I.T system has been put in place across the county; all records are now recorded electronically as part of the integration of children's services. All staff had received some training on the new recording system. Clear procedures were not in place for the saving of all documents, and staff expressed difficulties in accessing the information easily. There were plans to upgrade the new IT system and put procedures in place on the saving and recording of information, to enable all staff to access the records more easily.

Further improvements have been made to the standard of recording by staff within the family placement and children's teams. Foster carers and children's records looked at on this inspection were generally of a consistent high standard, and contained the required information. However there were inconsistencies in where foster carers recorded information relating to the young people in their care, and the level of information recorded. A number of foster carers had recently attended training on the importance of good recording and further training was planned. The managers acknowledged that further training and work was required to bring about consistencies in the level of recording by foster carers.

Several foster carers and staff expressed concerns that the permanency plan for certain children and young people in foster care had not progressed in a timely manner for various reasons. Senior managers acknowledged the need to address this issue and had drafted a comprehensive policy to promote the permanency of young people's placements.





# 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>	2
<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>	3
<b>13</b>	3
<b>31</b>	3

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

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

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

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	FS8	33	The service must provide evidence of matching considerations between a foster carer and a child.	31/05/06
2	FS17	27 Schedule	Foster carers files must clearly show: The level of C.R.B. check carried out, the person's disclosure number, and that a satisfactory check has been obtained against the Protection of Vulnerable Children/Adults List.	31/05/06

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS12	The service should continue to promote that foster carers are given essential information about a child's health needs to enable them to appropriately care for the child.
2	FS3	Reference request forms should ask for verification of the

		reason why the person ceased to work in a position, involving work with children or vulnerable adults.
3	FS3	Potential new staff and foster carers should be instructed to record the full dates of their employment history, so as identify and explore any gaps in employment history
4	FS3	A record of staff interviews should be kept on the personnel files. Records of interviews should be to a consistent and adequate standard, and recorded on a standard form.
5	FS6	All foster carers should be encouraged to complete an information book about their family and home, for young people's consideration.
6	FS6	Health and safety risk assessments of foster carer's homes should show that they have been reviewed prior to the carer's annual review, and as changes arise.
7	FS6	Children and young people (where appropriate) should be made aware of the safe care policy that applies to their foster carers home.
8	FS30	The independent members of the three fostering panels should include expertise in child health.
9	FS14	The service should continue to support that a young person's move to semi/independent living is well planned and communicated to all relevant persons.
10	FS19	The Authority should continue to consult with foster carers regarding the allowances and remunerations paid to carers, to ensure that these cover the full cost of caring for each child and take into account the work carers undertake.
11	FS1	The statement of purpose should include/attach all information set out in Standard 1.4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.
12	FS1	The service should produce an alternative children's guide for young people.
13	FS5	The Authority should appoint an overall manager at operational level to oversee and lead the fostering service.

14	FS9	Further strengthen the systems in place to collate and evaluate information relating to all allegations of neglect, abuse and complaints received.
15	FS17	The service should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a full compliment of staff working in the recruitment team in order to recruit a range of carers across all areas of the county and offer placement choice.</li> <li>• Put plans in place to increase the level of staff within the support teams to take account of the increased numbers of new foster carers being approved.</li> </ul>
16	FS20	Staff should receive regular planned appraisals from their line manager.
17	FS21	The service should strengthen the level of support provided to foster carers across all areas of the county, and establish a support group for carers in the Erewash and Amber Valley areas.
18	FS21	The service should train further skilled carers across all areas of the county to provide support to newly approved foster carers in the form of a 'mentor'.
19	FS22	All supervising social workers should carry out occasional un-announced visits to foster carer's homes.
20	FS23	The service should further develop the post-approval training programme for foster carers and opportunities of local training.
21	FS23	The service should continue to promote that all foster carers attend regular training to further their knowledge and skills and to meet the needs of children placed in their care.
22	FS23	Foster carers training and development needs should be robustly reviewed through their annual review.
23	FS24	The Authority should put in place a clear policy and procedures relating to the saving and recording of information on the new I.T system, to enable all staff to access the records easily.
24	FS24	The Authority should continue to promote that children/young people receive a good level of direct contact with their social worker

25	FS24	All foster carers should be encouraged to attend I.T training to enable them to make full use of the computer and IT system in their home.
26	FS24	Further work should be carried out to ensure that all foster carers keep essential records of children in their care.
27	FS24	The service should put in place policies and procedures on kinship care and permanency placements.

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